

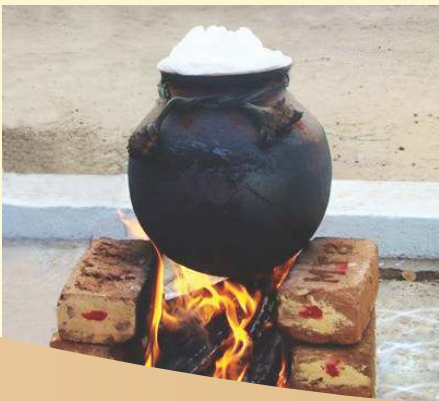


Hand in hand



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Hand in hand
news letter 2014



*The day we have not helped
somebody is a wasted day...*

- Pappa Vidyaakar



Message from the Founder Secretary



- Being a social worker is a remarkable job, where the profession demands and specializes in the ART OF GIVING. As mother Teresa points out "Give until it hurts you".

Any person who provides emotional support to others has to lead a life of integrity, conviction and strong sense of spiritual understanding. We become the storehouse of support and reassurance to many people in distress. Basically I am a spiritual person and I believe in myself. God speaks in the silence of the heart and we listen. He is very much within us and we could explore the possibilities of finding God within. Right from the beginning, I almost felt the presence of God within and I always share that I believe in God and God believes in me. To have a clear understanding of other, we need to have a clear understanding of oneself and hence God's support primarily provides a kind of total emotional strength and a sense of confidence to handle anything. Developing a sound or correct awareness of mind, body and atman will lead us in the righteous path. May 2014 be a year of understanding and bliss. Man is a creation of God, He has given us resources and opportunities to be good and do good.

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*This is not the way I intended to
lead my life. It is a tough and thankless job.
Someone has to do it. I wish society does not
need people like me. But while it does "I WILL BE THERE"
- Pappa Vidyaakar*



A Family Reunion

For 18 years, Aradhana knew of only one place as her home – Udavum Karangal. Yes, her mom stayed here too. She would meet her at regular intervals trying to piece the puzzle her life was. Her mother, Jaljanandhi was a mentally disturbed lady, she gave birth to Aradhana on the roadside and Udavum Karangal had brought the mother and her new born to the cocoon of Udavum Karangal way back in 1995. All these years, Aradhana knew that her family lived somewhere in Odisha and yes, she dreamt of meeting her uncles and aunts. But till then, she woke up every day to love and serve her family at Udavum Karangal.



After completing class 8, she took vocational training and was adept at making mats, candles and other handicrafts. More than that, she was keen to give back abundantly the love she received here and turned out to be one of the best caregivers of our home. Each day, she helped the needy to bathe, dress up and eventually live a dignified life.

And one day, that miracle happened, after 18 long years, her mother Jaljanandhi remembered the name of her village. The social workers then traced her brothers who are farmers in Madhupatna in Odisha. Aradhana doesn't speak Oriya but that did not matter when she met her family. They spoke in tears and laughter. We, at Udavum Karnagal bid adieu to two of her family members on the same day, but with a happy heart! Aradhana promises to come visit us, we only hope she gets the love and life she deserves.



*"If you are taker of happiness you
get misery, if you are giver of happiness
you get joy and love."*

-Sri Sri Ravi Shankar



Twilight years without a family

When you struggled to take your first step, I was there for you . Today when I tremble at every step my son where are you.

She has never uttered a word of complaint from the day she arrived 12 years ago. Kind and friendly, Paati does not like to be dependent on others. You would always find her wearing a white saree until a year ago. That's when she suffered minor burn injuries after her saree caught fire during the morning pooja at the pillaiyar temple. She looks prettier now in a more convenient floral dress, though she still loves her white saree.



This is the story of Mailaatha Patti, a resident of udavum Karangal. She has lost track of her age. Twelve years ago, an Udavum Karangal volunteer found her begging for food outside a temple. It was a sad sight to see a fragile old lady begging for food. From then on, she has been under the care of udavum karanagal.. You can always find her smiling and chanting the name of God. She greets everyone with "sammy samy".

Mailaatha Paati belongs to an affluent Gounder family who live in the outskirts of Coimbatore. She lost her husband when she was around fifty years of age. She has four daughters and a son. At the time of her husband's death, all her children were married and well settled. A few years ago, a Udavum Karangal volunteer contacted one of the daughters. However, owing to other priorities and also because she not get enough money in spite of the ancestral property, she was unwilling to take her mother. She also thought that it was the son's duty to take care of their mother. The only son could not be traced, for the other daughters too, their own families took precedence over their mother. Paati's soft, wrinkled body, adorned with beautiful tattoos, speak volumes about her. Like a crushed flower that leaves a sweet fragrance in the hand, she continues to spread kindness in spite of her personal sorrow. Her eyesight is intact; she can easily identify people from afar. Most of her evenings are spent with a watchful eye on the gates of the Centre.

In today's busy modern world, it is a pity that people and relationships are given the least priority. We must realize that it is a blessing to have grandparents at home, for their wisdom is what present-day children really need. We must be aware that each one of us will grow old and in our twilight years we too will need the love and support of a younger citizen".



*Who is helping you don't forget them,
Who is loving you don't hate them,
Who is trusting you don't cheat them
-Vivekanand*



Silent Cry

Violence against women-

They are the silent victims of violence. Even as they live through trauma of physical and emotional abuse everyday their pleas for help are either muffled within the four walls or totally ignored

Aysha smiles warmly, the scar of her dreadful past barely hidden under her cotton sari. Even as she reminisces those days of suffering, her eyes begin to moisten. "I was married to a close relative and hence did not expect my marital life to be bad. But things went wrong from the very beginning, both my mother-in-law and brother-in-law started pestering me for more money constantly. So I went to work to earn some money to supplement his income. But then my husband started doubting my integrity as I had to work till late in the evening. They continued to abuse me constantly." She then adds softly, "One day, while I was cooking my husband tried to burn me. He took my half-burnt self in an autorickshaw and abandoned me in a market in the early hours. Udavum Karangal rescued me and admitted me in the burns ward. Today I am fully recovered and take care of other victims like me in Udavum Karangal. My only prayer is that no women should undergo the pain and suffering I went through." Though her physical scars are healed her emotional scars remain.

Aysha



Aishwarya

Aishwarya lost both her parents when she was hardly seven. She was sent to her aunt's house. Her aunt already had three children of her own and she knew that she was not very welcome. Her only happiness was when she was with her friends. She dreaded the evenings; she often wished she was invisible. She did not know what would trigger her uncle's temper. If he was drunk, if he did not have enough money, anything would irk his ire and he would start beating her. This went on till the age of 15, at the age of 15 she decided to run away. She came to Udavum Karangal emotionally scared. With counseling, she was able to slowly recover. She did her class Xth privately. She came out with flying colours. She is now doing her class XII. She plans to become a social worker and help people like herself.

*Go out into the world today and love
the people you meet. Let your presence
light new light in the hearts of others*

-Mother Teresa



Back to nature

In every campus of Udavum Karangal, harmony and quietness are a must. You will not be surprised therefore to see many animals; they're the perfect company for people, bringing joy to everyone with their natural behaviour and playful attitude.

The benefits of having animals around are well known and scientifically proved: the human has been taming animals from the dawn of time, not only for getting milk and other products, but also company and amusement.

Today many new streams in psychology see animals in their centre: the pet-therapy, which focus on the importance of having a poodle or kitten around to help people relax and love, or the horse therapy useful in the rehabilitation during post traumatic treatments for patience: riding a horse works actually as a natural physiotherapy for many leg and back problems.

In Coimbatore, finally, Emu can be seen; a little less common animal, but a joyful one as well.

All these contribute to sustain a green environment where to live, one of the core ideas of Udavum Karangal. The people living in it, as well as the occasional visitors, must feel that peaceful harmony which makes the campus different from the chaotic and trafficked world outside the gate; a special effect that couldn't be achieved without our friends, the animals.

There is not an official pet or horse therapy in Udavum Karangal, however. Animals live freely inside the campuses like in their natural environment, spending time around the inmates and being often fed by them. A little natural reserve is what can be found in Shantivanam, or Karunai Illam, or all the other headquarters of Udavum Karangal. Dogs are the most common, but also sheep, goats, rabbits, cats, donkeys, chickens, parrots, swans, ducks can be seen around, to add beauty to the landscape or in the core of our project for organic farming, a way in which Udavum Karangal helps itself feeding its several inhabitants.

Other guests are there by chance but are of course more than welcome: squirrels, pigeons, doves, fish, sometimes also snakes, come to pay a visit to our campuses and are always respected, the same way people respect each other.



*When you start to develop your powers
of empathy and imagination
the whole world opens up to you*

-Susan Sarandon (American Actress)



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Blissful birthday

I slowly opened my eyes, my mind was fresh and I was full of smiles because it was a Sunday but there was something more special yes- that was my birthday.

My mom was standing right next to me wishing me a happy birthday. I spent almost half the day attending calls and opening presents.

Around 5 in the evening I wore a new dress and my parents took me in their car. They told me that they have a surprise for me. After an hour's journey, my father parked the car in front of a huge building. It was Udavum Karangal. Initially, I was a little upset because I thought my parents would be taking me to a hotel or theme park. My parents brought out a cake and sweets and requested me to hand over to the children and residents of Udavum Karangal. As I handed over the sweets, I could really see happiness in their eyes it wasn't the sweets, that made them happy but for a second, there was someone to care for them. I could talk to each one of them and caring and sharing seemed to be imbibed in them. I learnt a lot from them and I realized the happiest things in life was to make others happy.



A sponsor speaks

My wife and I decided to sponsor Maya. The feeling of taking care of someone other than the family is intensely fulfilling and has filled the vacuum in our lives. We visit her twice a month and spend time with her.



*Leadership is about empathy.
It is about having the ability to relate to
and connect with people for the purpose of inspiring and empowering their lives.*
-Oprah Winfrey



Volunteer Speaks

My name is Davide Orioli, I'm 31 and I'm at the moment volunteering at the Udavum Karangal.

I spent the last 5 years of my life travelling and volunteering in several countries, and I can define myself as quite experienced in collaborating with charities and Ngo's.

Regardless what everyone would say, not every volunteering experience is enriching, and not always the volunteer and the hosting Ngo will like each other and fit each other. That is even truer when there's a cultural difference to take in concern.

That's why I was a bit puzzled before joining Udavum Karangal, only westerner in a fully local Ngo, they were probably not used to manage long-term volunteers from abroad. I was totally wrong.

My months spent at Udavum Karangal has been among the most interesting of my life, for several reasons.



First of all, I met tons of nice and inspirational people. With some of them language can be a barrier and it will take some time and a translator to get to know them well, but everyone here have interesting, sometimes also hard, life stories to tell. And Pappa, the founder of Udavum Karangal, stays on top of this list.

Second, having everyday just before your eyes the reason why you're there. Each of the hundreds of children, elders, mentally challenged, disabled who dwell in the campuses of Udavum Karangal would be otherwise dead or living on the street, with no one to care of them nor way to get an education and make they're own path in life. Meeting them every day gives you a boost of energy and makes you wanting to put once more your drop in the sea of changing.

Third, I got an insight of the Indian culture which I would not have had in a Western-managed Ngo, or living in the nice areas of a big town. Here at Udavum Karangal I spoke, worked, shared everyday with local people, of course with their pros and cons, discussing topics and cultural differences, widening my mind and, why not, helping them to do the same. Which is the main goal of travelling to far away places, in my humble opinion.

Last but not least, I liked my job. I felt free to propose and do, finding people eager to welcome a proactive volunteer and assisting me with all the support needed for my activities. That's one of the most important things as nobody wants to travel thousands of miles to waste their time. In Udavum Karangal I felt like I made the best use of my time and that didn't depend on just me, but all the people in the Organisation.

*Development is not about factories,
dam and roads. Development is about people. The goal is material,
cultural and spiritual fulfillment for the people, the human factor is of supreme value in development*
-Rajiv Gandhi



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Vimochana -Legal Service Cell

Even though our nation has crossed strides in development, our women are yet to get complete freedom from dowry harassment. With the cost of legal services on the increase we have set up Vimochana legal service cell to support women in distress. The legal services provided by this cell are absolutely free and have helped several women to handle their marital or property disputes. We stand by the woman in society because we know only she can turn things around.



Parivarthan means Transformation

In India, 30% of the population lives below the poverty line and one in four Indians get affected by mental illness at some point in their lives. Imagine if you had to spend 50% of your earnings on treating a family member suffering from mental illness! The majority of the Indians may have to do that hence they are the most neglected... it is where Udavum Karangal steps in under the banner of Parivarthan.

Parivarthan is a community-based mental health program for preventing trafficking of mental sick and to create an awareness to the people in rural areas about mental illness and provide free medical treatment and counseling facilities. It also aims to educate the family members on how to care for the mentally sick members in the family.

We also provide medications to the patients and we regularly follow up on the patient. Today, there are hundred villages under our care.

Annai Creche

In many households who live below the poverty line, women are the sole bread winners for the family. They take care of the house and also go out side and work. Very often, the toddlers are left outside the house to just wander .Hence Udavum Karangal decided to start a home The crèche not only organize pre-school education activities but also provide food with adequate nutritional value. Children are immunized and health record of the health is maintained in the register after the weekly health checkup by a visiting doctor. At present, we have three crèches in Coimbatore and Chennai with a total strength of 243 children .



Follow the path of non-violence

Always speak the truth. Control over oneself is very important. There is no point accumulating loads of wealth that you can't even spend. Be compassionate towards living beings.

-Lord Mahavira



Ramani Tailoring Institute

Women face many social challenges today and it is difficult to secure an income for her family and to raise children amidst the harsh economic crisis. A woman is dynamic in the many roles she plays. We at Udavum Karangal believe in empowering women through its tailoring institute. They learn a skill and set up shops of their own or work in export houses. At present, we have two tailoring units in Coimbatore and Thiruverkadu. There are at present 80 students benefitting from this project.

Where there is love there is Celebration

Krishna Jayanthi celebrations

Krishana Jayanthi was celebrated in Baba's temple. Little David was dressed as Krishna and the children not only cherished the sweets, but also they were also told the story of Krishna.



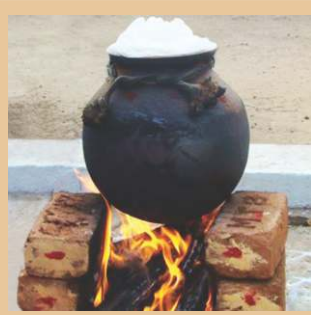
Vinayaka chardhurthi celebrations

Vinayaka Chaturthi was celebrated with not only modaks and chundal. The children sang also sang bajans and prayed to God Ganapathi, the remover of obstacles.



Pongal celebration

Pongal, the harvest festival was celebrated with a lot of pomp and gaiety. The festival of abundance was celebrated in a traditional way. Nature is at it is best during this time of the year and we worship nature for being so kind to us.



Christmas Celebrations

Christmas was celebrated with singing of Christmas carols and the children from Nazareth college visited Udavum Karangal and distributed gifts and conducted a prayer for the children of Udavum Karangal.



*"Try not to become a man of success,
but rather try to become a man of value*

-Albert Einstein



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Activities for Children

Basic classes: classes on drawing, handwriting, English and maths classes are being conducted regularly for the children at Shantivnaam. Ms. Mahalakshmi and Rose are taking care of the sessions and children are showing good improvement due to personal attention.

Chess Clases: Chess classes are being conducted on Sunday every week and the children are being coached by Mr. Anantha Raman .

Drawing Clases: Drawing classes are conducted every week and the children are showing remarkable improvement and seem to be enjoying the classes.

Dance Class: Ms. Nandhitha, Director of Maithri Dance School Chennai is coming to teach the children and the children are showing keen interest. They are doing fine and showing good interest in learning dance.

Wedding bells

There is only one happiness in life to love and to be loved and that is the precious bond of marriage. Pappa Vidyaakar conducted more than four marriages in the past four months. Should we call the children fortunate or Pappa Vidyaakar



Love moves the world

Houston Fundraiser

Dr. Padmini Ranganathan, President of Udhavum Karangal USA, based in Houston has successfully raised funds for the organization for nearly 15 years and has raised the profile of the organization to a new level. Dr. Padmini Ranganathan has also involved children in the act of saving, sharing and giving. She along with Ms. Kate Rhoad, Mr. Mahesh, Mrs. Alpa Shah, Mr. Rajan and Mrs. Vijaya Radhakrishnan, of Madras Pavilion, with their children joined hands with Dr. Padmini, in supporting Udhavum Karangal.

"The pleasure is intangible and it is bigger than what I have given,"
-Dr. Padmini



Sastha Tamil Foundation of Dallas

Under the leadership of Mr. Raman Velu more that 100 dedicated volunteers, raised money for our Thiruvannamalai Project by staging the dance drama, 'Valliyin Kadal, more than 1150 people attend the event !. It was a landmark fundraiser.



Dutch Team

Mr. Bart Veldapus and his team, encourage youngsters to volunteer and donate for the less privileged. He with his team ambassadors along with Mr. Erik Nieuwkoop, Mr. Wilbert Vloet, Students, teachers management and staff of 'Karel de Grote College, created awareness about Udhavum Karangal and collected donations.



*Throughout the world,
teachers, sociologists, policy makers
and parents are discovering that empathy may be
the single most important quality that must be nurtured to give peace a fighting chance.*

- Arundhati Roy

