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Wherever we live or work, we rely on the services of others whose opportunities may be less than ours.....so let us help them so they can help themselves.

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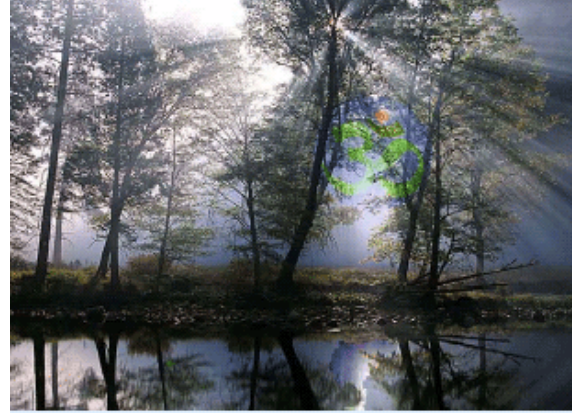
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यज्ञो दानं तपश्चैव पावनानि मनीषिणाम् ।
एतान्यपि तु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा फलानि च ॥

कर्तव्यानीति मे पार्थ निश्चितं मतमुत्तमम् ।
नियतस्य तु संन्यासः कर्मणो नोपपद्यते ॥

*Work in the form of sacrifice, gift and austerity should not be relinquishedthey must be performed without any attachments or fruits.
This is My decided and best view.*

Bhagavad Gita Chapter 18 verses 5 and 6

::: PRESIDENT'S CORNER :::
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Once again, it gives me great pleasure to report to you about AASAI's performance. Thanks to your generosity and involvement, AASAI has grown since 1998 with a mere \$40, to currently over 60 donors contributing \$30,000 (estimated) annually. This has enabled AASAI to support several projects; projects that span the full range of our society, from destitute street children (Deena Seva in Bangalore) to the destitute old (Sri Poorna Mahameru Trust); from special needs children (Little Angels, Bombay) to bright students achieving high scholastic accolades (Sri Ahobila



At the outset, AASAI's involvement in these projects may appear lofty and altruistic. Yet, in reality it is a pragmatic, objective, and to a certain extent, selfish approach. It is naive to think that in today's society, we are totally


Let Me Enlighten

....My life is an indivisible whole, and all my attitudes run into one another; and they all have their rise in my

Math Oriental School Chennai); from rural elementary schools (Sri Ramanai Renganayaki Trust -Aduthurai, a village in Tamilnadu) to a big city high school (Sri amaseshier High School, Pattamadi, Tirunelveli district, Tamilnadu). AASAI is proud of the accomplishments of these institutions.

AASAI has recently initiated two new projects, school for destitute girls (Kastuba Illam, Vedaraniyam district, Tamilnadu) and VHS hospital, Chennai, that provides free medical services to the poor.

independent. We rely on services of others and thus their welfare is important to our well being. We have to recognize this fundamental social reality and develop a commitment to the common good. So, please let us work towards maximum welfare of the maximum people ? - *Samasta janaanaam sukhino bhavantu.*

L.Raghavan, President

insatiable love for mankind.....
Mahatma Gandhi

....Just as there is no loss of basic energy in the universe, so no thought or action is without its effects....

Norman Cousin

We are what our thoughts have made us; so take care about what you think...

Swami Vivekananda

....Love the world as a mother loves her only child....

The Buddha

....Lord, grant that I might not so much seek to be loved as to love....

St Francis of Assisi

....The little unremembered acts of kindness and love are the best of a good man's life....

William Wordsworth

::: AASAI's project—Deena Seva Blooms with 5 Children ::: HELP FOR STREET CHILDREN IN BANGALORE

AASAI initiated a new project to benefit street children, Deena Seva in Bangalore. The project pro-actively interacts with the Bangalore police to shelter abandoned children who would otherwise be in city jails. AASAI's Dr. Gopinath recently visited Deena Seva Sangha (DSS) in Bangalore, to get first-hand information regarding the project. As you may be aware, DSS started in 1930 by a band of Gandhian workers, to provide education, health care, and rehabilitation of orphan and destitute children. They serve a population of 20,000 in various slums in Bangalore. Their programs include: 9 schools offering K-12 education, dispensaries, school for mentally retarded children, and vocational training centers. The City Police currently runs a program called "Sahayavani" to take children off the streets and hand them over to charitable organization for rehabilitation.



AASAI now has taken charge of five children from police sources . They are now housed in 3 cottages currently not being used by the DSS. DSS currently owns 60 acres of land at Pestalozzi Village near Bangalore and houses 50 children in 4 cottages.

Here are some of the cases that the DSS is handling thanks to AASAI. Pushpa, a 10 year old adorable girl, who has no mother and has been abused by an alcoholic father and abandoned by her Grandmother. She was found near a school crying with no place to go. She is now at the DSS cottage and studying in 1st grade.

Uma, another child, 13 years old, was abandoned by her father and her stepmother, was found on the street wandering aimlessly. Makkala Sahayavani handed her over to DSS where Uma is found to be fit for the 5th grade. A special teacher has been assigned to bring her into the mainstream. Three other children with similar circumstances now enjoy a secured environment and are being integrated with the existing children in all their activities. We are sure that these children are on their way to becoming productive future citizens. AASAI has opened a case record book to monitor the progress of these children.

We thank you and hope that you will continue to lend your support.

Dr. Gopinath, Director

::: AASAI'S projects pays off—SRI AHOBILA MATH SCHOOL ::: STUDENTS ACHIEVE STATE RANKS AGAIN

Nearly three years ago, AASAI's Raghavan visited the Sri Ahobila Math Oriental High school at west Mambalam, Chennai. We saw in those bright young faces the future of our society. The school exudes a unique combination of the ancient charm of India with the reverberating voices of students reciting vedas and prabhandams and the clicking sound of modern-day computers. The simplicity of the school's surroundings



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Top Rank students

Congratulations!

**N. Aarthi
Bavya Badrinath
V. Pavithra**

and the students stand out as if to proclaim to the whole world that a teacher's dedication, student discipline, and insatiable desire for learning, are far more important than money and modern-day conveniences for success.

As if to reiterate this concept, many students of this school have achieved top state ranks again this year in the state wide public examination with students scoring marks of over 1170 out of 1200 (see side honor role of students). AASAI is proud to acknowledge the students' achievements and for the third year in a row gave out total cash awards of approximately Rs. 20,000.

**K Aiswarya
N. Bharadwaj
K. Srinivasan
B. Vidhya
P. Sindhuja
D. Ramya
S . Anand
L..Gayathri
T.R.Srinivasan
H. Saradha**

**::: Salute to SRI POORNA MAHAMERU TRUST for its dedicated service to elders :::
HOME FOR ELDERLY DESTITUTE – A STORY OF SELF RELIANCE AND SUNSHINE**

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Thanks to your generosity, over 50 destitute elders with ailments needing services of others even for day-to-day life, are now able to lead life with dignity. As you are aware, AASAI has been supporting Sri Poorna Mahameru Trust, which runs a free home, Thriveni Illam, in Chennai. Through the dedicated services of several volunteers and tireless leadership of Sri. S. Swaminathan, the Trust has secured the support of local hospitals which provide free medical treatment to the elders. Also, the renowned Sankar Nethralaya eye hospital has adopted the Home for its 'eye care' program. With assistance provided by AASAI, the Trust has constructed Shanthi Niwas Complex in Pallavaram, Chennai. ShantiNiwas compliments the Thriveni Illam with 16 rooms for the use of Senior Citizens who pay for their stay.



SHANTINIWAS

This is generating revenue for the Trust, which is used to support, free of any charge, the 50 destitutes under the care of the Trust. A new medical ward with three beds has also been opened in January 2003, with two nurses on 24-hour duty. The services of a lady doctor are now available . The doctor visits the Home once a week and is also available for free consultation in her clinic in Pallavaram.

This is in addition to the free services available in the Hindu Mission Hospital, Tambaram. Thus far, AASAI has donated over \$16,000 towards Shantiniwas, and plans to continue its support to this cause in the future.

Another new Home has also been started in Aduthurai which now accommodates five elders. These elders prepare midday meals to the village school children in Aduthurai (another project AASAI supports). AASAI is proud of the accomplishments of the Trust and its efforts to become self-reliant, which goes to the very root of AASAI's objectives. Thanks to you, AASAI has successfully fulfilled its commitments to the Home which brings a ray of sunshine into the life of under-privileged elders.

**::: AASAI SUPPORTS A NEW PROJECT— Little Angels in Bombay :::
School for Special Needs Children**

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There are 170 million people with mental disabilities in the World. Taking care of them is in itself a big challenge. Many of us ignore them or learn to live with the problem. Only a few in our society believe that special-needs children could and should be integrated into the regular workforce or learning environment and enjoy independent (even if supervised) living. In the US, there is a keen sense of awareness and sensitivity to this segment of our population. There are abundant resources and organizations that are devoted to this issue. In fact, there is even a "Special Olympics" for these citizens.

Unfortunately, Indian society pays little

The students are first observed and tested to find out their actual difficulties. The children are then placed in any of three groups. Group "A" is a school-going program teaching these youngsters general education along with motor development and hand-eye coordination, to name a few activities. Group "B" is a pre-school course that stresses the development of reading and writing skills along with basic education and speech development. The last group, "Group C," is a learning through fun course. Children are taught communication skills, pre-reading and writing skills, and tolerance. Occupational therapists, psychiatrists, and speech therapists help these students fight their problems on a daily



"In the beginning of life, when we are infants, we need others to survive...and at the end of life, you need others to survive...But here is the secret, in between, we need others as well"

- Tuesdays with Morrie

attention to this segment of our population; it even attaches shame and stigma to this condition. Mostly, ignorance is the source of this problem. Thus, it is refreshing to see progress being made in this arena by the Little Angels school in Bombay. We have always been very skeptical about trying something new or different, but in this school, being different means being special.

Little Angels was founded in 2002 by a former flight attendant, Jahangir Afshari. The school's primary focus is to meet the challenges posed to young children with multiple disabilities. Independence, confidence, and education are the main goals of the organization. Jahangir Afshari, a man of great inspiration to many, encourages the Indian society to accept and help these little angels to bloom. With his optimistic can-do personality, he has given these children an opportunity to be themselves and learn to find their own place in the world.

basis. The education course is not by any means restricted to the classroom. Nature walks, weekly trips to parks, beaches, and swimming lessons are also part of their curriculum. In addition, the school has specially designed computer programs to help these students learn coordination, colors, and numbers.

Today, 40 children are learning and growing here; 75 more are on the waiting list. It's time to think bigger about this movement, to help change our attitude, to persuade people that individuals with mental disabilities can be contributing members of society. It has been a struggle for Jahangir and his team to come this far and the battle is far from over. Thanks to our friend Krishnan Swaminathan, who brought this project to our attention, AASAI plans to help the Little Angels, to renovate three additional rooms and a bathroom.

Let us all hold hands together and offer our support to these Little Angels.

::: The Concept of Seva or Service in the Hindu Dharma :::

There is one concept that is common in all religious faiths, the concept of Seva, or service. Hinduism is no exception to this concept. Seva is considered a part of human Dharma in Hindu thought. Pareshamupakarurtham Yajjivta sa jivati", He alone lives who lives for the sake of helping others, says the Rig Veda. Seva, therefore, is a significant aspect in one's spiritual life and advancement. This idea was also expressed beautifully by Swami Vivekananda who preached the worship of the poor when he said that serving man is serving God, "Nara Seva, Narayana Seva".

Since time immemorial, our ancient rishis, sages, and great kings have demonstrated as living examples to the great importance attached to selflessness and loving service to others. In the Bhagwat Gita, Chapter 18, Verse 4, the Lord clearly speaks "yagno danam thapaschaiva pavanani manishanam," sacrifice, gift, and austerity are sanctifying to the wise and should not be relinquished. The rishies and great kings did not limit their seva to the humans but extended the seva to all beings; be they human, mammals, birds, plants, or any other. This attitude of the wise clearly shows that seva promotes not only the joy of living in harmony with nature but rather is critical to everyone's life since no one is independent. Our Hindu puranas contain many examples of this service ? There is a well known story of King Shib, who was prepared to cut out flesh from his own body and sacrifice himself in order to save a pigeon from an eagle. This thought is also exemplified in the story of King Ranti Deva contained in Bhagvatam.

When his subjects were facing a severe and devastating famine, King Ranti Deva fasted until all the hungry were fed. On the 48th day, when he was about to break his fast, he gave his water to a crying Pulkasa and all his food to a hungry guest. The king then said: "[I do not] care for my own salvation from the cycles of births and deaths. My only desire is to be present in all beings (to share their feelings) and undergo suffering with them and serve them so that they may become free from misery, hunger, thirst, fatigue, loss of strength in limbs, distress, grief, disappointment, delusion ? all these undesirable features of my distressed soul have all disappeared upon my giving water to one who was suffering from acute thirst." The king's words set the standard for a true seva attitude. Mahatma Gandhi was quite impressed with the sayings of Ranti Deva. He adopted this quotation in all his Seva work. "Pandit Nehru echoed this feeling when he said "The ambition of the greatest man of our generation has been to wipe every tear from every eye." Then how do we perform Seva? Our seers have said that Seva could be done in three ways ? Tan, Man, Dhan, namely physical, mental, and material support. Physical service is easy to understand. Mental service is to ponder about the sufferings of the poor, taking actions to alleviate them and motivating others to indulge in Seva. Material service is to give generously. Then the question is to what extent a person should give his time, efforts and wealth in charity. It is important to understand that one can choose any one of these three ways to help, the way that best suits one's convenience and ability. At the present stage of one's life, one may not be in a position to provide physical support.

But certainly all of us can help by commiserating with the needy and underprivileged and donate wealth to the best of our ability.

In Hindu thought, wealth is given by God and is not meant for accumulation. To hoard more than what a man needs is a sin and excess should be given for others to use. Simply said, "To live is to give. Give as long as you live". Seva is thus a continuous lifelong process.

L. Raghavan, Chairman

Let us practice the vedic words:

**" Shatahasta
Samahara,
Sahasrashasta
Sankira"
(Atharvaveda
3-24-5)**

**"Earn with hundreds
of hands, and
distribute with
thousands".**

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"The ambition of the greatest man of our generation has been to wipe every tear from every eye"

- Pandit Jawarharlal Nehru

::: A Report From the Village School, Sri Vidyasram, at Aduthurai :::

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It was February 15, 2003 Sports day at Sri Vidyasram (yes that is the name of the school)..Wow! What an experience! What a difference between 7 am and 9 am! We could not believe ourselves! At 7 am we felt it was useless to spend our energy in starting a school with lofty ideals – when only 6 out of 72 parents turned up with their kids! But by 9 am - the number swelled to 500! The enthusiasm, the joy, and the sense of competition exhibited in the faces of those young ones, lifted our spirits and reinforced our conviction to this school project.

Being the first year, and having only about 50 children present, we encouraged other children of the village, parents of the school kids and others, to participate which they did! It was fun to watch the kids actively encouraging their parents during the events (like real pros)! In all, about 500 attended the Sports Day events (more than half of them were not connected with school) which goes to show the awareness and involvement of the locals in our school activities. Let me go back to the beginning of this narration to explain why we got dejected about spending our energy! Previous day, we held a dress rehearsal to inform the parents to report at 7 am with their kids. Assuming it would take about 2 to 2-and-a-half hours for the events, we would have finished all events by 9:30 am before the day gets hot! For the children and others it would be a punishment rather than fun to be outdoors. This was the reason why we were very much depressed when the attendance was very poor even by 7:45 am on the Sports Day. When we wanted to set an example to be punctual it was so depressing not to be so ourselves!

Finally the events started by 8:30 am and as the attendance improved, - the tempo picked up! The mike and speakers started cooperating after initial startup hiccups! Wow! The Prayer, March Past, Drill, so on – one after another - with the last minute procured drum, cassette music-operating in full swing! Both Chandri and Maheswari (two experts in teaching very young children) had put in lots of efforts with the children and their teachers to come up with a good-show! Contribution from Renuka was not less! Starting from the simplest thing like preparing a placard, to beautify the venue of the Sports Events, her deft hands were continually busy! Naturally everything fell into place and the whole event went very well. The result was superb, giving us immense satisfaction!

Everyone helped. First Radhakrishnan, (manager), was the announcer in addition to organizing everything connected with the celebration, in our absence! The March Past was led by Ramesh, the one who transports us day-in and day-out, from Chennai to Aduthurai and back! Chandri, Maheswari, Renuka and the Teachers and the Ayahs were carrying the placards/leading the children in the March Past. (Poor Pre KG children! They could not keep pace with the LKG and UKG kids! The Drill by LKG and UKG students was a treat for the eyes! Hats-off to the Teachers who trained them. This was followed by Running Race, Lemon and Spoon race, Blocks Collection, etc. Some events were for juniors and seniors separately. Running Race for children and Sack Race for adults were conducted. It was such fun watching children persuading their shy parents to participate, and encouraging them during the event! By 10:30 it was time for distribution of prizes.

The Teachers, the Ayahs, the watchmen and a lot of interested parents and others gave lot of help to conduct the events. The Teachers had to perform more than one act at the same time! Teach/explain the event to the children, give out the names of winners, etc. so swift they were in conducting the events! It was perplexing to watch the yellow-clad Seshadri carrying the pen and pad and keeping track of the winners! Swaminathan, who was the most dejected at the beginning, had no time to think of anything other than the sequence of events. I took position as the 'running commentator' – well, actually 'sitting' commentator!

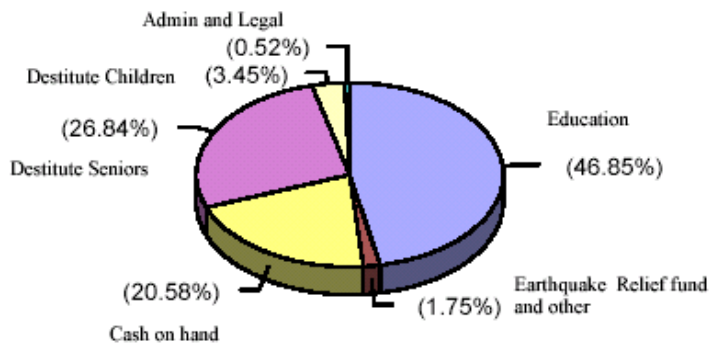
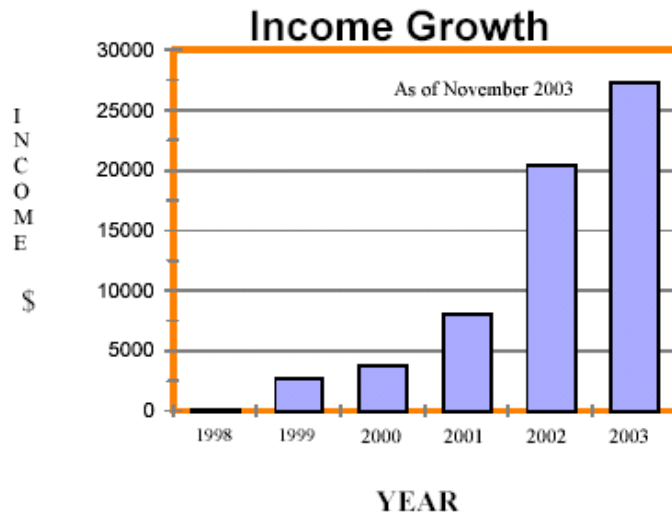
Mr. Ameer John, an assistant Governor of Lion's Club was the Chief Guest and distributed prizes to the children. The entire crowd stayed without minding the Sun getting hotter minute by minute. In his speech to the gathering, Mr. John told the gathering how impressed he was about the whole program. To his knowledge there was none like Sri Vidyasram in and around that area where free education and free midday meals were given to children. Coming up with ideas to utilize the grounds available with the Temple and making the local population getting involved were also praised by him. He promised to help the School through the good offices of the Lion's Club of the region. All in all it was lot of fun for the children as well us.

All this would not have been possible without your generous contributions. On behalf of the children, our heartfelt thanks. Please continue to support.

Dr. S. Natarajan, President AASAI Chennai Chapter

::: THANKS TO YOU - AASAI continues to grow :::

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