

# PUNARCHITH

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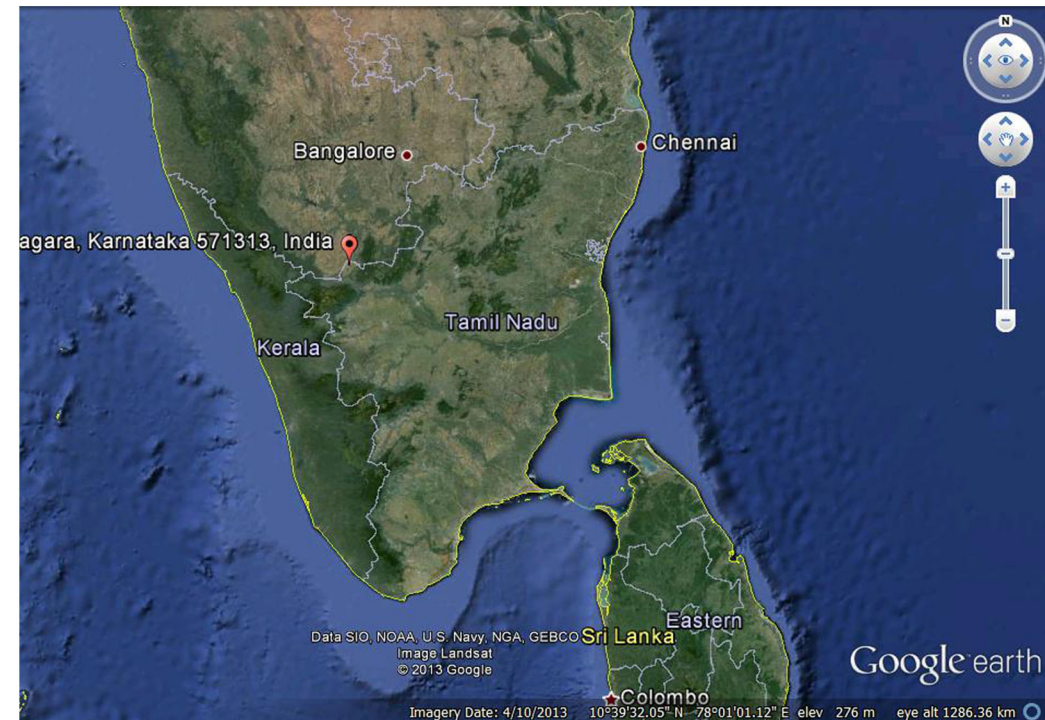
## PUNARCHITH

*...to rethink our privileges,  
received ideas and knowledge...*

*...to seek new pathways  
of learning, sharing and living*

**Punarchith ('Re-Think')** seeks to be a collective that focuses on evolving alternative perspectives and activities related to education, environment, democracy and society. It will seek pathways and perspectives to facilitate ideas and learning for an equitable and just society. Its foundational premise is to evolve from a perspective rooted in the everyday life of rural India. **Punarchith's** main activity or flagship programme will be the development and delivery of an alternative education programme, catering to rural and disadvantaged adolescents. Going beyond mainstream education, the programme will have learning and training activities related to environment and organic agriculture, art and artisanship, construction and architecture, music and performance arts, local leadership and democratic institutional building, development and training in alternative technologies, and integrated studies of sciences and humanities. It will draw on the pedagogies of place-based education, critical and reflexive thinking, social transformative learning, and integrated knowledges. Based on responses and needs, other programmes and activities will gradually be added.

**Punarchith's** immediate area of work and engagement is in the Punanjur panchayat area of Chamarajnar district (a buffer zone of the BR Tiger Sanctuary), Karnataka (about 90 kms from Mysore). A small resource and learning centre-cum-guest house has been set up in Mukhanpalya village and entry level activities have begun.



## OVER THE YEAR...

From one-day contact programmes to three-day events to a five-month certificate course. Evolving, slowly and with great trepidation, we seem to have made some headway into developing a viable and effective alternative learning programme for rural youth. Most heartening for us was what one elderly grandmother from the Banwadi hamlet said to us, “you are teaching our children about everyday life and how to deal with our problems”. This, we think, is the cornerstone of our endeavour and the fact that a member of the village recognized this, was heartening.

The past year saw us realize some of our goals and objectives. The home garden programme seems to have gained currency and there is now demand from women from a number of hamlets to be included in the activities. The impact of sustained support to one Soliga boy to cultivate his land bore fruition when his first venture into cultivation was bountiful and he decided to stay on in the village and to reclaim the land that his parents had mortgaged. The certificate course was evaluated very positively by the participants and their parents and they highlighted the significance of the learning in their lives.

***These were small steps but significant processes. We learnt and re-thought our work and approaches. We have a much longer, and perhaps harder, route to follow. And, much, much more effort, thoughts, ideas and support are needed.***

Amidst all this was the consolidation of the core team. We discussed issues, reviewed ideas, argued, re-thought plans and grew closer. We worked on our communication abilities and recommitted ourselves to being a democratic collective to sustaining relationships that are built on respect, understanding, and mutual support.

# ACTIVITIES

## LAND RECLAMATION

Over the year, we supported a young man, Devaraj (who had earlier worked for three years in a bakery in Tamil Nadu) to reclaim his family land of 1.5 hectares, that was lying uncultivated, and to grow local grains of ragi, beans and some pulses. With a good monsoon and the support of his grandmother he was able to harvest the following produce from his mixed cultivation plot:

Ragi (finger millet)	9 quintals
Beans	5 kgs
Cow peas	5 kgs
Paddy	2 kg
Horse Gram	10 kgs

Total cost of cultivation, production, harvesting and storage; Rs. 7460. Total value of produce: Approximately Rs. 23,000.

More importantly, the experience has made Devaraj confident about taking to agriculture and his interest in organic cultivation has grown. He now plans to reclaim another acre (that was was mortgaged) and to cultivate it during the coming year. Casting aside his plans of migrating out for a job, he now sees himself as a future farmer who can probably enable other members of his community to also reclaim and rework their lands. He also plans to retake his tenth standard examinations.



*Devaraj's land before and during cultivation*



## HOME GARDEN PROGRAMME

Started at Dodd Moodahalli, the home garden programme was sustained only for the cultivation season from August to January. Based on the previous year's review of field conditions and interest, vegetable seeds were distributed among interested women. A variety of beans, brinjals, ladies fingers and greens were successful. Shortage of water and the lack of rains meant that much of the gardening was stalled after January. We noted that the women had collected and dried some of the seeds and were even exchanging them among themselves. There was also a request for market-oriented production but we were unable to extend support towards this. Plans are to continue this programme this year and to extend it to other hamlets also. An attempt to introduce a variety of tubers and yams will also be undertaken this coming season.

The Home Garden plot at the PUNARCHITH centre also yielded a bounty of beans, greens and pulses although the carrots, tomatoes and much of the lentils became food for hungry monkeys. A bumper crop of custard apples was harvested from the trees that were revived with sustained watering and manuring. Our own backyard tamarind tree yielded plenty of tamarind, which we shared with a large number of people.



## CERTIFICATE COURSE

After much planning, outreach and review, a five-month certificate course called 'INTEGRATED LEARNING' or 'SAMAGRAHA KALIKE' was initiated in November 2012 and closed in March 2013.

The course was developed for youth (ages 18 and above) from the Punanjur panchayat area and focused on enabling them to receive exposure to a general orientation on alternative learning and knowledge. Since the youth are those who have either failed in the SSLC or PUC exams and have been living in the villages, this course emphasised the importance of recognizing local worth, enabling them to live in rural areas, and supporting them to overcome the stigma of failure and the sense of futility of living in the villages.

A total of eight learners took the course (4 girls and 4 boys; from the Soliga, Badaga and Kuruba communities; average age was 20 years, five had completed their SSLC and three had attended upto PUC I).

### PROCESSES

Selected youth were offered Rs. 2000 per month as stipend (to supplement their wages and as opportunity cost) and the course was held over a total of 46 days. A two-day visit to the Gurukul Botanical Sanctuary at Wynad, Kerala was organized as part of the conservation and ecology sessions. Other visits included a trip and discussion at the local co-operative bank, and a day-long visit to Chamarajnagar town to see and get



familiar with the range of government departments and programmes. Apart from a few local resource persons, several resource persons from Chamarajnagar town, Mandya, Mysore, and Bangalore came to engage with the students.

#### FOUR KEY CONTENT THEMES OF THE CERTIFICATE COURSE

##### I: Personal Growth:

Exercises and Observations: Drama and Songs; Literature and Creative Writing; Individual Presentation; Group work; Work responsibilities.

##### II. Key Issues:

Social (Society, Gender, Hierarchy, Popular Culture; Consumerism, Relationships); Political Awareness (Democracy; Decentralized Administration); Economy (Agriculture, Industry, Globalisation); Environment (Local, Global, Challenges; Climate Change), water (resources, conservation, re-use).

##### III. Livelihood Skills:

Bee-Keeping; Home Garden; Paper craft.

##### IV. General Skills:

Kannada Comprehension and Writing; English, Computers, Accounts; Letter/Petition/Complaints/Follow-up Procedures.

**Assessment:** A portfolio of written work by learners was maintained and constant, detailed feedback was given to them. A monthly formal feedback note was given to each of them with clear indications of their progress and areas which required further attention.





**Feedback from Students.** We requested anonymous written reviews of the course on the last day of the learning sessions.

**Excerpts from their submissions based on their reviews:**

“At first I used to feel a kind of fear and I was shy about coming to Punarchith. But now I am afraid to leave Punarchith and go away”.

“I was always shy by nature and did not speak much. Now, at Punarchith, I have learnt to speak and to also talk to many people”

“I have made friends with both boys and girls”

“I have learnt so many issues at Punarchith....and all these make me happy”.

“I learnt about society and how we should not discriminate between people and consider some people as high and some as low...I also learnt how to talk and negotiate issues with our elders in our family”

“I met many people from different places...I had not seen many people from other places”

“The bee-keeping course will enable me to earn some extra money and contribute to my family’s finances”

“I am now slowly getting to know about organic agriculture...I will also start working towards converting my land into organic cultivation.”



### Concluding Session of the Course:

As with the inaugural, the concluding session of the course was held in Mukhanpalya village itself with the parents of the learners and some elderly members of the local community inaugurating the session. The learners put up a dance drama called 'Bhumi, Jhala' (Land, Spring) which highlighted the production and ecological challenges that most cultivators faced. They also spoke about what they had learnt during the five-month course and the elders then responded with their impressions of the course.

### ENGLISH COURSE

The Course in Basic English that was begun in Dec 2011 was continued until end December 2012. Nandini Prakash from the Indian Institute of Montessori Studies, Bangalore, was the resource person and she drew on a combination of Montessori methods for adult learning and that of using the mother tongue for comparative understanding to develop the course. All 16 members who participated in the course were able to grasp the structure of English as a language. Several practice sessions were devoted to conversational English. We hope that the learners continue to practice on their own so as to gain proficiency.



# RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

Research on issues pertaining to changes in the Punanjur panchayat belt especially that related to land use, migration, impact of commercial agriculture, and the functioning of the panchayat system continues. Our observations on youth, the impact of larger political and economic changes and that of popular culture also continues. A composite Situational Analyses that focuses on the growing agricultural dualism (abandonment of agriculture and entry of corporate and commercial agriculture) and the impact of governmental welfarism on the residents is underway and should be completed by the end of 2013. Drawing on our experiences in evolving the learning programme for rural youth, an essay entitled, 'Reflectional and Relational, Empathetic and Engaged: Notes towards Social Transformational Learning" was presented in New Delhi at the Knowledge in Civil Society forum and has resulted in a publication.

P. Veerbhadranaika published two essays; one on "The state of Mysore University" in Andolana, and the other on 'Globalisation, Privatisation and Casteism in Higher Education', in Vijaya Karnataka. He also completed six modules of training on 'community learning' under the aegis of the Institute of Human Development, Bangalore. The subjects that were

covered included Human Rights, Climate Change; Globalisation, and Development. He continues to work on finalizing his manuscript on education among the Adivasis for publication.

Sunita Rao published an essay on the cobra, 'Long Live the King' in the Deccan Herald. She also gave a talk at Kuvempu University, attended by about 150 students, on Women, Seed sovereignty and Food systems. At the annual Terres de Hommes network meeting at Hunsur, Mysore, she spoke on 'Seed Saving Initiatives'. Between September and November 2012, she participated at the iLEAP Fellowship programme in Seattle on 'Leadership for Social Change'. In August 2012 she co organised the annual Conservation Education Network retreat at Timbaktu Collective and a meeting at IISc Bangalore. As part of her work at Vanastree, Sirsi, she organised and carried out six experiential learning camps for children from 6 years to 18 years.

A.R. Vasavi published essays on agriculture and the state of agriculturists in two journals and also delivered lectures in Delhi: at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library and at Jawaharlal Nehru University's School of Social Systems annual lectures for the Global Studies Programme. She also delivered a lecture in memory of the sociologist Anjan Ghosh at the Centre for the Study of Social Sciences, Kolkata. Drawing on the insights from the situational analyses in the Punanjur belt, she presented an overview of the growing agricultural and rural dualism to the Agrarian and Rural Studies Network at Chidambaram in Tamil Nadu.

## SOME VIGNETTES FROM THE ON-GOING SITUATIONAL ANALYSES OF THE PUNANJUR BELT

- Between abandoning agricultural land due to economic unviability or succumbing to the pressures of lease-based commercial and contract agriculture, land has become a commodity that is expected to generate quick and high profits. More land in the area is now under cultivation of ginger, turmeric, and vegetables for the market than for local consumption needs. Linked to the changes in land use are the changes in local food cultures and a subsequent shift from a predominantly millet based diet to that of dependence on rice.
- Women continue to be subject to multiple forms of inequities and pressures; from denial of equal education to that of denial of health provisioning.
- The 'love' bug seems to intensify...we hear more stories of adolescents leaving home to be with partners from different castes. Intense negotiations between families render them apart and many are forced into marriages where the parents choose the spouses.
- Politicisation and corruption in the local panchayat system continue with the recent election of the new president seeing an inflow of large amounts of money. Payments for votes included not just money to the elected representatives but also free trips to the city, motorbikes, and jewellery. Most people, even the youth, remain distant and disengaged from the regular functioning of the panchayat and access it only for receiving key benefits or processing civic credentials such as

the ration card, voter id etc.

What have years of displacement and marginalization done to the most disadvantaged groups? Disregarding their own local knowledge of forestry, agriculture, health, and construction, they are increasingly dependent on governmental welfare for even their basic needs. Attendant with this is the loss of identity and a sense of belonging to the local place.

# MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT

New readings on themes related to the courses and those that may be of use for the core group were identified. Modules consisting of readings and pedagogies for themes related to understanding society; literature; communication skills; youth and the preparation for the future; rural and urban differences; gender issues, rights etc have been developed.

A package of readings (in Kannada) developed for the Certificate Course has been compiled and can be the source materials for future workshops. Sunita Rao continues to work on and develop the comprehensive module on Home Gardening. The components include not only 'food gardening' but also alternatives to pesticides.

In addition to purchasing books for the resource centre, since several young children (between the ages of 7 to 11 years) were visiting the centre, we purchased more books related to their interests and age groups.

# LEARNINGS AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

While we were heartened by the positive response to the Certificate Course, there is much that we need to fine-tune before a prototype of the full-fledged course or programme can be launched. For one, our work with the most marginalised communities and households have indicated to us the possibility and problems of them engaging with such a course. While many do not consider a rural-oriented course to be suitable to their children, those who are keen on such a course are not often able to sustain themselves in the rural areas. Lack of access to land and the trends of abandoning marginal plots work against their interests and training of youth. In addition, the pressure on girls to be in non-manual and non-agricultural work also forces them to seek non-local jobs. How, then can we attract and sustain the interests and abilities of youth ?

- Since we have an interest in promoting and developing alternative and community based sustainable agriculture, we need to identify a full-time person to work with us on these modules and to also provide local guidance and inputs.
- We think that there is a need for a local meeting to discuss and debate the trends in lease-based commercial agriculture

and its ecological, economic and social implications. Yet, given its popularity and the support it has in the larger community, will addressing this be seen as a way of disrupting or critiquing the village residents?

- The emphasis on market-oriented production is also seen as one way to garner alternative incomes and livelihoods. Yet, many of these are unstable and access to the market is fraught with risks. If we must combine learning for local livelihoods, with that of social orientation and citizenship rights, how do we address the key problem of lack of resources itself?
- We need to identify a place that will be suitable for hosting and providing long-term support for such a program. Our discussions with various people, including administrators at the district level, indicate that it is advisable for us to move out of the BRT buffer zone (where we are currently based) and relocate to a place closer to Chamarajanagar town. In addition, access to and links with a larger village (mixed in caste, class and religious composition) was also advised. We have been on the look out for suitable land and place but the high market prices and the unreliable legal status of much of the land makes us wary.
- Accessing funds for further programmes remains a key challenge. Some established funding agencies are no longer working in South India and we are not able to access international funds as we do not have FCRA. Much more work has to be undertaken on this front.

- Although the local high school had been enthusiastic about our inputs for their students over the previous summer, a change of guard in the school meant an absence of interest in engaging with us. Our inability to access the students in the school also meant an absence of high school students from accessing the library and the resource centre.

# AUDIT STATEMENT

## FINANCIAL STATEMENT

(Amount in Rs.)

SOURCE & APPLICATION OF FUNDS	1ST YEAR 2010-2011	2ND YEAR 2011-2012	3RD YEAR 2012-2013
<b>Contributions + Interest on F. D.</b>	<b>301,000</b>	<b>665,885</b>	<b>1,171,968</b>
Less: Charitable Expenses:			
Education Promotion	52750	8,212	94,419
Programs	NIL	6,268	83,665
Honorarium to Resource Persons+Consul.	NIL	20,868	70,250
Material Dev. & Translations	NIL	6,515	NIL
Resource Centre+Misc+Renovation	5485	74,312	12,925
Meetings & Workshops	16920	6,325	NIL
Travelling & Conveyance	1285	82,074	53,240
Printing, Stationery, Courier and Postage	1,305	8,063	11,567
Salaries	10000	284,000	194,500
Communication	150	2,485	1,820
Bank charges	1163	613	713
Registration charges & Audit fee	NIL	8,890	8,000
Office Rent	NIL	21,600	21,600
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>89,058</b>	<b>530,225</b>	<b>552,699</b>
	<b>211,942</b>	<b>135,660</b>	<b>619,269</b>
<b>APPLICATIONS OF FUNDS TOWARDS:</b>			
Fixed Assets(Library+Automation+Furn.)	NIL	36,433	31529
Rental Advance	18,000	18,000	
Cash at Bank	183,631	81,211	575,060
Cash on hand	10,311	16	12,680
	<b>211,942</b>	<b>135,660</b>	<b>619269</b>





## RESOURCE PERSONS

We acknowledge with gratitude the support provided by the following persons who acted as resource personnel for various topics and modules:

Basamma (Panchayat) and Chennanjamma (Land and medical knowledge)

K. Venkataraju, Chamaraj Nagar (Health and Nutrition)

Robert Leo, Murugan and others from Keystone Foundation, Coonoor (Bee Keeping training as part of the Certificate Course).

Suprabha Seshan, Gurukul Botanical Sanctuary, Wynad (Conservation and Forestry).

U. Ravi Kumar, Mysore (Water and Eco Sanitation)

Santhosh Koulagi, Janapada Trust, Mandya (Peace and Conflict Resolution)

D. H. Tanuja, Mysore (Home Gardening)

Kokila Deshpande, Bangalore (Paper Craft)

Nandini Prakash, IIMS, Bangalore (English)

Mahesh, Deenabhandu Resource Centre (Computers)

R. Rajappa, Chamarajanagar (Songs and Drama)

Mallikarjunappa, Punanjur (Banking and Savings)

## SUPPORTERS

We also acknowledge with gratitude the financial contributions made by the following persons for the year 2012-13:

D.D.Nampoothiri

Kedarnath Sangam

Mina and Hari Mahadevan

Harish Narasappa

Sarah Joseph

Kala Sunder

R. Sunder

Vishalakshi Padmanabhan

Deepak M. Narasimhan

Anita Ramesh

Almitra Patel

## TRUSTEES

We thank Ms. Vishalakshi Padmanabhan for her support to PUNARCHITH as a Trustee over the past three years. Based on her decision to resign from the Trusteeship of PUNARCHITH after three years, we have nominated two new members to the Trust. Shri. K. Venkataraju (Chamarajanagar) and Ms. Kala Sunder (Bangalore) have consented to act as Trustees. Harish Narasappa (Bangalore) and A.R.Vasavi continue to be Trustees.

## CORE TEAM

Sunita Rao, P. Veerbhadranaika, R. Rajappa, Sheela Venkatesh, A.R.Vasavi

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PUNARCHITH is a registered Charitable Trust (Reg number YPR-4-00087-2009-10, dated 15/2/2010) with 12 A (P-97/12AA/CIT/MYS/2012-13 dated 7/6/2012) and 80G certification (P-97/80G/CIT/MYS/2012-13 dated 07-06-12).