

# Punarnava Community Newsletter

October 2017 | Volume 5, Issue 2

**Our Vision:**  
Live Simple  
Live Well  
Live Healthy  
Live Happy

## Trust Activities from July 2017 – September 2017

### Agnihotra



At Vaidyagrama, the ancient and very sacred fire ceremony, Agnihotra, is performed daily at sunrise and sunset in the presence of all patients. Agni means 'fire' and hotra means 'to make offerings to the fire to create a healing effect'. This healing fire ceremony is considered one of the highest of Vedic rituals.

One of our Vaidyagrama family members wrote the following description of her experience of Agnihotra during her stay with us. "Agnihotra is performed each evening at Vaidyagrama, with reverence and dedication. I experienced its healing effects for 49 days, each evening, during my stay recently. This was a powerful healing experience and each evening I was drawn to this energy. I felt there was something divine to it. I encourage all, regardless of faith, to attend this daily, and focus the energy to allow the negativity be consumed by fire. Visualize that all your stress and ailments are being burnt by fire, replacing it with the positive light that brings wisdom and warmth. Bathe yourself with this energy. You are lucky to have this opportunity. Make your experience a holistic one".

Another family member wrote "To all my friends ....Our stay at Vaidyagrama community healing, the daily morning and evening Agnihotra has instilled certain calmness."

Agnihotra can be performed by anyone at the precise time of sunrise and sunset, as it changes every day. The fire is prepared and lit in a semi-pyramid shaped copper vessel. Two pinches of rice smeared with cow's ghee are offered to the fire, and at the same time two Vedic mantras are chanted in Sanskrit. The sound of the Sanskrit language is endowed with special vibrational healing powers. The utterance of mantra in esoteric combination produces unique sound waves, which in turn create immense energy and power, impacting the atmosphere, living beings and plants in an extremely pacifying and positive manner. The particular convergence of sound and meaning created by the Sanskrit language is known as Mantras.

### **The Five Disciplines of Agnihotra**

To perform, practice, and experience the benefits of Agnihotra, we follow certain disciplines. Only when a ritual is performed sincerely, according to certain basic rules, does it bring about beneficial results.

**The First Discipline** –Observe Timings (Agnihotra can be performed by anyone at sunrise and sunset at precise timings of the day).

- **Second Discipline** – Semi Pyramid Shaped Copper Vessel
- **Third Discipline** – Dried Cow Dung Cakes
- **Fourth Discipline** - The Offerings. Importance of ghee made from cow's milk, two full pinches of uncooked unbroken rice grains
- **Fifth Discipline**- Mantra

### **Sunrise Agnihotra mantra**

#### **SOORYAYA SWAHA, SOORYAYA IDAM NA MAMA {First Mantra}**

O Sun, the giver of Energy, I salute you and offer unto you what is given to me by you, that which is not mine but of the Universe.

#### **PRAJAPATAYE SWAHA, PRAJAPATAYE IDAM NA MAMA {Second mantra}**

O Lord, the Creator, I salute you and offer unto you that what is given to me by you, that which is not mine but of the Universe

### **Sunset Agnihotra mantra**

#### **AGNAYE SWAHA, AGNAYE IDAM NA MAMA {First Mantra}**

O Agni, the Primordial element, I salute you and offer unto you that what is given to me by you, that which is not mine but of the Universe.

#### **PRAJAPATAYE SWAHA, PRAJAPATAYE IDAM NA MAMA {second Mantra}**

O Lord, the Creator, I salute you and offer unto you that what is given to me by you, that which is not mine but of the Universe.

### **The materials required for performing Agnihotra**

A semi pyramid shaped copper homa vessel, a small copper dish for rice, a small copper spoon, dried cow dung, cow's ghee, raw rice, a match box and a vessel for storing ash.

### **To perform the ritual**

Add a few drops of ghee to a few grains of rice. Arrange small pieces of cow dung cakes in the homa vessel, leaving a hole in the middle. Pour some drops of ghee on the cow dung and light the fire. Once the fire is burning properly, at the precise sunrise and sunset time, start saying the mantra, taking a pinch of rice from the copper dish. When chanting 'Swaha', offer the rice to the fire.

The cooled ash is allowed to stay in the homa dish until the evening and then is removed and kept in the storing vessel. When Mantras are done in conjunction with homa fires, the vibrations from the Mantra become locked up in the ash, and the ash therefore becomes even more powerful. It is used in the garden for plants, in the water bodies for purification. It is also mixed with ghee for treating skin disorders of humans and animals too.

## Medical Camp and Community Lunch



On the first Saturday of July, August and September 2017, Punarnava Trust conducted free Ayurveda Medical Camps in Rottigoundanur village. Dr Harikrishnan headed up the team, which attended in excess of 50 patients. The majority of the ailments treated were arthritis, digestive problems in the elderly, colds, fever, skin diseases in the children, and gynaecological problems for the women. Most of the patients seen were prescribed medicines.

Attendees were transported from distant villages and were invited to participate in the community lunch, a feast prepared in Balagrama kitchen and transported to Rottigoundanur in Vaidyagrama's vehicles. The villagers very much look forward to participating in these community lunches; alongside the medical camp, the lunch is a very special social and communal event. Balagrama children, Vaidyagrama staff and therapy students volunteer to serve the midday meal, and for all of us, volunteers and villagers alike, it is a particularly special occasion. We all give heartfelt thanks to our sponsors for the support and resources given for the successful conduct of the camps.

## Project Annam





Project Annam is a midday meal for 100 old and destitute villagers. Covering most of the villages in Thirumalayampalayam panchayat, this Project serves meals 365 days a year. The food offered is sufficient for lunch and dinner also. The older villagers are also asked to consult the Ayurveda physician every month, and their medical needs are taken care of under Project Annam!

### **Dogs at Balagrama**



Living in harmony with nature is a core practice in Punarnava community. Our pet dogs, April and Bunny are 7 and 8 months old respectively, having arrived into our care when they were 1 month and 2 months old. They were rescue dogs, and Vaidyagrama has welcomed them into our community. April and Bunny have grown beautifully under the expert care and attention of the Balagrama children and staff.

### **Launch of Punarnava Natural Ghee**



Lakshmigram, our goshala, has 30 indigenous varieties of cows. The milk from our cows is A2 variety and is therefore very nutritious, being more suitable for human digestion. After the calves have had their daily milk, the balance is made into butter milk for the patients. The butter from the curd is then converted to ghee. Punarnava's Natural Ghee was launched on July 12, 2017 and Lalitha Mami, who is 84 years and the leader of the Narayaneeyam group, received the first bottle of ghee direct from the hands of Dr Kalpana Sampath, Director of Punarnava Ayurveda Ltd. This is indeed a feather in the cap for the Punarnava Community!

The milk is drawn manually from the cow, boiled on a yellow flame, and then cooled naturally. It is curdled overnight by adding a small quantity of curd to the milk. In the morning, the curd is churned manually using the traditional method of wooden butter churner. The butter is then heated to make ghee.

Buttermilk is a digestive. During the summer months a refreshing drink of buttermilk helps to keep the body cool. The use of warm ghee in a meal increases the digestive fire, thereby improving the metabolism. It contains essential vitamins and strengthens the immune system.

It is also used to treat burns. Traditionally in the temples and homes, ghee is used in lighting lamps, as it is considered to have more satvik vibrations. Ghee is also used in preparation of many foods, including sweets. Food made from ghee is considered tastier than food made from oils.

At Vaidyagrama, ghee is used in-house for the patients, in the Temple and also in the kitchen. Any surplus ghee are made available in the Trust shop for patients to purchase.

**To make ghee-** Gently melt the butter in a saucepan over medium-low heat. Once it has melted, the butter will separate into three layers; this should only take only a few minutes. Foam will appear on the top layer, the milk solids will migrate to the bottom of the pan, and clarified butter will float between the two. After a few further minutes of heating, the foam will disappear and a clear fluid residue will remain in the saucepan. The clear fluid is the ghee. Filter it through a fine cloth, and store in a glass container.

### Narayaneeyam July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017



The Narayaneeyam recital is conducted every month at Vaidyagrama and attended by all the patients and staff. Narayaneeyam is a medieval Sanskrit text, comprising a summary study in poetic form of the Bhagavata Purana. It was composed by Melpathur Narayana Bhattathiri, (1560–1666 AD) one of the celebrated Sanskrit poets in Kerala, and is revered for its extraordinary literary merit and its intense devotional fervour. Most popular in Kerala, and Tamil Nadu, it condenses the Bhagavata Purana into 1,034 verses, divided into 100 dasakam, or cantos (chapters).

Narayaneeyam tells the tale of Lord Narayan, and has its own efficacies, such as relief from illness, happy family life, healthy progeny and good fortune. It is said one will attain good health, long life and realize one's dreams if one chants or atleast listen to these slokas with full awareness of their meaning.

The idol, depicting the form of Krishna in the lap of his mother Yashoda, is decorated. The theme on the day was of 'VATSALYA' or 'Mother's Love'. Thirteen elder, pious women from Annapoorneswari Temple, headed by Smt Lalitha, recited the entire 1034 verses of the Narayaneeyam, and thus blessings of the Lord were showered on all. All the patients and staff participated in the 'VILAKKU PUJA'. In this Puja, the lamp is assumed to be the Lord, and prayers and flowers are offered to the lamp. After the Puja, the lamp and the flowers are offered to the main idol.

### **Independence Day celebration at Vaidyagrama August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017**



Indian Independence Day, August 15<sup>th</sup>, was celebrated in Vaidyagrama Ayurveda Healing village with the hoisting of the tri colour national flag in the morning. Our guest of honour was Dr Kalpana Sampath, the Director of Punarnava Ayurveda Ltd. She addressed the gathering, imparting an important message about the concept of freedom and independence. She said freedom comes with serious responsibility. Many of us ask for freedom but do not consider freedom is really about taking responsibility for ourselves and others. What has happened in our own country? We gained independence from the British, and we fought for it on many different levels. But are we truly aware of the extent of responsibility and accountability that is now needed to build a moral nation? Similarly, how many of us who ask for freedom from our parents, or the organisations we work for, are aware of the responsibility for the actions we take, or the consequences that derive from those actions? While we happily celebrate Indian Independence Day, it is actually a great 'reminder day' for each of us, and a call to increase the responsibility and accountability in our own life, our families, our communities, our country and the world at large. We need to ask ourselves what we can do to contribute to making this world a better place to live. A very thought provoking message indeed!



### Balagrama Boys



We now have 12 boys residing with us at Balagrama, the boys hostel. The youngest, Najeeb, is 7 years old and the eldest, Jagan, now nearly 16 years old. The children have done very well in their studies as well as extracurricular activities. They help in natural farming at Balagrama and also with making products like herbal teas, which are sold at the Trust maintained shop. On Vaidyagrama Staff Day, on September 15th, the children outdid themselves with a gymnastics demonstration of exceptional skill, as well as performing a very beautiful lamp dance, both of which were loved by everyone.

### Dignitaries at Vaidyagrama



Shri Navin Chawlaji, Indian Administrative Service-Retired, who served as the Chief Election Commissioner of India, visited Vaidyagrama recently. He is also a writer and is renowned for his biography of Mother Theresa. Navinji addressed the staff and patients of Vaidyagrama upon his visit.

He spoke about the life and works of Mother Teresa. Mother Teresa never went to university and her studies were largely confined to the scriptures. Yet she set up hundreds of schools, lifting thousands of poor children from a desolate life on the streets. She provided a safety net for the homeless by opening feeding centres and soup kitchens, and started Shishu Bhawans for the many infants her sisters found abandoned on the streets. Mother Teresa's major philosophies were simple; Faith and Compassion.

### **Ganesh Festival at Vaidyagrama- 25-26 Aug 2017**



Every year during Ganesh Festival, the birthday of Lord Ganesha is celebrated with much excitement and piety. At Vaidyagrama, the Brahma Kamalam hall is decorated lavishly and the staff welcome the diety at the entrance, guiding it ceremoniously into the hall. Pujas are performed three times a day for one and a half days, after which the idol is taken to the nearby lake for immersion.

The practice of celebrating Ganesh Chaturthi as a Festival was prevalent in the ancient India. During the British regime, it lost its importance. During the freedom movement, the Festival was revived, mainly due to the efforts of our freedom fighter, Lokmanya Tilak, in order to mobilize the public and inculcate the spirit of oneness in fighting the British. Thus, the tradition of Ganesh Chaturthi celebration in the public places prevented the British Government from opposing the assembly of people. This then became a practice and in India, in Maharashtra and many states, it is celebrated as a 10 day festival in the public places or sometimes 3 days or 5 days.



### Organic vegetable farming



This year at Vaidyagrama and Punarnava Trust we have brought more than 3 acres of land under organic vegetable cultivation. Almost all the vegetables that are used in the hospital are being grown in-house. In fact, now there is surplus of vegetables and these are being made available for sale. The vegetables grown in the gardens at Balagrama are being used for community meal programs and for the children of Balagrama. This step of growing mass scale vegetables is taking us closer to our vision of being a self sustaining healing village!

### Onam Celebration September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017



Vaidyagrama is indeed proud to be a multicultural, multi-faith place, where people of all religions and nationalities can co-exist. Most of the staff is from nearby Kerala and Onam is the harvest festival of Kerala. The 10 day flower celebration focuses on the flower decorations which adorn the entrance of every house. The members of each house compete with each other in making their decorations better each day. On the tenth day, a sumptuous luncheon feast is prepared and family members sit together and enjoy the pleasure of coming together on the day. In Vaidyagrama also, a feast is prepared by staff, all of whom sit together and serve one another during the meal, experiencing a time of brotherhood and sharing. Chiranjeevi, our young colleague who works in the store, dressed up as King Maveli, visiting his subjects during Onam.

### Support for the education of girl children

Promoting the education of girl children in India is the need of the hour. We find that in the villages, boys are compulsorily sent to school, but the girls are mostly asked to do housework or help in the farms and are then married off at an early age. These girls bear children also at an early age, thereby risking their lives. In India, educating the girls has acquired particular importance in the recent times. Punarnava is sponsoring the education of 3 girls, Sadhana, Aradhana and Shivadarshini, who are the children of our staff who cannot afford to educate their girls in a good school. Total sponsorship for these girls for the year amounts to Rs 54000/-

### Sri Krishna Jayanti September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017



Lord Krishna's birthday is celebrated as Krishna Jayanti. This year we arranged a bhajan by the Kalpathy sisters. Their rendition enthralled the audience of staff, patients and some guests. A sumptuous meal was also served. Lord Krishna's idol was decorated with flowers and a Puja was performed.

### Staff day Celebration September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017





Every year, one day in the year is reserved as Staff Day. The staff of Vaidyagrama enjoy the day with each other, eating a good meal, entertaining each other with sports and cultural programs etc. This year, the chosen day to celebrate was the 15th September. Staff cultural is a program of the staff, conducted by staff and for the staff. Lots of prizes are distributed for the sports competitions held the previous day. It is much needed fun day in the hectic life of Vaidyagrama, and a day for all its movers and shakers to allow themselves to enjoy some simple, but much needed, fun!

### Navaratri Celebration-21<sup>st</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017



The nine days of Navaratri are celebrated with much excitement at Vaidyagrama. The traditional decorated dolls, depicting various characters from the Puranas, adorn the tastefully decorated steps. The idol of Devi is also decorated. On the first three nights the Goddess Durga is invoked. Durga Devi symbolises the destruction of the evil tendencies of the mind. The next three nights Goddess Lakshmi is worshipped, aiding us to purify our mind and bring in the wealth of goodness and true values. The final three nights are spent in invocation of Goddess Saraswati, who symbolises the highest knowledge of Self. The ninth day of Navaratri is celebrated as Ayudha Puja. On this day all articles used in the day to day work and life are worshipped. People worship their work tools, household appliances, vehicles etc. The festival concludes on the tenth day, celebrated at Vijayadasami, or Dussehra. On this day it is considered auspicious to start something new like the first writing of a child, any art form or any new beginnings of enterprise.



### **Auera living homes**



The first batch of the Auera living homes is ready for occupation. Built in the natural landscape surrounding Vaidyagrama, nestled in the mountains, with palm trees and the green cover of the ambient lands, Auera presents a beautiful setting for its members to reside. The newly constructed houses range from one bedroom to two and three bedrooms with study, living room, kitchen and a beautiful verandah. The goshala, temple and the coconut farm surrounding Auera completes the picture. Balagrama, the children living in it, Agrarharam and the staff living there, as well as Vaidyagrama itself and Auera Living complex, makes this a community worth joining. Very few houses are left. Join Auera Living and become a part Punarnava (Healing) Community.

### **Tree plantation at Vaidyagrama**



It is a tradition at Vaidyagrama that all patients, when they leave our care to return home, plant a sapling in the surrounding lands. Today, as a result of this tradition, Vaidyagrama boasts of a beautiful young forest in the once barren lands, nurtured with the tree plantation, rainwater harvesting and natural farming.

### **Cookery Corner:**

#### **Idli, Chutney, Sambhar (Pic courtesy- Preeti Singh)**

This is a very healthy breakfast, wholesome and filling. Commonly eaten in the southern part of India, the preparation takes over 24 hours. It can be made in a regular cooker, but an idli stand is a must. These are available everywhere in India, or in the Indian stores outside India. When purchasing an idli stand, one has to be careful that it fits snugly in the available pressurecooker.

#### **Ingredients for Idli**

1. 2 cups boiled rice
2.  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup black lentil- skinned/peeled
3. One teaspoon fenugreek
4. Salt to taste
5. Water for soaking

#### **For Tempering**

1. 1 teaspoon mustard
2. 1 teaspoon split skinned black lentil
3. Curry leaves-4-5 leaves
4. One tablespoon coconut oil

#### **Ingredients for chutney**

1. 1 cup grated coconut
2. 2 tablespoon coriander chopped
3. Salt to taste
4. Water

#### **Ingredients for Sambhar**

1. 1 cup split yellow mung dal
2.  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon asafoetida
3. 1 teaspoon mustard seeds
4.  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup coriander leaves chopped
5. 5-6 curry leaves
6.  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon turmeric powder
7. 1 cup ripe tomatoes chopped
8.  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup chopped coriander leaves for dressing
9. Optional- One tablespoon juice of lemon
10. Coconut Oil for tempering
11. Salt



## Method of preparation

### For Idli Batter

Wash and soak boiled rice, black lentil and fenugreek together for 6 hours in water. After soaking, blend the mixture into a fine paste by adding water. Add salt. Keep the mixture fermenting for 12 hours. If the weather is cold, one can preheat the oven to 100 degrees for 10 minutes, switch off, and leave the batter inside for 12 hours.

### To make Idli

Apply oil in the Idli stand inside the mould and add one curry spoon full of Idli batter inside the mould. Fill all the moulds. Meanwhile, add 2 cups of water (for a medium size cooker) and keep it on the gas for heating. Once the moulds are filled with Idli batter, place the Idli stand inside the cooker. Close the cooker and steam the Idli for 10 minutes.

Once cooled, slowly remove the Idli with the help of a flat spoon.

### For Chutney

Blend, grated coconut, coriander leaves, salt in a blender to a fine paste. For tempering, keep a kadai or saucepan on the gas. Add coconut oil. When it heats, add mustard seeds. When the mustard seeds splutter, add split, skinned black lentil and curry leaves, roast for 30 seconds and pour the mixture into the chutney and mix well.

### For Sambhar

In a saucepan, soak the yellow mung dal in water for 30 minutes. Once soaked, boil the dal in a cooker with water. Mash the cooked dal well. Add turmeric, chopped tomatoes and boil again; add salt and boil for 5 minutes.

### For Tempering

Keep a kadai on the flame; add coconut oil and mustard seeds. When the seeds splutter, add asafoetida and curry leaves. After 30 seconds, add this mixture into the boiled dal.

## How you can support us

If you feel you want to be a part of this vision, and would like to contribute to its realisation, here are some ways you can help:-

- **The Daily Annam**-meals to poor project, Rs 2500/- (USD 50/- or Euro 40/-)
- **Community Natural Farming** by donating USD 100/- providing livelihood for families
- Monthly free **Medical Camp** (and feed an entire village) USD 300/- (Feeding USD 200/-+ Cost of medicines USD 100/-)
- Eye Camp for 150 elderly - Rs 26000/- (USD 450/-) half yearly.
- You can **Donate Your Skills**: graphic designers, content writers, publishers, educators, engaging social media, and publicity are all needed.
- **Spread the Message** to your 10 Best Friends:
- [www.punarnavacommunity.org](http://www.punarnavacommunity.org), **Vaidyagrama community group** on Facebook



## How to donate (at [www.punarnavacommunity.org](http://www.punarnavacommunity.org))

### For Indian Donors:-

Our Bank details are

Indian Overseas Bank, Nanjundapuram branch, Coimbatore

Account number 174602000005107 of Punarnava Ayurveda Trust.

IFSC code- IOBA0001746

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**Punarnava Ayurveda Trust is registered under Section 11 (1) of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), 2010, and hence is eligible to receive International donations for the said purpose.**

**Donations to Punarnava Ayurveda Trust by Indian donors are eligible for tax exemption under Section 81 G of the Income Tax act.**

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