

Sangharsh and Nirman in Potnal: Vimukti leads the way



Potnal women rallying for their rights.



Vimukti volunteers (from left : Neju, Prem, Narasappa and Koshy

When I visited Potnal, Karnataka in July, I was overwhelmed by the energy that Vimukti, one of the social movements supported by AID, has managed to harness amongst the Dalit people of the region. Vimukti is catalyzing a broad social change in the villages around Potnal. Dalit women are now starting to influence government decisions that affect their community. AID's Raleigh and State College chapters have been supporting Vimukti's work since its inception in 2000. The second phase of support started in September 2002. The first phase of the project focussed on the formation of local self-help groups amongst Dalit women living in 15 villages surrounding Potnal. These women organized themselves as the Jagruta Mahila Okkoota (Awake Women's Organization) after their fight against corruption and injustice enabled old

women to receive the pensions due to them. They were able to influence the government to enforce payment of minimum wages to the locals employed in drought relief projects. Besides organizing for their rights, the women's groups were also involved in improving health awareness in their villages. In the second phase of the project, Vimukti is implementing alternative livelihood development plans such as soap manufacturing, terracota handicrafts and the cultivation of community land. Vimukti also operates after-school learning centers to improve access to education for school drop-outs and adults. Vimukti volunteers Mita and Premdas have also participated in events like the People's Health Assembly and the satyagrahas of the Narmada Bachao Andolan. AID is looking forward to a long and fruitful relationship with this pioneering organization. For more details on Vimukti and AID, please visit www.aidindia.org/raleigh.

-- Deepak Suryanarayanan (AID-Raleigh)

Wish you could do more to support Vimukti ?

*Please consider making a **directed donation** to this project by mentioning "For Vimukti Project" on your check or when you call to make your donation (regular donation details overleaf).*

AID wishes you a Happy Diwali !

News and Notes

Swami Agnivesh, a prominent critic of harmful practices in popular religion and an activist against bonded labor, gave an inspiring message of social justice and spirituality at the M.I.T. on Sept 21. At the event, co-sponsored by AID-Boston and South Asia Center of Boston, the speaker exhorted the audience to not leave the symbols of Hindu tradition and spirituality in the hands of extremists. -- *Siva Digavalli*

"Drowned Out", a compelling documentary on the Narmada struggle, was screened at AID-State College on Sept 15. The film squarely addresses the notion of the greater good and other fundamental questions. The film can be viewed online at www.spannerfilms.net.

-- *Anand Narasimhamurthy*

AID-Miami hosted Manoj Saranathan (AID-Maryland) on Sept. 14 at a talk entitled "The Narmada Dam Project: A Socio-Economic and Environmental Disaster". A spirited discussion followed the talk. The chapter also organized a

dance performance by a local troupe and publicized AID at a concert by the Global Rhythms group.

-- *Pavithra Narayanan*

Manick Sorcar, son of legendary Indian magician, P.C. Sorcar, was the star at Harmony 2002, an Indian American cultural extravaganza organized by AID-Cincinnati on Sept 28. Fifteen visual arts performers entertained the audience with dance, drama, magic, animation and lasers. -- *Varsha Bhatt*

The AID information booth at Atlanta's Festival of India (Aug 17-18), was overwhelmed by interested visitors ! On the second day of the Festival, AID-Atlanta organized a dance drama portraying the joys and responsibilities of freedom. Entitled "Azaad: Celebrating Freedom", the program was choreographed by AIDER Alka Roy and won rave reviews from the local Indian newspaper Atlanta Samachar. -- *Abirami N. Raja*

Upcoming Events – Mark your calendars !

Global Rhythms concert in Boston

Global Rhythms, a World Music Ensemble, will be playing at a Fall Benefit concert organized by AID-Boston on Oct 20 at the MIT Kresge Auditorium. Consisting of over 20 members based in Miami University (Ohio) the group performs Indian raaga based music, integrated with music from Asia, Africa and South America, with a heavy emphasis on rhythm. The group has played with Grammy award winning percussionists such as Eguie Castrillo, Jon Santos and Glen Velez. For more details please visit www.aidboston.org.

--Rabel Matthews

Pt. Vishwamohan Bhatt & N. Ravikiran at Ann Arbor

Mohan Veena maestro and Grammy award-winner Pt. Vishwa Mohan Bhatt will join Chitra Veena exponent N. Ravikiran at Sangam 2002, to be held on Oct. 25 at the Power Center, Ann Arbor. Sangam 2002 at Ann-Arbor, is being sponsored by AID, Sulekha.com and MEO. The two artists enthralled an audience at an earlier tour stop, sponsored by AID-Bay Area. on Sept. 25. For more details on the Ann Arbor event, please visit www.umich.edu/~aidindia

--Rachna Dhingra

Cricket Tournament in Atlanta

AID Atlanta's Fall fund raiser is a cricket tournament to be held on Oct 27 and Nov 3. Visit www.aidindia.org/~atlanta for details.

--Radhika Rammohan

Gift of new clothes ! An EcoShop special

This holiday season, surprise a loved one in India and support rural livelihoods.

The Grameen Maitri Kendra (EcoShop) is offering exciting gift packages combining beauty with vision:

- Sari & blouse piece (Handloom \$10, Khadi \$16)
- Khadi kurtas (men's & women's, all styles & sizes under \$6)
- Khadi nightdresses (men's & women's under \$6)
- Men's western-style khadi shirt (\$6) and pant (\$5)
- Material for salwar, kameez and dupatta (\$8 to \$15)

The EcoShop will ship ordered items anywhere in India for a nominal charge (upto \$6). Every order over \$20 includes a colorful vegetable-dyed kerchief free ! For more items and ordering details, please visit

www.aidindia.org/ecoshop

“Changing Faces – Facing Changes” The AID 2003 calendar

*Featuring breath-taking pictures
from P. Sainath's collection*

AID's 2003 calendar features pictures from “Visible Work, Invisible Women”, a photo-collection by India's leading journalist P. Sainath ! Dedicated to the extraordinary spirit and unflagging energy of village women, this must-have calendar is available now by making a donation of \$10 or more to AID. The calendar includes the months of Oct-Dec 2002, making it ready for immediate use ! To order copies for yourself, friends and family, please visit

<http://www.aidindia.org/calendar>

Poverty

Economic is the only definition we think about:

I live in emotional poverty.

I place myself before others-

I think of whether the person who's asking for help deserves my help or not.

(In contrast, the Sun shines on everyone)

When the child in rags

comes for alms

I think of organized crime and

pull away.

When everyone around me clamors

about the earth losing its resources

I make sure I extract from the earth

my money's worth, not what I deserve.

When someone asks me for help:

I don't feel, I think.

I am poorer than the poor.

I cling to my selfishness, not knowing that

if I threw it away--

I would be rich.

-- Arun Sripathi (AID-JHU)

Email: info@aidindia.org

Phone: 1-888-TALK-2-AID

Web: <http://www.aidindia.org>

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- By Credit Card, please call (301) 209 0511
- By Check, please send in favor of AID to:

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PO BOX F, COLLEGE PARK, MD 20741-3005**

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