



## The Association for India's Development (AID) Quarterly Newsletter

### AID celebrates Independence day worldwide

*August 15, 2000 marked 53 years of India's independence. AID chapters in the US and Germany commemorated the event. Below are some of the reports of the celebrations.*

#### **Penn State** -*Bhagavathi*



*Aid - Penn State volunteers rendering a Carnatic Classical music performance to commemorate Independence day*

AID-Penn State/State College commemorated India's 53rd year of Independence by observing a candle lit vigil at midnight that culminated on the lawns of the Old Main Building on Penn State campus by a group of about 60 students, comprising both existing volunteers and incoming students. On the evening of the 15th, AID volunteers rendered a Carnatic music performance for 90 minutes. This event was publicized to reach the incoming students. About 100 people attended the event.

**Cologne, Germany** -*Prasanna*  
AID has started its first chapter in Germany. It is called as Verein fuer Indians Entwicklung (VIE) a German translation for AID. The core members in the constitutional meeting on July 29, 2000 decided to hold the first program in Koln (Cologne) in Germany to celebrate Indian independence day. It was a dance and music program held on the 20th Aug 2000. The program started with Vande Mataram and lighting of the lamp. The president elect Srinivasan Ramakrishna spoke about India and VIE followed by a cultural program comprising classical dance and music. About 120 people attended the program.

#### **Pittsburgh** -*Shoba*

A candle light vigil was held at 11.30 PM on 14th August, at "THE FENCE", CMU Main Campus. There were exactly 53 people who attended!(to commemorate 53 years of independence) We painted "THE FENCE" with the tricolor. We then lighted candles and sang the national anthem at midnight. This was followed by the pledge to work towards removing poverty in India, and then some patriotic

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songs. We also distributed sweets in the end. There was also an informal session with the incoming students on August 15th in the evening. About 60 new students attended the vigil.

#### **Cincinnati** -*Sreelakshmi*

The McMicken Commons at the University of Cincinnati was, for the fourth consecutive year, the venue for the Independence Day Candle Light Vigil. An enthusiastic group of 40 people gathered at 11:30 PM on August 14th. The event began with the singing of Vande Mataram. Nehruji's Tryst with Destiny speech was read out, following which we took a pledge to strive and free India from poverty. We sang some patriotic songs together before concluding the vigil with the national anthem.

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### Drought-alternative approaches

-Nagini

### I wonder Why ? ... How ? ...

- Akash

-If we love our pets; if we so lovingly care for the dazzling lowers in our small home garden; if our kids are so fascinated with animals and love their (stuffed) teddy bears to death..... then why do we have such a hard time fighting for nature preservation, animal rights, and species conservation ?

- If we really, truly love our kids and family, then how come we have such devastating wars ?

- We all start of as simple, playfully innocent kids, but some end up as adults who spread hatred, and cause horrible things. What happened in between ?

- If growing old is synonymous with maturity and higher levels of thinking/understanding then with rising life expectancy and an ageing population the world should be a much better place. Is it ?

Nafisabhen Barot founded Utthan in 1981 with four other women to work in resource poor rural areas of Gujarat. Utthan's work is primarily in community water harvesting and through their innovative approach they have also had positive effects on community and women's development. Utthan seeks to learn from the community and facilitate community initiatives in water resource management. This ensures a high level of ownership and enthusiasm by the community. The approach lead to the formation of Mahithi - a team of local people with local leadership. Its leader at present is a Dalit woman and it is now a separate organisation that operates in three districts. Utthan's work has included the installation of lined ponds for water storage, building recharge wells, and working on rainwater harvesting as a sustainable method for rainwater cultivation. The rural residents assist in building the wells and ponds and village committees ultimately decide

### Diamond

-Karthik

Life bursting  
In its arms  
Cutting air at sonic speed  
Crashes,  
Kills a hundred and nine,  
For whom does  
The Concord grieve?

Privation  
Portrayed on  
Each hard face  
Tear-shaped itself  
Amidst tears  
A diamond in  
The midst of desolation  
For whom does  
The diamond grieve?

how to manage them. AID hosted talks around the USA by Nafisabhen Barot and she also spoke at the AID annual conference in Boston. Learn more about Nafisabhen's talk at: [http://www.aidboston.org/events/conf\\_2000/proceedings/nafisaben.htm](http://www.aidboston.org/events/conf_2000/proceedings/nafisaben.htm)

### Lighter side

by Sandeep Rao



## Satyagraha in Narmada valley

- Ravi Kuchimanchi



*Medha Patkar addressing activists in the Narmada valley*

This year's Satyagraha in the Narmada valley started on July 15, 2000. The activities are in full-swing with reunions among the activists, village people and the visitors. Local issues are being taken up everyday.

Five days into the Satyagraha, hundreds of people walked up the hills to Dhadgaon (25 km from Domkhedi), to demand that the government keep its promise to pay them the material and labour charges for digging the wells, which had become necessary before the monsoons because the silt due to the SSP dam had cut the access to Narmada in several villages.

On 22 July, hundreds gathered around the Mahua tree in Domkhedi Satyagraha for the world premiere release of Sanjay Sangvai's book, "River and Life: People's Struggle in the Narmada Valley", which

documents the history of the Andolan, its issues, and its processes. To order your copy of the book in the US, please contact Uday Turaga at [uday@psu.edu](mailto:uday@psu.edu)

With the Supreme Court concluding the final hearing and a decision on the dam expected at any moment, the people of the valley have been left fending for themselves. There is no land available to resettle the people already displaced due to last year's unjust raising of the dam height based on false affidavits showing land availability.

Dr Apaschim, who came to the Satyagraha this year, has decided to open a 4-bed hospital in Jalsindhi. Starting from Sikka Village on July 18, he's been conducting health camps at every village and plans to continue even after the Satyagraha.

Since there is no electricity grid in this area, people are pedalling to generate electricity. The new Pedal Power Generator allows the user to light up their whole house for one hour after 15-20 minutes of pedalling..

In the villages that face submergence this year (Nimghavan, Sikka and Domkhedi), areas that need bunding and trenching have been identified. If you would like to express solidarity with the satyagrahis, please contact Joe/Sukumar at (0265)382232, or Pervin Jehangir at (022)218-4779, or email to [medhapatkar@vsnl.com](mailto:medhapatkar@vsnl.com)

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**Stanford/Bay Area** -Aniruddha

On Aug 14th 11:30PM, AID Bay Area volunteers joined a program hosted by the Stanford India Association (SIA) at the Betchel International Center Lawns at Stanford University. The program began with the lighting of lamps and candles and the singing of Vande Mataram. The guests reflected on the meaning of Independence by reading poetry and prose and singing songs in various Indian languages. At midnight, everyone joined in the singing of Jana Gana Mana. The program closed with several AID volunteers and guests joining to (re)affirm their pledge to eliminate poverty from India..

## Glimpses of post-cyclone Orissa

Prasad Subramanian, an AID volunteer, visited the cyclone hit regions of Orissa in June 2000, to survey the status of cyclone relief activities. Here are some pictures from his visit. For the full report and more photographs, please visit <http://astro.princeton.edu/~vijay/Aid/orissa.html> <http://www.cdsp.neu.edu/info/students/ravi/orissa/index.htm>



*Trees stand in mute testimony of the devastation 7 months after the cyclone. The dirt road leads to Bengali Sabi in Gada Kujunga block where legal awareness and women's microcredit work has begun.*



*Mamta Grha (home of compassion), one of the many set up by the government to house destitute women and children temporarily, in the most ravaged regions*



*Adbikaar staff Damayanti Prusty, addressing women from Darpanarayanpur. Adbikaar has been active in identifying rights-violation and encourages legal awareness among villagers.*



*Children smile before Kesariapur's Balvikas Kendra, in spite of the physical conditions at this worst hit area being run down and depressing, reflecting the spirit of the recovery.*

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