

ప్రసాదం

Punarchith

**Annual Report
2022-2023**



Annual Report 2022-2023



Finally, we completed a year marked without covid and stepped into our second decade of work. At the full team meeting in April, we reflected on our decade-long journey and also planned for the future years with new team members and new challenges.

Restorative agriculture, integrated learning, climate change awareness and mitigation, intergenerational learning, scaffolding young learners to be active citizens, engaging with issues of democracy, promoting value-addition of local produce. These and much more continued to be our work and responsibilities. Via training and discussion, we shifted gears to make way for younger leadership in the team, extended ourselves to local issues in Nagavalli, and sought new resource persons for workshops. Dynamic and engaged youth from other districts of Karnataka boosted the enthusiasm quotient in the learning transactions, and several visitors endorsed our work. Construction at Angarike Maala posed more challenges than we had anticipated but the whole process has become a learning exercise in management of knowledge, skills, labour, personnel, and finance.

For making all this possible, we are grateful to our friends and supporters who have reposed trust in us and our work: MoonFrog Labs, Rain Matter Foundation, and YuvaLok Foundation who provided the much-needed funds and moral support; our friends and family members who continue to be with us on our journey of 'rethinking' our received knowledge, ideas and practices and for enabling us to share, engage and exchange. We also acknowledge with gratitude the support that Kala Sunder has provided to Punarchith over the years. Since her move to Moscow, she has been replaced as a Trustee by Sunita Rao, a long-term team member, and founder of Vanastree.

As we journey into the third decade of the 21st century, we hope the challenges that we continue to face will enable us to forge new and alternative pathways towards peace, sustainability, justice and overall well-being.



2012-2022: Reflections on a decade long journey

Punarchith's experience in fostering and instituting an alternative learning experience for rural youth has been marked by the need to fine-tune all the programmes to the needs and orientation of rural life.

At a time when much of India, especially rural and agrarian worlds, are experiencing expedited and intense forms of change, it has been a challenge for us to constantly revise and institute programmes and activities that cater to the interests and possibilities of a changing world. Although guided by the ideas of addressing issues of social justice, economic opportunity, and democratic engagement, we have gone beyond working with blue-prints for any of the programmes. The 'Integrated Learning Programme', our flagship programme, was meant to cater to the interests of rural youth to be engaged in sustainable agriculture and to lead holistic lives in the rural areas itself. But, given the extensive disembedding that rural India, including the Chamarajanagar belt, is experiencing we have been faced with the fact that a strong anti-rural and anti-agriculture attitude has meant that the course is not in demand. Most youth seek training and employment for urban occupations and see such courses as redundant. Those youth who have participated in our programmes (a total of 109 youth from 8 batches conducted until now) are faced with issues of lack of rights to conduct sustainable agriculture on their family plots, inadequate resources, or pressures to have salaried jobs. Based on these trends, the course from 2023 onwards will be offered as specialised modules (sustainable agriculture, democracy, climate change, etc) and will be open to all rural youth from across Karnataka.

Two of the key programmes, **Honneru (the rural producers' collective)** and **GramaSethu (Village Bridge)** were spin-offs from the Integrated Learning Programme and seek to provide continuous support to the livelihood and citizenship abilities of the youth. Although it began well, the Covid phase saw Honneru products face challenges in marketing and the whole enterprise needs to be revamped

to make it more locally viable and competitive at the larger market level. Some of the youth, especially those in Tumkur, as participants in the GramaSethu program, are doing stellar work in their own villages; orienting young children about ecological issues, conducting night learning support programmes, trying their hand in sustainable agriculture and overall attempting to engage with alternative ideas for lives to be led with dignity and justice.

Angarike Maala, as a site for land restoration, biodiversity conservation and sustainable agriculture has been an unexpected site of learning for us. The focus of much of our work has been to restore the land, conserve the resources especially the soil, water and biodiversity, and practice sustainable agriculture. The work has been arduous, expensive and frustrating many times. However, we have learnt much from it and plans are to sustain it as a "living lab" where experiential learning for various topics can take place. That it is also the site for the local Soliga to experiment with a plot where 'taragu benki' or litter fire is tried out is another feature of enabling local knowledge to be revived and strengthened. That we have 'grown water' (with the water levels in the tube-well rising from 211 feet to 116 feet) is a feat which we take immense pride in. Building a small, utility complex on it has been a challenge; primarily that of dealing with contractors and workers whose schedules and work ethics don't match ours. Over the coming months, we hope to develop programmes, especially those on experiential learning for varied audiences, and where participants can also spend a few days at the land.

The Climate Change programme was another programme initiated to address some of the pressing ecological problems that are manifesting across the region. Despite numerous presentations to farmers, youth, and administrators, the response has been very limited and the sense of emergency seems to delude most residents. Plans are to persist with this programme at multiple levels so that

at least some impact is made at a basic level. The challenge is to develop and articulate a decentralised action-plan for climate change mitigation and adaptation that is suitable for specific regions and which addresses the needs of the most vulnerable citizens.

Aniketana or the ‘Saturday Children’s Program’

which sought to cater to the creative needs of Nagavalli children has received a boost with Vinay engaging deeply and personally with some of the children on a more regular basis. A small group of regular students has emerged and they will be participants in varied focused programs and also receive scholarships over the coming years.

The Covid period from March 2020 to nearly mid 2022

saw us responding to the altered circumstances in which the vulnerabilities of the most disadvantaged were brought to the fore. Without much preparation or funds, the team plunged into Covid relief work and Punarchith’s handouts that simplified covid related details, provided information for seeking medical support, were absorbed by the government. Relief and rehabilitation work entailed providing food and medical kits to the elderly in Nagavalli and to those abandoned or in dire circumstances in other villages. The conditions also highlighted for us the urgent need for the community as a whole to put pressure on the government to improve local public health facilities. That PUNARCHITH facilitated lake restoration work in and around Nagavalli and this provided jobs for several hundred people was due to the supporting role played by the then CEO of the Zilla Parishad.

The Aadhi or Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer program

was initiated by Samira Agnihotri in response to concerns by community members about the serious loss of knowledge and identity among Soliga youth. Its various outputs and work indicate high potential for co-creating a repository of Soliga knowledge and for at least some of the youth to regain their own identities and knowledge systems.

Lakshmi M joining as field co-ordinator and Priyam Vadaliya as the design consultant for the program has been integral to its development. Vasavi, Veerabhadra Naika, Sundramma and Vinay have been key consultants, and Dr C Madegowda and Dr Aung Si have provided invaluable support as advisors.

The seed bank was conceptualised by Sunita Rao (in collaboration with Vanastree) as a complimentary and important dimension of both the sustainable agriculture programme and the home garden. While the good monsoon years have seen us reap a bounty of seeds, the poor or fluctuating monsoons have also left us with limited stocks of seeds. Plans are to build and sustain a seed bank where local and organic grains/seeds for dry cultivation can be stored and sold or shared.

Over the past decade, PUNARCHITH has been able to develop several publications that have also represented key issues. Starting with the documentation on ‘New Lease Agriculture’, to that of the ‘Dry Grain Complex’, we have developed handouts, booklets and books that address a range of issues. In addition, Kannada translations of the booklet on the ‘State of Rural and Agrarian India 2020’ have been received well. Team members have also independently authored various articles and books.

Challenges and pathways ahead

If an overview of the evolution and impact of the programmes indicate both the potential and challenges that lay ahead, the team discussed various other personnel, management and fund related issues. Given the strong anti-rural and anti-agricultural attitudes among rural residents, how do we bring the community together? What will it take and how long to articulate and show-case alternatives that are sustainable and equitable? Since our work is with disadvantaged communities how will we get them to engage with sustainability issues while they are focusing on income? Such challenges find no easy or quick responses and these are issues that need to be addressed at multiple levels. A ray of hope and optimism lies in working with children who are more open to ideas and may be able to internalise these ideas in the long-run. In terms of personnel, who will be able to carry on this work when the founders seek retirement or a less visible and engaged role? Will the full-time team members be able to carry forward the work and in what ways will they be assisted by volunteers and part-time persons? What type of organisation will PUNARCHITH be in the future? It is not advisable to be a typical NGO and dependent on charitable funds. Can programmes be designed that will cater to individuals and groups who will be willing to pay for these? A decade since its establishment, PUNARCHITH sought to be a 'collective' and is not yet one. The differences (in class and cultural backgrounds of its members) indicate that forming a collective with complete equality is not easy. While new funding sources have to be identified, especially to build up the corpus fund, it will also be advisable to develop programmes that can generate revenue for PUNARCHITH. Articulating alternatives to the many mainstream domains of knowledge and practice can be a way for PUNARCHITH to not only continue its work but also ensure that some of

the key concerns are addressed. Once Angarika Maala is ready as a composite campus can the land work be integrated into the activities cycle so that labour and knowledge issues are interlinked? PUNARCHITH has until now been media averse and we have avoided having anybody report its work. But, in the future we will have to review possibilities of sharing the work with others so that the content and orientation of the programmes can be shared widely. Food, its production, processing and cooking, has been key to many of PUNARCHITH's activities and we need to consider ways to strengthen this aspect of our work. Workshops for varied age groups and during different seasons may be one way to ensure that a wider section of participants are brought into our circle. As we initiate the second decade of PUNARCHITH's work, we can invite an experienced person to conduct an in-depth review of PUNARCHITH's work and the possibilities for the future.

Overall, this has been an exhilarating journey; the tribulations and trials have taught us many lessons and the participants have often made us feel humble. A small sense of satisfaction has kept us engaged and ensures that we continue to persist. In a world full of tumultuous trends ours is only a small endeavour to carve out a space in which alternatives that enable social justice, economic equity and ecological sustainability can be tried out. To do this, we need to continue to 're-think' many issues and ideas. Hence, PUNARCHITH will continue to be relevant even for us.

Acknowledgement

For being with us during this past decade, we would like to thank: all the resource persons and volunteers who have made time to engage with us; our friends who have made personal financial contributors, and the following institutions for grants that have made the work possible: WATIS (Wipro Applying Thought in Schools); ITW Bengaluru; MoonFrog Labs, Bengaluru; Yuva Lok Foundation, Bengaluru; Exotic Travel, New Delhi; and RainMatter Foundation, Bengaluru, Aroon Raman, Dilip Ahuja, Gayathri Arakere, Ashish Patel, D. D. Nampoothiri and Samitha,

Richa Kumar, and Tirthankar Ghosh have been generous friends. We also acknowledge with gratitude the pro bono work that architects Mohan Rao and Nikhil Udupa of InDesign, Bengaluru, provided in developing the utility complex at Angarika Maala. In addition to the existing endowment funds in honour of various persons, we are pleased to acknowledge the initiation of a fund in honour of the late, well-known economist, Prof. P.R. Brahmanand, by his family.



Above: On April 17th and 18th 2023, all the PUNARCHITH core team members (Veerabhadranaika, Muthuraj, Sundramma, Vinay, Chandrakanth, Manuja Priya, Suma, Samira, Ratheesh, Dwiji, Sunita, Sajan, Balachandran, Vasantha, Shaila, Siddharth, Joshua, and Vasavi) met at Nagavalli and discussed details of the key programs, the lessons learnt and the new pathways for the coming years.

Right: Glimpses from 2012-2022





Programs and key activities

PANCH PAYANA: **Women's Assertions for Dignity, Rights and Well-Being**

Over the past eight years, Punarchith has reviewed the various programs and activities that village women have been engaged in or are seen as subjects of 'development programs'. Seeking to go beyond the limitations of the mainstream programs that focus on ideas of integrating women into the market economy and inducing life-style changes over that of holistic empowerment of women, PUNARCHITH has evolved a five-pronged approach or 'FIVE PRONGED JOURNEY' (PANCHA PAYANA) that seeks to enable rural women to emerge as agents and catalysts in their own lives and society. The emphases are on Equality, Dignity, Rights, Freedom, Recognition, Respect, Responsibility, Sharing, Self-Capabilities; and Autonomy. The five key assertions are for:

I: Personal Growth: dignity, self-confidence, recognising capabilities, addressing fears and hesitation, ability to speak, make decisions, enhance knowledge and skills, leadership, team spirit and work, negotiating power, recognising rights, negotiating freedom, balancing tradition and modernity

II. Social Awareness: Social issues of gender, caste, religion, class, relationships; rights, recognition, forms of violence, negotiating conflict; capital, market, commodities, media.

III. Well-Being: sustainable agriculture; Livelihood skills and income generation, food and nutrition, health, housing, home gardening, value-addition.

IV. Democracy and Citizenship: Panchayat, elections, reservations, women's concerns, leadership, participation in panchayats and other democratic structures and institutions, accountability of elected representatives, local civic issues.

V. Ecological Care: Surroundings, Green Cover, water conservation, understand climate change trends, garbage segregation; sanitation issues.



Credits: Vinay K. Kumar

Angarike Maala:

Land restoration, Sustainable Cultivation, Conservation and Demonstration

With the start of construction on April 11th, 2022, Angarike Maala's middle ground, earmarked for human activity and the site for construction of a small utility complex, saw it being subject to all violations of conservation norms. Despite repeated reminders, the area was littered with plastic, waste of all kinds, and construction debris. Making bricks from the local soil meant gorging out a significant amount of soil from two patches, and the slow construction pace meant that the grounds remain unkempt. Despite several deadlines, the construction team was not able to complete the work in 10 months and it continues to drag on with limited workers, periodic material shortage and overall poor management. We hope that the complex, when complete will serve the larger purpose of providing basic facilities when programmes are held and the seed bank will act as a key site of conservation for seeds. Key contributions towards the construction have been from MoonFrog Labs, Bengaluru, Aroon Raman, Gayathri Arakere and Dilip Ahuja, Richa Kumar, and Tirthankar Ghosh.

Cultivation over the two seasons was not as satisfactory as the above normal rainfall (about 1120 mms, in comparison to the annual average of 800 mm) was largely unseasonal and flooded the land during peak production or harvest time. We managed to cultivate some amounts of pulses, finger millet and niger. The vegetable patches yielded little but we were gratified to see that all the tree saplings thrive with the additional rainfall. The ponds and the tube-wells also benefitted as did the varieties of grasses. The annual work of conducting managed litter fire (tharaku benki) by the Soliga continued and Vinay diligently monitored and photographed the changes.

To honour and remember several senior friends who had passed on, we planted tree saplings in memory of Shri Lakshman Char of Mysuru, Commander RSK Ratnam, and Shri Amrik Singh Brara, both residents of New Delhi. Members of their families visited the sites and simple ceremonies to honour them were conducted by members of PUNARCHITH.

K. Abhisheka, who initiated the biodiversity review in 2014, returned to do an update. She has indicated a healthy growth of both floral and fauna biodiversity at the land. Vinay has meticulously photographed the growth and presence of all new biodiversity at Angarike Maala.

Instead of a 'Soil Week', we decided to have a 'Soil Month (November 15th to December 15th 2022). In addition to the walk around Angarike Maala, there were displays and activities related to understanding soils. Several children from various schools, farmers and external visitors participated in these activities.



Group activity during ILP program

Integrated Learning Program

Restarting the ILP after a hiatus of two years (due to covid restrictions), meant that we had to revisit the syllabus and the activities of the course, and also widen our catchment area for learners. Even as we received applications from several districts of Karnataka, the response from Chamarajanagar itself remained poor. However, when the course did start, the full team of 30 youth (22 from other districts, 8 from Chamarajanagar dt) learners were a refreshing and enthusiastic lot and made the course enjoyable and satisfying for all of us. One of the modules of the ILP was held at 'Hosa Jeevana Dhari (New Life Pathway) campus at Melkote and in addition to the PUNARCHITH team, we were honoured to have Santhosh and Sumanas Koulagi act as resource persons. Resource persons from across Karnataka also lent their expertise and made the course a comprehensive one. On November 30th, there was a valedictory function for this 8th batch of ILP learners and they put up a play, 'Beeja Maathe' (Seed Mother), which was directed by Laal Nadaf, one of the ILP students who is also a versatile theatre person. Ms. Rajeswari Varma, a gender and theatre specialist, was the chief guest for the valedictory programme. We were also able to develop several new teaching-learning materials and activities for these sessions. Some of the materials, such as the activity and TLM for understanding the caste system have been shared with other resource persons.



Aadhi youth along with adivasi youth community at Gudalur



AADHI:

Intergenerational knowledge sharing among the Solega

The Aadhi programme's multi-pronged approach to facilitate inter-generational transfer of traditional knowledge among the Solega/Soliga community has proved to be quite successful. On World Biodiversity Day, 22nd May 2022, a group from Kanneri colony comprising three generations of women performed at the Solega Spotlight event organised by the Indian Music Experience Museum at Bangalore, as part of their ongoing exhibit on Birdsong. In June 2022, a YouTube channel 'ಸೋಲಿಗರ ಕಾಡಿನ ಗೇನ' (Soliga Traditional Knowledge) was launched at the Dodda Sampige Granthalaaya in BR Hills. This channel showcases videos created by Solega youth who are part of the Aadhi programme in collaboration with their elders, and focuses on the community's local ecological knowledge and culture. In the collaborative spirit with which the Aadhi programme was conceived, a Samithi consisting of community members from each taluka, as well as members of the Zilla Budakattu Girijana Abhivrudhi Sangha, and Samira and Badri representing Punarchith, was formed to moderate the videos for the YouTube channel. Only videos that are approved by the committee are published on the channel. From 57 members in July 2022, the channel now has 407 subscribers as of October 2023. The youth have started engaging with the 'taragu benki' (traditional cool fire regime) demonstration and comparison plots at Angarike Maala, and there is scope for considerable knowledge exchange across generations through these visits to the land. On 21st June, Enosh Olivera conducted a session on videography for the Aadhi youth. On 2nd August 2022, Vasavi conducted an interactive session on the importance of 'Communication' and Badri initiated a discussion on 'Adivasi identity', especially in the context of Droupadi Murmu being elected as President of India.

A Soliga alphabet chart was published in March 2023. Since the language has no script, and has a slightly different set of consonants and vowels, the team collaborated with Dr Aung Si (a linguist and advisor to the programme) to create an alphabet using the Kannada script, but accurately represents their language. The chart, beautifully designed by Priyam, is accompanied by a guidebook with suggestions for games and activities that can be conducted using the chart. The youth plan to conduct these activities with school children in different podus on Sundays.

In March 2023, the Aadhi youth along with Sundramma and Samira visited Gudalur, as the first step in establishing an Adivasi youth exchange programme across different communities from neighbouring landscapes. They met children and youth from the Betta Kurumba, Paniya and Kaatunayakan communities at Vidyodaya school, and from the Ashwini hospital and The Real Elephant Collective (TREC), a company that creates livelihoods for Adivasi youth, through a focus on mitigating the spread of invasive species like Lantana camara. It was a wonderful two days of deep reflections, sharing, song and dance and good food.

We are pleased to note that on January 21st, 2023, Deccan Herald recognised Samira Agnihotri as one of the 23 'Change Makers' for the year 2023, at a large programme held at the Bangalore International Centre. The recognition was for her work on ornithology at B.R.Hills and among the Soliga. A video of her work was also made and is available on the Deccan Herald YouTube channel.



Climate change activities

Climate change:

Action plan and outreach

The Covid-19 induced hiatus meant that outreach work on climate change issues had taken a back seat. A key reason was also the lack of engagement on the part of the district administrators and also the local panchayat Nagavalli. We continued to document local trends in land-use and significant landscape and ecological changes. Secondary data was also collected. As a form of out-reach, we commissioned Betry Olivera to write a street play on climate change issues. The team with a set of actors from the district practiced the play and then we organised to have it performed in Nagavalli and nine other villages in the district. While the performance elicited interest and some discussion, most people did not come forth to engage in any pro-active activity. The play was also performed in Mysuru at the request of a group that was working on climate change issues. C.F. John, an artist from Bengaluru, visited us and encouraged us to engage with the Nagavalli community to restore the local lake. Taking this up as a challenge, we met with the panchayat members several times but were not able to make much headway. We decided to engage a consultant to help us think and plan this work. P.K.Sajan, a communications specialist, has been advising and supporting us in this work.

Spending time from December 2022 to March 2023, Sindhuja Sarasram, a masters' student of Architecture, conducted field research in the Nagavalli area to develop a thesis on "Climate-Change adaptation for at-risk dryland rural landscapes through landscape management strategies: A Case of Nagavalli Village Environs, Chamarajanagar, Karnataka' for her Masters in Landscape, under the guidance of Saurabh Popli, School of Planning and Architecture, Bhopal. In this thesis, which has been judged as the second best thesis for the 2023 batch, she reviews climate-change adaptation at

the marginal farm level and highlights good farming practices and strategies for 'Landscape Health'. Details from this study include the impact of human activities and its intertwining with climate change to degrade agricultural and rural landscapes. Information from this study will be drawn on to develop out-reach and awareness activities for the residents of Nagavalli and for training local youth as 'climate change catalysts'.

On hearing that Rahul Gandhi, on his Bharat Jodo Yatra, was passing through the vicinity, Badri, Muthu and Vasavi went to the Badanvalu Khadi Centre on October 2nd and presented a copy of Punarchith's 'Decentralised Climate Change Action Plan' to him. Rahul Gandhi gave the team a good hearing and also received a copy of the Action Plan.



Aniketana:

Children's program

The children's programme continued with activities on Saturdays and special inputs and mentoring for older children were provided by Vinay during the evenings of the weekdays. Vinay has also initiated a small eco-group and they undertake bird watching and eco-walks during the weekends and holidays. This year, we also took some of the older children on a walk around the village and introduced them to breaking caste-based residential barriers and to understanding the social ecology of the area. Apart from their regular activities of games, singing, and craft activities, the children visited the Mysuru zoo as a special trip, and the science centre at Deenabhandu school. Twelve children from Tumkur came for a summer trip and spent two days with us. They put up a play on climate change and also formed a circle of friendship with some of the older children in Nagavalli.

This year, the summer camp for children was led by Suma, Sucheetra, and Sugirta. About 60 plus children participated in the two-day camp and enjoyed a range of activities. Drawing from the endowment funds, we were able to support the education and medical needs of six students and eighteen elders of Nagavalli village.

We are particularly pleased with the work with children that two of our ILP alumni are engaged in at Gubbi, Tumkuru. Based on inputs and advice from Chitra and Prashanth, Geeta and Yatheesh have formed a strong and active group of children who undertake various ecological and awareness activities in their villages in Tumkur. These include organising eco-activities in a few schools, care taking tree saplings, developing vegetable gardens, highlighting resource depletion in their areas, engaging with the local panchayat etc.



Group discussion on democracy

Democracy:

Workshops and outreach activities

Based on discussions among PUNARCHITH members and with other friends we decided that modules on democracy need to be developed and shared widely. Focusing on themes such as history of the idea of democracy, key events and persons, to issues such as understanding the Constitution, decentralised democracy, challenges of accountability and democracy at the level of families and institutions and in the domains of environmental issues, the workshops had a blend of discussions and activities. Several resource persons engaged in these sessions. The first module of 3 days was held between February 11-13th at Nagavalli and the second module was held at Ashirvad in Bengaluru. The second module was also a concluding module and the Chief Guests were Neelima and Dileep Kamat of Belgaum, who not only took a session but also distributed certificates to the participants.

Linked to the Assembly elections in Karnataka, PUNARCHITH team members lent support to various awareness, mobilisation, and material development endeavours. Team members participated in the democracy and rights awareness discussions held at Bengaluru and in Chamarajanagar district.



Beeja Baluvalli



Seeds collected

Home garden and seed bank

The excess rainfall this year did not make for a good garden. Since most of the seeds that we sow are for dry crops (eg, beans), the production was very low. The team continued to work under the guidance of Sunita Rao and Santhosh of Vanastree. A seed drive was conducted around several villages in the Harve area and organic seeds for both grains and seeds were collected. On September 16th, a 'Seed Sharing' Mela or 'Beeja Baluvali' was held at our resource centre and a small cooking competition for ragi and greens was conducted. Several tasty dishes were made and three women emerged as winners. Work on conserving the seeds as part of the seed bank continues. We were happy to host Ms. Achal of Titli Conservation, Uttarakhand, during one of these programmes.



Lakshmi Sarasram engages with Honneru



Honneru



Honneru sales

Honneru:

Producers' collective

The production and sales of value-added produce was not significant primarily due to a lack of marketing and from a market saturated with 'natural produce' which are also available online. However sales for a few regular outlets such as Prakrti in Mysuru, Hasiru Organics (Chikmagalur), and Bio-Basics, Coimbatore continued to source our produce. Between November 11 and 13th, 2022, the team put up a stall at Mysuru during the Kisan Sammelan. On January 7th, 2023, we held a one-day 'Local Crops, Local Food' mela at the Rotary Club in Chamarajanagara and also joined the exhibition and meet during the annual Farmers Day meet organised at the district. Much more needs to be done to market the produce.

Brinda and Mamta, two enthusiastic clothiers and designers, came regularly to Nagavalli for six months and undertook training of the Honneru women in Nagavalli. They taught them embroidery and tailoring and they also made several 'recycled' and 'upcycled' cloth items. These have been sold and the women have earned some extra income. M. Lakshmi, of Bengaluru, a keen gardener and seed saver, visited us for two days and shared her immense knowledge and skills of identifying, processing, and preserving varied vegetable seeds.



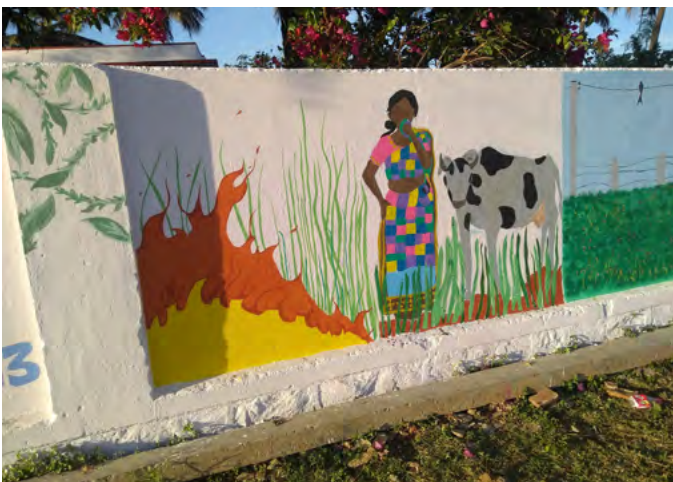
CFL children at Angarika Maala



Shrishti students



Visitors



Wall mural by Shrishti students

Special programs and visitors

This year, we were pleased to conceptualise and organise a range of special programmes and activities for urban education institutions.

School children from Doddrayapete Government school and from Deenabhandu school visited Angarike Maala and spent a day there and were exposed to a range of issues related to agriculture and ecology. On December 24th, 2022, we had a small group of 11-13 year old children and their teachers from the Centre for Learning, Bengaluru, visit us for a day. The focus was on understanding local ecologies and the importance of soil. In December, we hosted a group of 62 students from the Wodeyar School of Architecture, Mysuru, for a day. They were given an overview of Punarchith's activities and then with a walk around Nagavalli they were oriented to understanding issues of altering habitation patterns and architecture of a village. The students also went to Angarike Maala and were introduced to ideas of land, water and seed restoration. Nikhil Udupa of InDesign Bengaluru, and our consultant architect, engaged the students on issues of alternative architecture at Angarike Maala. In January, based on a request from Roshan Sahi, of Shrishti School of Design, Bengaluru, we hosted 20 students and two faculty for a two day programme on understanding rural and agrarian ecologies. The students not only engaged with these issues but also participated with us on Sankranti day. As a parting gift, they painted murals of various rural scenes on our compound wall at Nagavalli. One of our special guests this year was C.F. John, a well-known sculptor, installation artist and poet/writer. He reviewed our approach to community issues and encouraged us to draw on a more cultural and personalised approach to getting people to engage with their land and ecology.

We were particularly happy to host Mrs. Rita Ratnam (who sponsored a special meal for the village elders in memory of her late husband, Cmdr.R.S.K Ratnam), Ms. Uma Iyengar, editor, The Book Review, and Sehjo Singh, Saurabh Popli, M. Lakshmi, Izumi, Mr. Gopalakrishna of RBI (Mysuru), Maya and Raghu Char, Jude Pais, Ashish Patel and family and several others over this year.



Publications



Team leadership activities

Lectures and publications

Team members participated in a range of lectures and discussions at various fora and at online discussions and lectures. Two key publications were completed this year: the first is a simplified version of the 'State of Rural and Agrarian India' in Kannada, which continues to be sold widely. The second is a compilation of some of the key progressive songs that are sung in PUNARCHITH and is called 'JanaSwara' or 'People's Chorus'. Two songs composed by Punarchith team members are also included here.

Samira Agnihotri contributed to an essay on sickle-cell anaemia in Connect (<https://connect.iisc.ac.in/2022/12/an-uphill-battle/>)

Team development and leadership transition

As part of the process of transitioning into collective leadership, the team underwent a three-days leadership training at the Honnemardu Sports Camp, led by Nomito and Swamy. A follow-up to this training was held at Nagavalli in September and Nomito and Swamy returned to engage with the team. Various activities and discussions were conducted to enhance the leadership and responsibility abilities of the team. Vinay Kumar attended a ten-days programme called 'Gramya Manthan' which was held in Gujarat.



Acknowledgment

Resource Persons: We acknowledge with gratitude the inputs and support lent over the year by the following persons: Santhosh Naik of Vanastree, Priyam Vadaliya, Dr. Lata Muthanna, U. Ravi Kumar, Brinda Nair, Mamata, Abhisheka Krishnagopal, Suchareeta, Sugirta, Vani Periodi, Berty Olivera, Dr. Made Gowda, Nomito Kamdar, SLN Kamdar (alias Swamy), Prof. A. Narayana, Cheluvaraj, Ankila Hiremath, K.P. Suresh, Rajendra Prasad, C.F. John, Shivsundar, Leo Saldanha, R. Poorna, Dileep and Neelima Kamat,

Trustees: Dr. Nagarjuna ,Ms. Sunita Rao, C. Balachandran, A.R.Vasavi

Team members: Dr. P. Veerabhadranaika, H. Suma, H. Muthuraj, H. Chandrakanth, Sundramma, Dr. Samira Agnihotri, Manuja Priya, Vinay K. Kumar, G. Lakshmi, P. Srinivas (alias 'Soil Vasu'), N. Mahendra, Dr. Dwijendranath Guru, Ratheesh Picharody, P. Sajan, Siddharth Joshi.

Audit and Accounts: Ananthavardhana and Associates, Mysuru

Web Design and Maintenance: Cheluvaraj, Mysuru

Computer Support: Tejaswi, Ivy Systems, Mysuru.

Report Design: Priyam Vadaliya



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