

ANNUAL REPORT

Nearly eight years since we initiated PUNARCHITH and the lessons we learn from the region, the people and from macro political and economic trends continue. What are the pedagogies to cater to youth's interests? How must sustainable agriculture be promoted? What will it take to make a village's panchayat function? How can we address the rights of girls without upsetting family norms? These are only some of the dilemmas and challenges that we continue to face. Amidst all this, we continue to plod on knowing that changes that we seek in terms of facilitating social justice, economic equity and ecological sustainability in the region are a long way away. Current trends of increasing marketisation, capitalisation and the spread of welfare governmentality combine to pose challenges to ideas and practices of localised democracy, social harmony and ecological stability.

Added to these are the forms of 'cruel optimism' that mass media fosters in the youth and which disorients them to the realities of their own lives. Persisting amidst these challenges, our strength lies in the solid and warm circle of resource persons and team members who see this endeavour not as a job or a passing project but as a vocation. Forming a collective that works with the broad goals of PUNARCHITH—rethinking our received ideas, privileges and knowledge –encourages us to seek solutions to the pressing problems around us. We are immensely grateful to the few institutions and many persons who have come to our financial rescue and have made the continuity of the programmes possible. The journey will continue as will the many lessons that we will learn and the challenges that we will have to face.

INTEGRATED LEARNING PROGRAMME



The sixth batch (July to Dec 2018) consisting of 17 youth was the best we have had so far. The learners were attentive, enthusiastic and engaged. Having raised the age bar and permitting youth from other districts to apply and join the course brought us fresh and enthusiastic persons. We had two participants from Tumkur district, one from Mandya, and two from Mysore district attend the course. A key participant was Jayamma, age about 35 years, who despite being physically challenged was the most enthusiastic of the group.

INTEGRATED LEARNING PROGRAMME

Many of the youth learners are now active motivators or 'preraks' in their villages and continue to engage with us. Paucity of funds meant that we offered only a truncated course. But, periodic engagement with the youth and their involvement in either the Honneru network or in Graama Sethu means that many remain in contact with us. Plans are to work towards making the ILP a residential course so that the learning transactions are more intense and prolonged and the absorption of the issues/ideas is better.





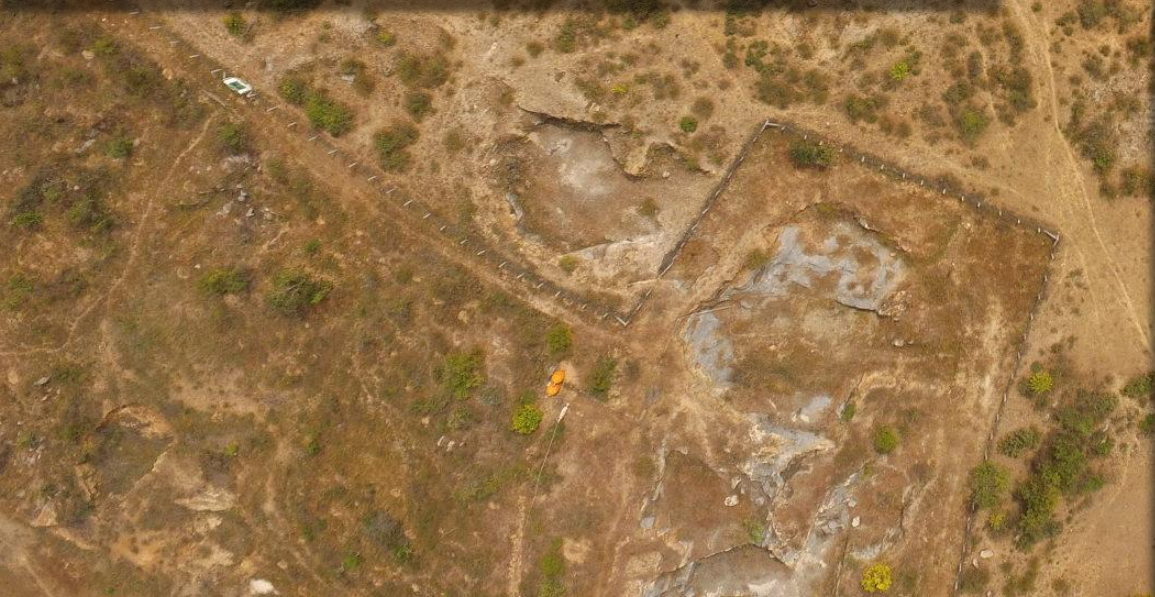
ANGARIKE MAALA

The year saw Angarike Maala face two sharply differing conditions. April to August was a period of relatively good rains and the land seemed to be well on its way to rejuvenating itself.

Abhisheka, who had conducted the preliminary flora and fauna survey in 2014, returned with Arun (a botanist) and they re-surveyed the land in April 2018. We were very pleased with the findings which indicated that the land was rejuvenating well: several varieties of wild grasses had taken root; the floral species had increased from 40 varieties in 2014 to currently 116 species; the variety of birds have increased from 21 to 57, and the forest patch has some rare varieties of flowers such as the Gowri Huvvu or Glory Lily. We also had samples from the black patch tested for heavy metals and the reports indicated that cadmium levels were at a minimum and therefore the area was not toxic. Our challenge is now to continue to rejuvenate the land but to also ensure that it will become economically viable in the near future.

ANGARIKE MAALA

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW



ANGARIKE MAALA

September 2018 to March 2019 saw the land subject to the vagaries of the weather that resulted in a sharp manifestation of climate change in the region. Erratic and inadequate rains meant that the production processes were disrupted and the ponds did not fill up with the returning monsoon. Ragi production at the hingaru/winter season was limited but the quality was very good. The tree saplings were doing well until Dec 2018 but given that the rains failed, the land went dry in January and the saplings started to dry. By mid March several of the tree saplings including several coconut trees had died. Mahesh, one of our neighbours came to our rescue and offered to give us water on alternative days just so that we could water the tree saplings. In December 2018, R. Sunder came by and took drone photographs of Angarike Maala and its vicinity. The photographs highlight how dry the land has become with the persisting drought.

Recent research indicates that we need to revise our classification and understanding of the local forests. Typically, the forests in the region (BR Hills, Bandipur etc) are classified as 'dry, deciduous forests'. However, (after the fire at Bandipur) some researchers have called for noting the specificities of these which indicate that they are closer to being 'savannas' or open grasslands. This may be more appropriate as we see how the variety of grasses has grown in Angarike Maala and the land seems to be able to support only this type of vegetation (with ease). So, considering all this, we need to see how best to restore Angarike Maala and to make it a viable and relevant conservation and demonstration site.

Getting the tube-well recharged has been a major challenge and finally we were able to persuade some persons from BIOME, a water conservation agency in Bengaluru, to come over and review the conditions. Based on their guidance, we reviewed the water situation and found that the level of the water has improved significantly (from a depth of 220 ft in 2015 to 160 feet in 2017 to now in 2018 about 117 feet (about 37 meters). Now the challenge is to assess the water capacity and to use it only for the tree saplings and for drinking purposes.

FARMERS' MEET



In December, we had a meeting at Angarika Maala with some farmers. The discussion was interesting and many of them consented that it was important to first restore the soil and conserve water instead of despoiling both by seeking only high productivity. The group also decided to meet once a month and to share ideas and experiences among themselves.

A photograph of a traditional thatched-roof structure, possibly a vegetable shed or a small kitchen, situated in a lush green garden. The structure is built with wooden poles and has a thick layer of dried palm fronds or similar natural material on its roof. A bicycle is parked inside the structure. The garden is well-maintained with green grass and various plants. In the background, there are trees and a white wall. The text 'HOME GARDEN' is overlaid in large white letters on the right side of the image.

HOME GARDEN

The garden looked resplendent in August after the heavy rains. But, the cessation of the returning monsoons soon saw a dip in production and the quality of the produce was mixed. Some vegetables grew well but not others. The soil samples were sent for testing and they indicated ph imbalance and fertility decline. Need to address this and also overall improve the content and layout of the garden. Raj P.K made short films about home gardening with Badri and Muthu elaborating on the importance of home gardening for nutrition and food security.

SEED SHARING - '*Beeja Baluvali*'

Instead of the open day for the home garden, this year we decided to have a seed sharing program. Smt Padmamma from Kanagal village in Periyapatna was the main speaker and she highlighted how important it was to save seeds. Several farmers from Chamarajanagar district came with their seeds and vegetables and exchanged or sold these. Santhosh represented VANASTREE and set up a stall which did brisk sales and exchanges.



SEED BANK



Due to the drought and the low production we saw a dip in the quantity and variety of seeds. Plans are to organise the women in Nagavalli and the surrounding villages to engage in home gardening and to share seeds among themselves. A few farmers have come in requesting for millet seeds and we have distributed these to them. Mahendra, one of the former ILP students who now works with PUNARCHITH, is in charge of the seed bank.



HONNERU, the Rural Youth Collective now consists of about 20 members. The group continues to make handmade soaps, cloth bags, and value-added edibles items like chutney powders and masala. The sales of the produce have picked up momentum and there are now four outlets in Bengaluru and Mysuru which stock their produce. Two members of the team received training in making low-cost solar dryers. They have now made a few of these and some of them have been sold. However, the quality of the materials and the finish needs to be improved. The youth group is yet to fully comprehend ideas about collective work and co-operatives as they are familiar only with individual or corporate organisations. We plan to initiate some training for them in this area.

An off-shoot of ILP and Honneru was begun in December 2018 and the focus was to get the youth to be engaged and active in their villages on issues that are pertinent to the village. Although eleven of the former ILP learners have committed to this, work has begun in only six of the villages. Participants who act as catalysts for their villages are called 'preraks' and they receive a small stipend for this work. The five focus areas that they will work on are: panchayat functioning and responsibilities; awareness about government programs and rights; waste management and water conservation; social awareness discussions, home gardening and sustainable agriculture. Formats for tracking the process of the work and detailed documentation of trends and impact have been initiated.



GRAAMA SETHU

WORKSHOP ON DEMOCRACY



As a way to prepare the local youth for the forthcoming general elections, we conducted a workshop on democracy with a focus on the constitution and the role of citizens. It was attended by 43 youth including some of the learners from the ILP batches. It was an interesting exercise that highlighted for us the limited understanding that youth have about democratic processes. Issues such as 'military rule', 'totalitarianism' etc were terms that were alien to them. We decided to conduct these sessions on democracy periodically so as to enable youth to engage with both local and wider democratic processes.

LAND AND LENS



The show at Bengaluru was held at Venkatappa Art Gallery and was curated by Abhisheka, Suresh, and Batt with inputs and support from Zoe Champagne . Ms. Surekha, a well-known artist, reviewed the show and shared her comments with the audience that had gathered for the inaugural.

The show at Mysuru was held at Rangayana and was part of their annual Bahuroopi (or theatre festival). Devanoor Mahadeva, the well-know Kannada litterateur, visited the show and Krishna Prasad, the journalist and political commentator also spoke to a small audience, about the photographs and their significance. The audience, which was mixed, was very appreciative of the efforts and the press covered both the events well. A few photographs were sold at both the exhibits and Batt made a calendar of select photographs and sold these in the U.S. The receipts from these sales were given to the youth and the women. The used and donated cameras are now accessible to the youth who borrow them in rotation. Some of them continue to take photographs and document their lives and experiences.



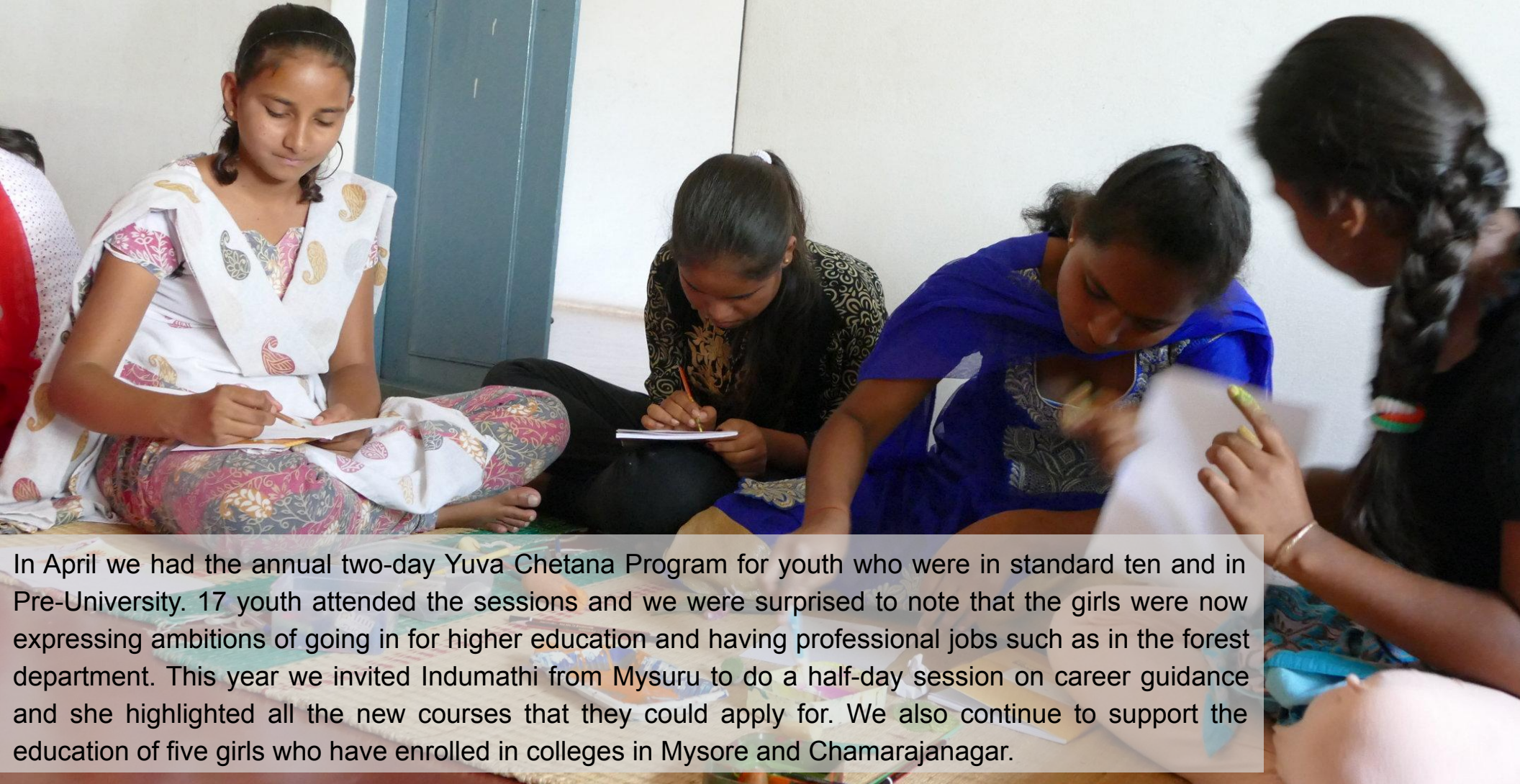


CHILDREN'S PROGRAMME

The program has picked up a lot of momentum and an average of 70 children attend the Saturday program. The summer program in May saw theatre specialists, Veena and Vinay, take sessions and they enabled the children to develop short plays and dances. The children enjoyed these sessions and put up short plays and dance performances. Sharanya, another theatre and dance specialist also spent a day with them and taught them several dance movements.

In June, we also organised a small sapling program for them and the children were encouraged to take these saplings and plant them in their homes. One of the regular participants in the children's program, Gundu, a child of about nine years, fell ill and we found that she had lost her limb movement and was having periodic seizures. After tests in Mysuru, the family was advised to take her to NIMHANS in Bengaluru and after ten days of hospitalisation and observation she was diagnosed with the fatal disease of Subacute Pan Encephalitis. PUNARCHITH now provides the family a monthly amount to enable them to purchase drugs and some food for the child.

YUVA CHETHANA



In April we had the annual two-day Yuva Chetana Program for youth who were in standard ten and in Pre-University. 17 youth attended the sessions and we were surprised to note that the girls were now expressing ambitions of going in for higher education and having professional jobs such as in the forest department. This year we invited Indumathi from Mysuru to do a half-day session on career guidance and she highlighted all the new courses that they could apply for. We also continue to support the education of five girls who have enrolled in colleges in Mysore and Chamarajanagar.

RESEARCH, ADVOCACY & OUTREACH

This year we spent considerable time and energy compiling data related to natural depletion, agricultural changes and climate change in Chamarajanagar dt. Thanks to support from Prof. Vinod Gaur, a well-known geo-physicist, we were able to access data from IISc and the Indo-French Water Cell. Siddharth Joshi put in a lot of effort to recheck the secondary data on rainfall, temperature and ground water, Badri and Muthu spent considerable time doing interviews of people around the Nagavalli area. In addition to observations around Nagavalli, we also visited the Beramwadi catchment area and the dry tracts of Harve in Chamarajanagar dt. We shared the preliminary results or overview with our close circle of farmers and some friends and they all insisted that this was important to work on and share with a wider circle of farmers, government officials and civil society members. Plans are to finalise the data collection and then share it at various fora.

We continue to work in Nagavalli on issues related to water conservation, waste management, and the functioning of the panchayat. However, the panchayat remains dysfunctional (6 Panchayat Development Officers have come and gone in 4 years) and the out-reach bears little results at the systemic level. Some impact is visible at the street and home levels where people have purchased taps for their water sources and are being more cautious about wasting water and some of the drains are being cleaned regularly. We have also started to focus on women and orientation about government schemes. For this outreach work, we have now recruited Ms.Sundramma, who had worked with Mahila Samakya for several years, and she will be working primarily on these issues.

VISITS, MEETINGS & LECTURES

As part of the team training and upskilling, ten members from PUNARCHITH attended a five-days training program on land conservation and sustainable agriculture at SAMBHAV, an organisation in Nayagardh district, Odisha. The team learned several practices and principles related to restoring the land, conserving water and native plant species, designing and developing home gardens etc. They were also very impressed with Sabarmatee, a pioneering conservationist and well-known scholar, who has established SAMBHAV and organises regular trainings on the land.

Suma H participated in a ten-day long training session for women members of the Karen tribe in the Andaman Islands.

P. Veerabhadranaika made a presentation on climate change to youth at the meet organised at Deenabhandu, and participated in a two-day conference on tribal education that was organised by the Azim Premji University.

Members of the team attended meetings and discussion at various fora which included the following: Belavala Foundation, KVK (Mysuru), Azim Premji University, and IIM Bangalore.

A.R.Vasavi delivered the Malcolm Adishesaiah Memorial lecture at Stella Maris (Chennai) and a key note address at the national conference on agricultural policies and issues conducted by the Dept of Economics, Karnatak University (Dharwad), and lectures at JNU, Hyderabad University, and the Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bengaluru.

PUBLICATIONS

After working on his manuscript for several years, P.Veerabhadranaika was able to have his book on the state of education in Ashramshalas and among tribals of Chamarajanagar district published in Kannada. It is called 'Nijaru': Adivasi Jeevana Mathu Shikshanada Sitantaragalu' [Adivasi Life and the state of Education]. The book was released on **February 27th** by **Shri Dileep Kamat**, the well-know community learning movement person. In addition, Shri G.S.Jayadeva and Muthaiah, a Solega activist, also spoke during the discussion session.



FUNDING

We continue to scout for institutional or organisational funds. For this year, we received CSR funds from Bangalore Integrated Systems Support for the community out-reach work. Other personal funds from friends and a contribution from the Malcolm Adishesiah Trust, Chennai supplemented the funds from the corpus. Given the political situation and the problems associated with FCRA, we decided to avoid applying for this. We also decided against enrolling for online crowdfunding through agencies. A generous contribution as an endowment in memory of the economist, Late Dr. Meenakshi Tyagarajan, will enable us to support the emergency support for children and other ancillary activities.

We acknowledge with gratitude the following organisations and persons who have supported Punarchith:

Bangalore Integrated Systems and Solutions, Bengaluru
Vanastree, Sirsi, Karnataka, for contributions to Honneru
Elizabeth and Malcolm Adisheshaiah Trust, Chennai
Kala Sunder and R. Sunder
Lakshman Char
Vatsala Parthasarathy
Thompson Reuters Kannada Balaga, Bengaluru
K.C. Raghu and Pristine Organics, Bengaluru.
Tara and Siddharth Sinha, Ahmedabad

And several others who have made personal contributions.



TRUSTEES

**KALA SUNDER
K. VENKATRAJU
C. BALACHANDRAN
A.R. VASAVI**

Special Thank you to the following persons who provided support for various programs:

Abhisheka K; Veena, Vinay, Kiran, Berty Olivera, Indumathi, Dileep Kamat, Chitra, Zoe Champagne, Suresh, Batt/Matt Anderson, Anil Kumar, Chelubaraj, Raj P.K, R. Maithreyi, Mohan (Aditi Prints), Muthaiah, Gopi.

CORE TEAM MEMBERS

**P. VEERABHADRANAIIKA
MUTHURAJU H.
SUNITA RAO
SUNDRAMMA
SUMA H.
SIDDHARTH JOSHI
P. SRINIVAS (SOIL VASU)
SAMIRA AGNIHOTRI
MAHALAKSHMI M.
MAHENDRA N.
KANTHARAJU
SHAILA
DWIJENDRANATH GURU
RATHEESH PISHARODY**

**ANNUAL REPORT VIII
2018 - 2019**

Address : Nagavalli Village, B.R.Hills Road, Chamarajanagara, Karnataka, 571342

Telephone : 9448360215

<http://punarchith.org/>

<https://fb.com/punarchith>

ANNUAL REPORT VIII 2018 - 2019

ಪುನರ್ಚಿತ್
Punarchith