

# THE FIRST 5 YEARS



AMRITA  
**SeRve**  
SELF RELIANT VILLAGE

TRANSFORMING RURAL INDIA

THE  
FIRST 5  
YEARS




*“Love can never be tiring  
or boring. It keeps filling  
your heart with more and  
more energy.”*

*– Amma*

AMRITA  
**SeRve**  
SELF RELIANT VILLAGE

TRANSFORMING RURAL INDIA

## CONTENTS

 p 1.....Amma's Message	 p 55.....Agriculture
 p 3.....A Few Words	 p 69.....Income Generation
 p 5.....Introduction to the Project	 p 83.....Eco-friendly Infrastructure
 p 19.....Health	 p 93.....Self-Empowerment
 p 33.....Water & Sanitation	 p 105.....University Integration
 p 43.....Education	 p 112 .....Partners



AMRITA  
**SeRve**  
SELF RELIANT VILLAGE  
**THE FIRST 5 YEARS**


Published by:  
Mata Amritanandamayi Math  
Amritapuri P.O., Kollam  
690546 Kerala, India  
[www.amritapuri.org](http://www.amritapuri.org)

Copyright © 2019 by Mata Amritanandamayi Math  
All rights reserved.  
Printed in India.





## AMMA'S MESSAGE



*"Villages are India's foundation—Her very life force—and it is society's responsibility to take care of them. In fact, it is our villages that sustain us by providing us, who live in cities, with the nourishment we need in order to survive. However, today, we are just exploiting villages and casting them aside. It is time to acknowledge that our villages are our very foundation and move forward with one heart and one mind to protect and serve them."*

– Amma



## A FEW WORDS

SWAMI JNANAMRITANANDA PURI

It was in July 2013 that I received a phone call from Amma. Amma was on Her annual tour of the United States. Amma wanted me to select villages all around the nation, so that we could then work for their development. During years of touring India, Amma had seen, first-hand, the hardships villagers faced. Accordingly, during the remainder of that year, I travelled with my team to remote and impoverished communities around India.

More than five years have passed now. Working in diverse communities with different socio-economic profiles has been humbling. It has also been a great learning experience.

There have been so many positive changes. And what is really inspiring is that the village communities are now themselves beginning to drive change. We have to continue working alongside them. There is still some way to go. Amma's vision where prosperous villagers take pride in their immense contribution to the nation's well-being and overall development has to be fully realised.

Over the following pages we share with you some highlights from our journey of the initial five years and its impact. The project has given an opportunity to many teams and individuals to contribute selflessly. A strong foundation has been laid. We invite you to partner with us on our ongoing journey to enable the transformation of rural India.



## INTRODUCTION TO PROJECT

For more than 30 years, Amma has been travelling by road in different Indian states to conduct satsang and darshan programmes. She usually stops for bhajan practices, tea and dinner with those travelling with Her. Often, these stops are near villages, and villagers gather to see Amma and have Her darshan. They speak to Her about their lives and problems. In this way, Amma has personally met and listened to the despairing sorrow of countless people from rural India. She Herself grew up in a village and has personally encountered the problems many villagers face.

Life is hard in the villages. People do not have enough money or even enough food to eat sometimes. Water is a big problem everywhere. Also, because of the lack of good hospitals, villagers cannot easily gain access to quality healthcare services. The main occupation in villages is agriculture, but because of droughts, sometimes farmers cannot even grow one crop a year.

One prominent journalist likened the condition of the villagers to that of the prisoners whom Roman Emperor Nero callously burned to provide light for his guests dining nearby. At the material level, this might be true. On another level, life for people in the cities is harder. People there are burning inside because of stress, loneliness and depression. Ironically,

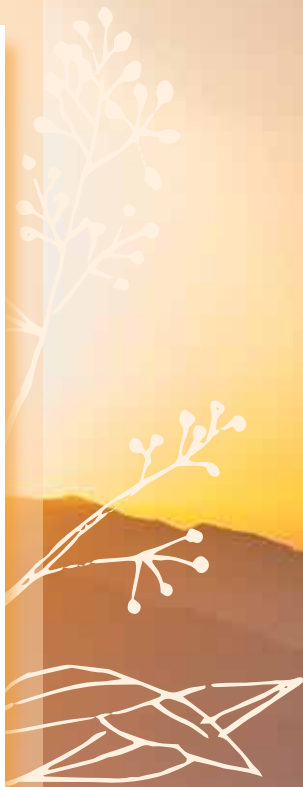
migration from villages to cities is increasing. If we do not act now, Indian villages will vanish, and her traditional culture will be destroyed.

In spite of the material problems, which can and must be solved, rural life is better in many respects than urban life. India's traditions and her rich spiritual heritage are still alive in the villages. India's ancient culture thrives here. Young people respect the elderly. The real pulse of India can be felt more in villages than in cities. For those "burning" in the cities, the remedy may well be going to serve in the villages, gaining inner satisfaction and contentment.

At present, India's economic and social development occurs almost exclusively in the cities. The challenge that lies before us is to balance material wealth and ambition, characteristic to urban life, with the culture and values that have been practiced in villages for thousands of years. To accomplish this goal, we must revive and nourish our villages. We must not miss our chance now to strengthen and include them in the technological advancements and forward momentum that is sweeping across the nation. The question at hand is: "How can India evolve into a modern society without losing its values rooted in traditions?" Amma has created the Amrita SeRve Project in order to address and respond to these concerns.



A world where  
prosperous villagers  
*Take pride*  
in their  
immense contribution  
to  
*the nation's wellbeing*  
and  
*overall development.*





## THE STORY

In July 2013, Swami Jnanamritananda Puri received instructions from Amma to create a new initiative that served the needs of the poor and underserved communities, which Amma had encountered during many travels around rural India. A team formed and preparations for the selection of villages began. Amma insisted that Swami Jnanamritananda should travel to villages across all 27 states of India in order to experience the people's living conditions first-hand before starting any work.

Leading up to Amma's 60th birthday on September 25th 2013, President APJ Abdul Kalam inaugurated a summit hosted by Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, named "Our Villages, Our World: What Can We Offer?" He discussed challenges facing the world today and how empowering India's rural villages would ensure economic growth as well as protect the nation from global turbulence and instability.

On the 27th of September, Amma's birthday, the Mata Amritanandamayi Math (MAM) officially announced the Amrita Self-Reliant Village Programme (Amrita SeRVe). The goal of this project was to select 101 villages across India to transform into self-reliant role-model villages.

The project was aimed at empowering villagers to create prosperous, clean, pollution-free communities where people are healthy, educated and dignified. Communities where everyone's basic needs of food, water, clothing, housing and employment are met. A community where there is harmony between man and nature, where there is confidence and a vibrant culture rooted in India's age-old traditional wisdom.

Shortly after the formal launch of the project, the team began a road trip around the entire country. They took the help of local devotees



### THE FIRST 5 OBJECTIVES

-  Spreading awareness on Health, Hygiene and Education
-  Leveraging existing infrastructure and utilising government schemes
-  Strengthening of traditional values and preserving local knowledge
-  Formation of Self-Help Groups
-  Restoring harmony between human beings and nature





in each state to identify suitable villages. Amrita SeRVE's goal was to work with the most backward communities, those which could reap the most benefit from its intervention. Villages were selected with the consideration of whether there were similar disadvantaged communities in the vicinity to which the work could be expanded over time. Games were played with the children and discussions held with elders, women and farmers.

"As we travelled through the states and chose each village, we also selected an educated young person to start an afterschool tutoring centre. Education is the key to development. So, the tutoring centre became our first intervention in each village. We were able to create an immediate rapport with the villagers."  
—Swami Jnanamritananda Puri

With the goal of delivering quality education to remote villages, tuition teachers were selected

and tuition centres established in 21 states. They offer afterschool tutoring for all the children of schooling age, bridge courses for dropouts and adult-literacy classes. These centres are currently run by Amrita CREATE (the Center for Research in Analytics & Technologies for Education of Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham). Amrita CREATE had already begun working in the flood-devastated villages of Uttarakhand.

Amrita SeRVE has since collaborated with CREATE to initiate these centres in every village selected as part of the 101 villages project. Finding suitable candidates to become tuition teachers, however, has been a challenge. Even today it is rare to find young men or women who have completed secondary education in rural areas; only a few actually complete secondary education, and most educated people leave their villages for jobs in the cities. This is a clear indication that as we promote education

in the villages, local employment opportunities must be simultaneously developed to prevent migration to the cities.

Another early priority was the recruitment of community health workers who would take on the role of awareness ambassadors to support the villagers' wellbeing. By early 2015, several candidates from the selected villages were invited to attend the first health worker training in Kerala. The four-week camp was conducted by Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences in Kochi (Amrita Hospital) and Amrita SeRVE in Amritapuri. The new staff were instructed in basic diagnostic methods, kitchen garden establishment and monitoring, natural remedies and guidance on how to impart awareness to villagers on health issues. Tuition teachers and health workers were recruited from the local community itself.

In September 2015, a fellowship programme was introduced. This presented an opportunity

for college graduates to serve in the villages for one year. There was an initial training camp around Amma's 62nd birthday, followed by a one-year placement in rural life. This was a learning period for all—not only for the fellows getting their feet on the ground, but also for the Amrita SeRVE team, which was new to this kind of work.

After completion of the yearlong fellowship, the fellows were given the option to become village coordinators. This meant that their valuable experience could be shared and built upon in the years to come. Today, village coordinators are appointed directly from the local communities and more emphasis is put on day-to-day communication with the headquarters rather than on initial training. Throughout the year, experienced staff visit the village coordinators and health workers to support their work and provide training within the working environment.







Working  
side-by-side  
*To overcome*  
all challenges  
villagers face  
in day-to-day  
*life.*



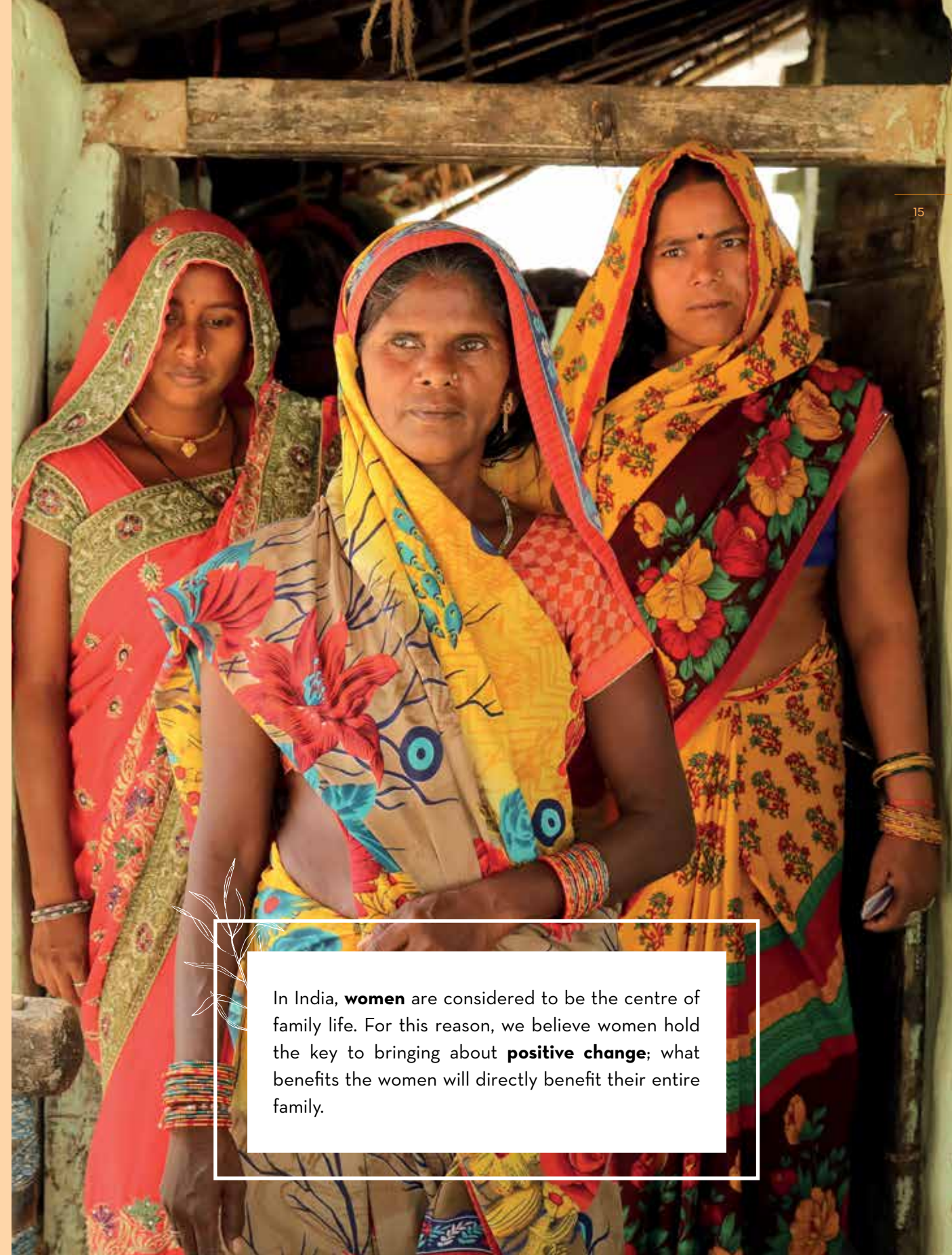


## COMMON HARDSHIPS

- Isolation from the **healthcare** system
- Lack of **personal hygiene** awareness and facilities
- Malnutrition** due to a deficient diet
- Obstacles to completing secondary **education**
- Difficulty in obtaining **sufficient income** to feed the family and send children to school
- Ever increasing burdens on land, and mounting **farmers' debt** due to unnatural farming practices



Amrita SeRVe works in some of the most underserved communities, comprising 200 to 1,500 people. A single household can include four to fourteen members from several generations. Primary occupations are typically agriculture and daily labour. Most households own less than two acres of farmland, which may barely be enough to feed the family. While men are usually the main breadwinners, most women are tied to household duties and seasonal work in the field.



In India, **women** are considered to be the centre of family life. For this reason, we believe women hold the key to bringing about **positive change**; what benefits the women will directly benefit their entire family.





### REGULAR ACTIVITIES ACROSS DIFFERENT FOCUS AREAS:

- 👉 Generating **awareness** on health and education
- 👉 Supporting **health and education** through monitoring and follow-up
- 👉 Securing **water and electricity** infrastructure
- 👉 Revitalising rural agriculture through **farmers' groups and organic farming**
- 👉 Encouraging **sustainable livelihoods** through supplementary income generation, provision of training and connecting products to markets
- 👉 Formation of **Self-Help Groups**
- 👉 Self-empowerment through daily **yoga and meditation**
- 👉 Preservation of **local culture, rituals of worship and celebrations** of life
- 👉 Motivating and strengthening **village development committees**
- 👉 Introduction of **reliable and sustainable energy** solutions



Seven focus areas have been chosen as a means to ensure that true development occurs in **all facets of life**: Health, Water & Sanitation, Education, Agriculture, Income Generation, Eco-friendly Infrastructure and Self Empowerment. Without meeting our basic needs, we cannot grow to become truly fulfilled beings. When true fulfilment occurs, the ripple effect will naturally spread to people beyond our own communities.







After decades of facing hardships in isolation, India's rural population is now gradually being included in the national healthcare system. Burdened by high maternal and child mortality, frequent occurrences of waterborne diseases, chronic hypertension, acute respiratory infections and systemic anaemia among women, the villagers are in **serious need of medical attention**. Although basic infrastructure is in place throughout the country, connecting villagers with government services remains an ongoing challenge.

In the past, **indigenous medicine and home remedies** played a big part in maintaining community health. However, these traditions have not been passed on to the current generation. This could be due to the promotion of allopathy throughout the world, school education, or simply a lack of interest in old techniques. Nonetheless, most of the health conditions that appear in the villages today could easily be avoided.

Amrita SeRve focuses on **preventative measures and health education**. By understanding the cause of disease, risk factors can be controlled and reduced. For example, the simple practice of **handwashing** before eating food can drastically cut down the rate of waterborne illnesses.

In essence, Amrita SeRve supports the people in adopting a range of practices that secure the wellbeing for all, making use of **existing infrastructure** and resources, primarily through raising awareness and conducting frequent follow-ups.



## HEALTH WORKERS



At the heart of all health-related activities are the local women in each village who have been identified by Amrita SeRve to serve as health workers. Their main role is to **spread relevant awareness** on health-related topics, provide **basic health support**, as well as to **improve the usage of existing government facilities**. Since the first health worker training camp in 2015, conducted at Amrita Hospital Cochin and Amritapuri, more than 70 health workers have been trained by Amrita SeRve.

Amrita SeRve **health workers are female**, have completed basic schooling through the 8th standard and reside in the same or neighbouring village. The health workers are always available and present within the community. They must be female because it is easier for women to

reach out to pregnant women and adolescent girls.

One of the health workers' regular tasks consists of visiting between four and eight homes every day. This way, each household in the community is visited at least once a month. At present, active health workers are engaging with around 2,250 families to promote good health practices and to explain the **risks and symptoms of several common diseases**, such as severe diarrhoea, pneumonia, anaemia and vitamin deficiencies. At the same time, they are constantly looking out for indications of any such diseases in the families.

Essentially, the health workers are the link between the villagers and professional healthcare. If a health worker recognises



**PHC/CHC trips** are undertaken by health workers to accompany homebound or reluctant patients to avail timely public medical care.



**Health check-ups** are done by our staff and include: height, weight, BP, sugar and haemoglobin.



**Child immunisations** were carried out **4,291 times**.



**Family planning information** is provided throughout the year for eligible couples.



**Pregnant women care** for around **480 women** have included antenatal check-ups, immunisations and awareness sessions.



**Anganvadi monitoring** ensures that all pregnant women and young children benefit from this government service.



**Health awareness** classes were held **219 times** for general public, at **1,154 SHG** meetings and **485 times** in schools.



**Yoga classes** are conducted for more than **680 people in 25 villages** on a regular basis. That means around **27 people** from every village.



**Kitchen gardens** were initiated for **1,400 households**, of which at least 500 are active and currently monitored.



**Medical camps** were held **232 times** to serve **19,420 patients**.





anything unusual or troubling, she will immediately refer the person to a **doctor at the Primary Health Centre (PHC)**. Sometimes health workers even accompany people to the PHC, when they are too weak or intimidated to go by themselves. PHCs are the first point of contact between the village community and the medical officer, and they provide basic medical services. Patients with higher requirements are referred from there to the nearest Community

Health Centre (CHC) or even the District Hospital, which in most cases is much further away.

Health workers keep an especially **close eye on pregnant women**. They follow up on their wellbeing and preparedness, either during their routine visit or with additional visits. They maintain a care record for each pregnant woman and advise her to visit the PHC once

a month to receive a free antenatal check-up, immunisations and iron supplements. During her visits, the health worker also reminds the women to regularly take any supplements prescribed by the doctor and to complete preparations for delivery in good time.

After delivery, health workers check on the mothers and their newborns. Aside from verifying that both are in good health, they ensure that the first immunisations are given on time and that an official birth certificate is issued. Health workers also hand out new-baby kits containing essential items and supplies to **ensure the baby's comfort and wellbeing**. The kits include one set of baby clothes, oil, soap and other essential items.

Additionally, health workers actively support the government appointed ANM (Auxiliary Nurse and Midwife), ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) and Anganwadi workers. During **immunisation camps** conducted by the ASHA worker once per month as per government directive, our health workers offer support in its organisation and ensure that not a single child is overlooked. Due to these efforts, around 2,000 children have received their vaccinations as per National Vaccination Schedule last year alone.

Health workers and village coordinators have been trained to facilitate **regular yoga** practices for groups of children and adults. The yoga sequence they follow consists of Surya Namaskar, simple asanas and meditation. The sessions for children take place either before or after school and those for adults are usually conducted with SHG members. Yoga classes are attended by more than 680 people in more than 25 villages on a regular basis.





## MEDICAL CAMPS



In many villages, people are not accustomed to seeking the help of professional doctors when they fall ill. As part of efforts to promote full use of free government health services available at the nearby Primary Health Centre (PHC), Amrita SeRVe encourages regular medical camps in the communities. Ideally, these camps are run by the **medical officers and support staff from the PHC** itself. Health workers play a role in organising the location as well as mobilising people to attend. So far, 232 medical camps have been conducted in this manner,

treating over 19,420 people.

Some medical camps were also conducted by doctors and medical staff of the Amrita Institute of Medical Science (Amrita Hospital) Cochin. Devotees of Amma who are licensed medical professionals have also conducted free medical camps as a **service to the impoverished communities**. These non-governmental medical camps have proven to be particularly effective in immediate disaster relief efforts. Eye clinics are also conducted in a similar manner.

## GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

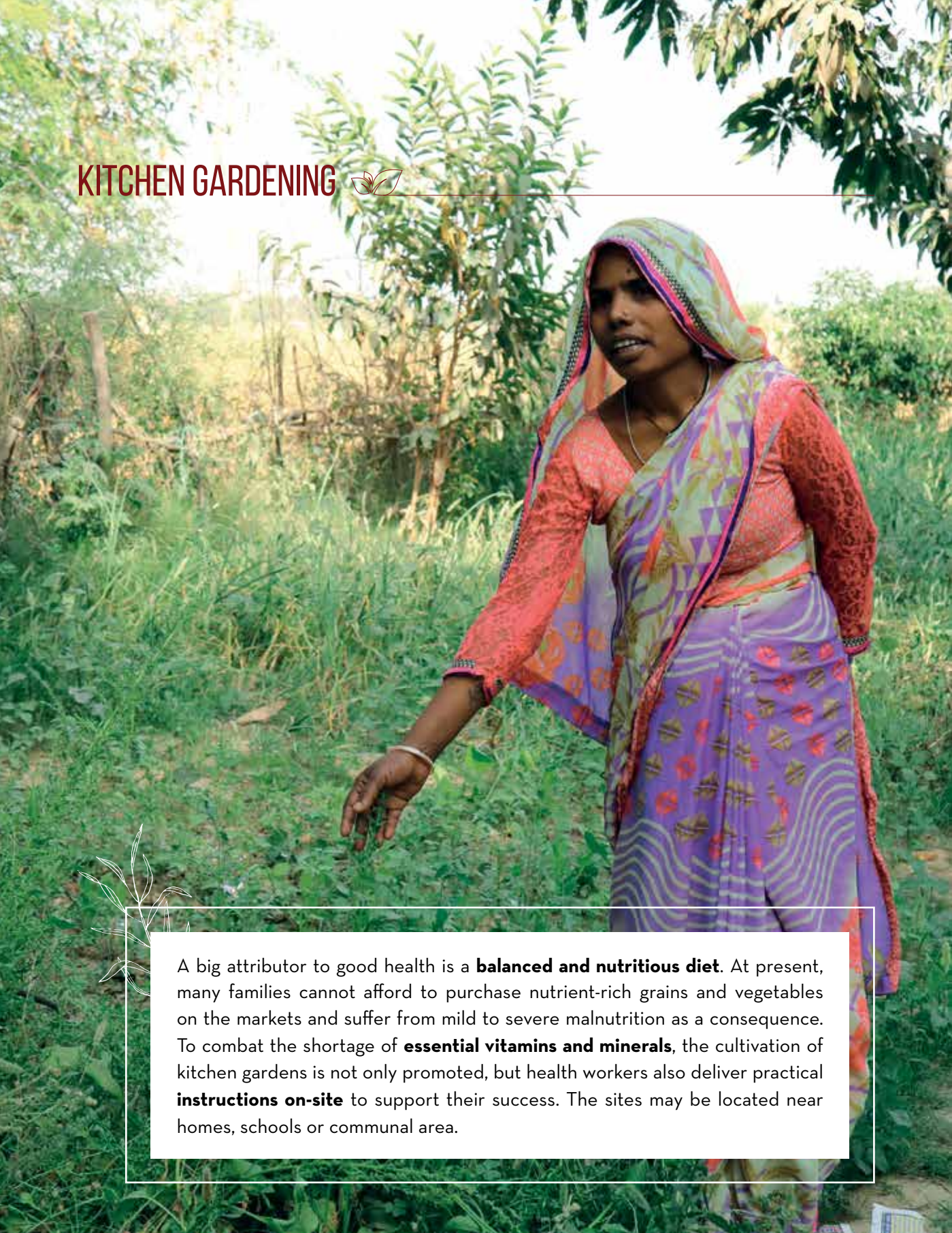


Health workers and village coordinators **assist the people** in availing government schemes, such as pensions, health insurance and social security. For example, there are several programmes by the Central Government specifically aimed at mother and child care.

They also support people in applying for Aadhar cards and in opening bank accounts—both of which are now requirements for most government schemes. For the most part, the villagers are unaware of the **large number of schemes** available to them.



## KITCHEN GARDENING



A big attributor to good health is a **balanced and nutritious diet**. At present, many families cannot afford to purchase nutrient-rich grains and vegetables on the markets and suffer from mild to severe malnutrition as a consequence. To combat the shortage of **essential vitamins and minerals**, the cultivation of kitchen gardens is not only promoted, but health workers also deliver practical **instructions on-site** to support their success. The sites may be located near homes, schools or communal area.



*“The practice of maintaining a vegetable garden is declining. Even if we only have a tiny plot of land, we should try to grow a few vegetables, using organic fertilisers. Spending some time with our plants, we should talk to them and kiss them. This relationship will give us a new vitality.”*

– Amma



## HEALTH AWARENESS



Health workers are trained to hold awareness classes and learn how to spread knowledge effectively. In addition to sharing their knowledge during daily home visits, the health workers hold regular awareness sessions at schools, in Anganwadis and at SHG meetings. At least twice a month, health workers join SHG meetings to provide awareness to their members, who then **spread the good practices** and set an example for the whole village.

**Self-cleanliness and hygienic practices** such as handwashing and body care are properly explained. Other topics include the health-risks of open-defecation and the sanitary advantages of toilets, the essentials of proper nutrition, the dangers of substance use, information on menstrual hygiene, practical home remedies and the identification and treatment of common diseases. On special occasions, such as *Menstrual Hygiene Day*, *Doctor's Day* and *Women's Day*, **rallies are organised to add momentum** to the health movement.

When health workers **visit government schools** to meet the children, they are not only talking about health awareness, but also give live demonstrations. They teach personal hygiene through **practicing cleanliness** activities in mixed groups with small and older children. At the same time, they regularly monitor the children's cleanliness in terms of hand washing, trimming of nails, bathing and wearing of clean clothes.





## MENSTRUAL HEALTH & SANITARY PADS



To manage their menstruation, rural women sometimes depend on alternatives such as rags, leaves and ash, which can lead to health conditions such as Reproductive Tract Infections (RTIs). Further, because of the stigma and social taboos around menstruation, hygienic **methods for managing menstruation are not generally discussed**. Studies reveal the greatest obstacle to proper sanitary protection for rural women is the high cost and unavailability of suitable products. Disposable pads are intermittently available. However, the biggest challenge is the disposal of the used pads.

Amrita SeRVe has been promoting menstrual health and hygienic practices along with a village-made, reusable sanitary pad. By discussing this new alternative to manage menstruation, **a space is created for women and adolescent girls** to share their problems on the topic, which is still a delicate issue for many people in rural India. The stigma and taboos surrounding menstruation have created a very unfavourable environment for women, young and old, to carry out the measures required for a healthy period.

Equipped with flipcharts, confidence and enthusiasm, Amrita SeRVe's determined **health workers are reaching out** to women of all ages, whether at schools, SHG meetings, or at home, to deliver advice on healthy practices. The movement of healthy menstrual practices is already picking up in several villages where women have come together and spread this important message in rallies and public meetings. The international Menstrual Hygiene Day is celebrated annually on the 28<sup>th</sup> of May and many successful events have been organised by the joint efforts of Amrita SeRVe staff and empowered women.

*Saukhyam* (a Sanskrit word that means *happiness* and *comfort*) was meticulously designed by an Amritapuri Ashram resident in 2015. The first version of this product was

first introduced to villages in 2016, taking the form of **a reusable cotton-cloth pad**. At the annual Rural Technology and Crafts Mela of the National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) in Hyderabad, Saukhyam received the **award for the most innovative product**.

Since then, Amrita SeRVe has travelled across the country to **teach the tailoring process** to more than 30 women in eight states. One of the main advantages of this product is that the materials required to make it (absorbent cotton cloth and a leakproof layer, such as umbrella cloth) are readily available in all villages. . This allows women to **make their own pads when needed**.

In October 2017, an alternative to the cloth pad, the *Saukhyam Reusable Pad*, was launched using **banana-fibre as the primary absorbent material**. This pad underwent intensive research and a design process that took more than two years to create. Banana fibre is a by-product of banana cultivation that is often discarded. Saukhyam pads with banana-fibre inserts have the advantage of increased absorption, resulting in improved hygiene and comfort. Both solutions are hygienic for the user and environment-friendly, as they avoid using the high amount of plastic found in conventional disposable pads.



# WATER AND SANITATION

CONSTANT AND CLEAN



Fresh water is used every day for drinking, cooking, bathing and washing. It is also needed for hydrating and cleaning livestock and watering essential food plants during dry periods. These requirements are usually met by the **women and girls** who are **daily fetching the water** from the nearest source. Water sources vary between open wells, nearby streams, communal taps, or, in many places, public handpumps.

For many households these water sources are several hundred metres walking distance from the house. The women are used to the **heavy work** of carrying the large vessels with cheer and smiles along well-tread paths. However, they may spend several hours every day on this task, leaving them little or **no time for other matters**, such as education, earning additional income, being with their children, or even getting sleep.

Recognising this hardship and the burden women undergo, Amma has made it a priority to ensure accessible, clean and **dependable water sources** in the villages. Amrita SeRVE and other departments of Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham have collaborated to assess the current state of water access, repair existing infrastructure and carefully plan and execute the construction of **new distribution systems**. To date, these efforts have directly benefited more than 600 households in seven villages.

More efforts have to be put into **water conservation** and groundwater replenishment. Check dams allow surface water from rainfalls to sink into the ground rather than running off or evaporating. A large check dam was constructed in Maharashtra by university students who visited the village as part of a two-week village internship in 2016.



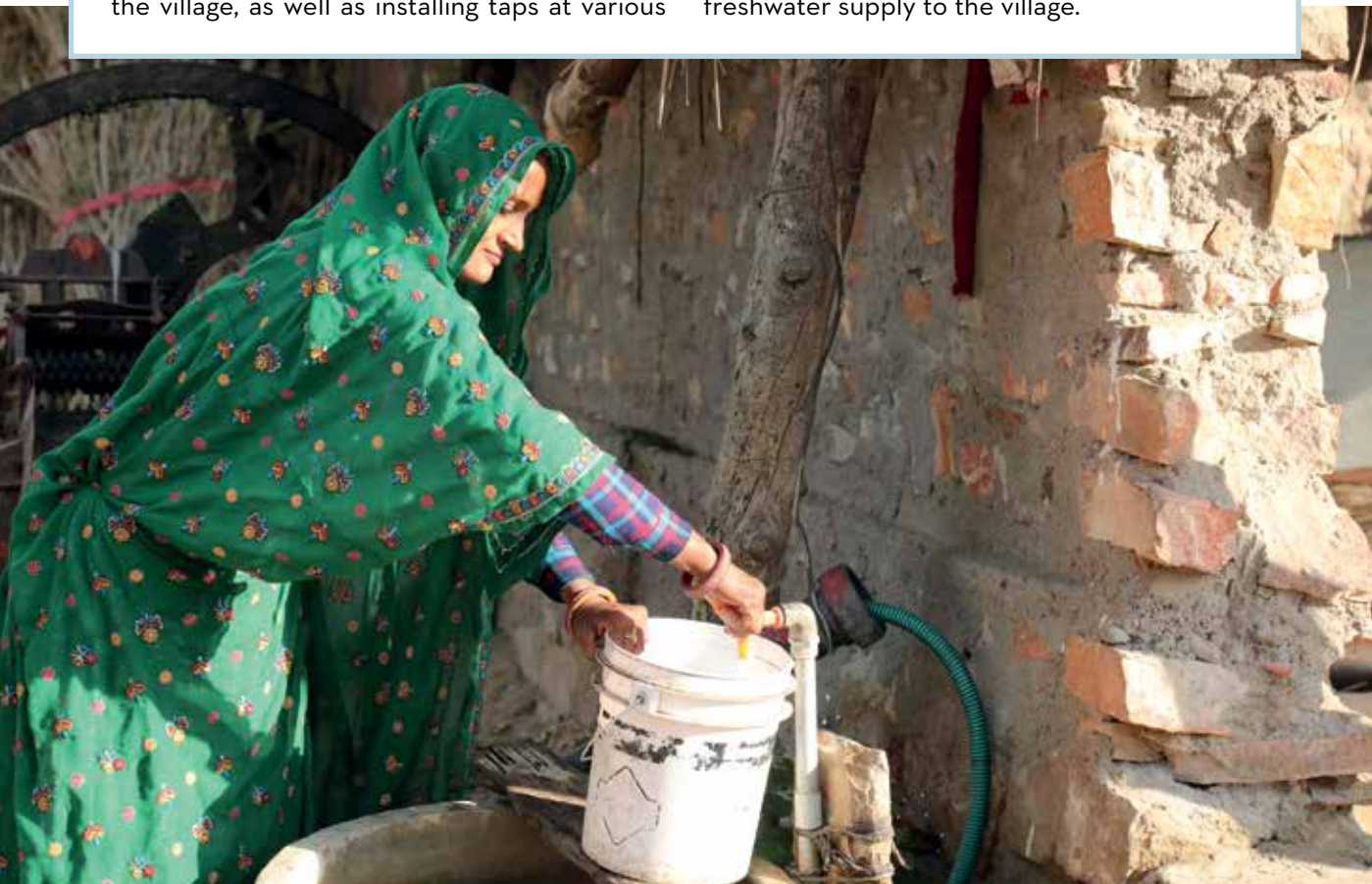
## WATER DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS

Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham's Center for Wireless Networks and Applications (WNA), the Department of Civil Engineering and the Live-in-Labs® programme joined forces with the Amrita SeRve team to design and build **low-cost water distribution** systems in the villages of Pandori (Jammu), Harirampura (Rajasthan), Guptapada (Odisha), Gudipati Cheruvu (Andhra Pradesh) and Komalikudi (Kerala).

Such systems generally consist of laying underground pipes from natural water sources or borewells to overhead storage tanks in the village, as well as installing taps at various

strategic locations throughout the villages.

In some places existing infrastructure has been either repaired or extended. For example, when one handpump was repaired in Ratanpur (Bihar), an additional four handpumps were built in the community. In Valaramkundu (Kerala), an existing pipeline between a nearby dam on a mountain stream had been destroyed by wild elephants, cutting off the entire fresh water supply to the village. Amrita SeRve laid a new water pipeline over the distance of around three kilometres to restore a dependable freshwater supply to the village.



## JIVAMRITAM DRINKING WATER



In September 2017, Amma launched the Jivamritam clean drinking-water initiative in the presence of India's President, Shri Ram Nath Kovind. The goal is to provide water filtration in 5,000 villages throughout India. Each Jivamritam System is capable of filtering the **daily drinking-water needs** of up to 400 five-member families. This **nationwide campaign** has also been implemented in some

Amrita SeRve villages. Jivamritam systems are already up-and-running in Indpur (Himachal Pradesh), Nani Borvai (Gujarat), Naglachandi (Uttar Pradesh) and Gudipati Cheruvu (Andhra Pradesh), with several more locations under way. These four systems alone can fulfil the drinking-water requirements of the 2,600 people living in these communities.



## OPEN-DEFECATION FREE VILLAGE



Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham's AMMACHI Labs has been leading the 101 villages toilet-construction programme, which aims to improve public health as well as transforming the lack of basic hygiene facilities into **economic empowerment**. Its approach is focussed on **strengthening women** through skills training, income generation and SHGs. These three elements are the pillars on which the open-defecation-free village campaign was built.

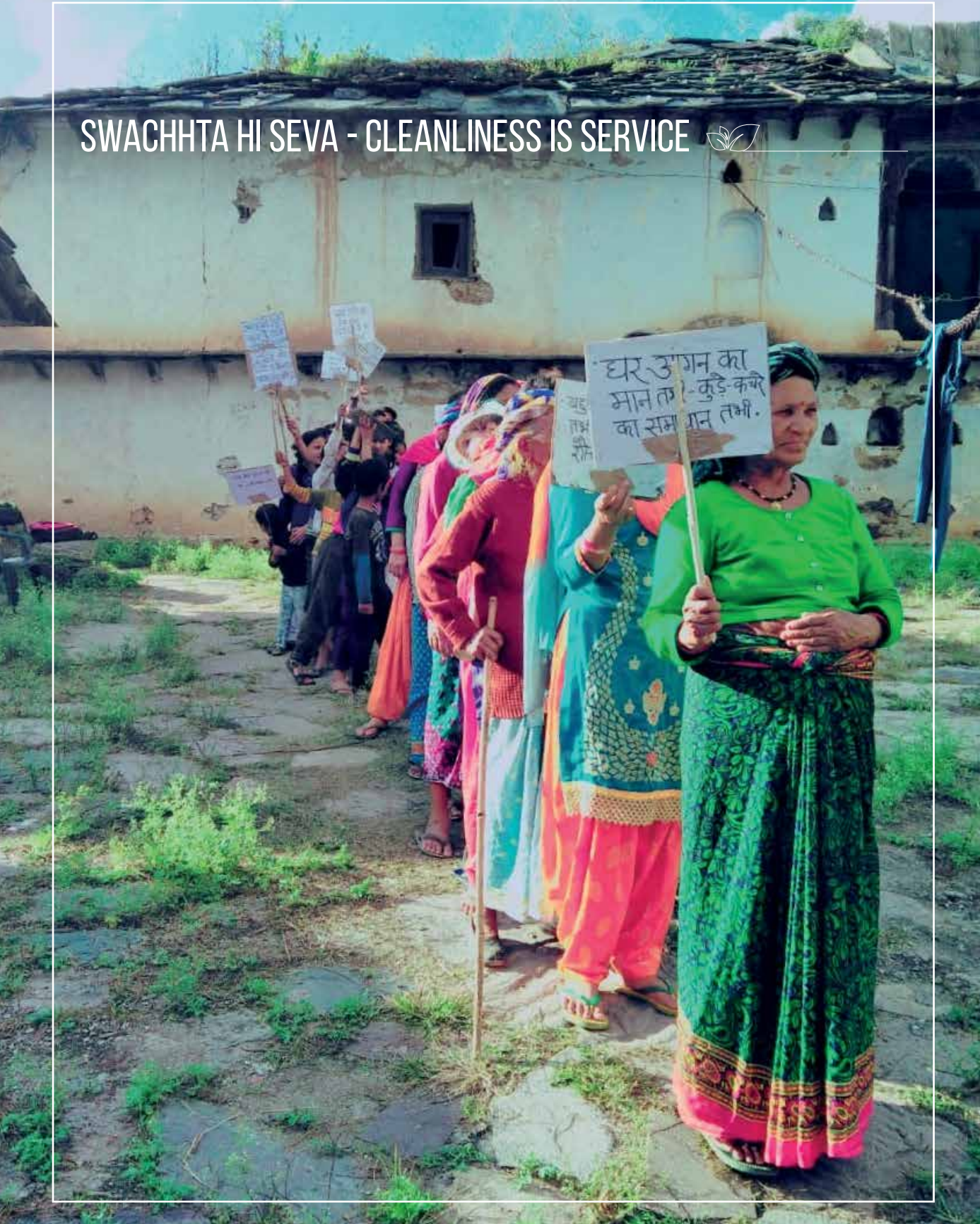
AMMACHI Labs has been offering a **training course** to interested women on the construction, installation and maintenance of new toilets in their communities. The course covers the basics of plumbing, masonry and construction skills. Women can benefit from these professional skills to take on related jobs or come together to start a **toilet-construction business**. They are also instructed in the importance of hygienic practices. By putting this knowledge into practice, these women are becoming **ambassadors for change** in their communities, helping to raise awareness and improve sanitation facilities.

So far more than 400 toilets have been built through these efforts. In October 2017, one year after the inauguration of the programme, the President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, announced that twelve Amrita SeRve villages had been declared Open-Defecation Free (ODF) by the Central Government's Swachh Bharat Mission. An ODF village is one wherein all households have access to a toilet and no human waste or sewage pollutes the village surroundings.





## SWACHHTA HI SEVA - CLEANLINESS IS SERVICE



*"Keeping our environment clean stops the spreading of diseases and saves lives. I urge you all to commit to a Swachh Bharat by offering Swachhata Sharamdanam"*

*– Amma*

The *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan* (Clean India Mission) was launched in October 2014 by the Government of India under Prime Minister Sri Narendra Modi. It is the most significant cleanliness campaign ever run by any Indian government. While leading the **mass movement for cleanliness**, the Prime Minister exhorted and inspired people to fulfil Mahatma Gandhi's dream of a clean and hygienic India.

The *Amala Bharatam Campaign* (ABC) is an expression of Amma's commitment to support the 'Clean India Movement'. It is an Amrita-designed initiative launched in 2010 and introduced to the villages since the very beginning of the Amrita SeRve project. Encompassing **regular clean-up drives**

with children and SHG members, we have conducted more than 700 drives in 34 villages, during the last three years alone. The results of these efforts can clearly be seen today, where the villages are cleaner and the people regularly demonstrate they have more awareness in handling waste.

Leading up to the 4th anniversary of the Swachh Bharat Mission, Prime Minister Modi, launched the Swachhata Hi Seva campaign on September 15th 2018, which ran until October 2nd, marking Mahatma Gandhi's birthday. This campaign aims to **raise awareness** around issues of waste management, cleanliness and sanitation. This short and momentous campaign invited NGOs, schools, colleges, social, cultural,



and political leaders, corporates, government officials, collectors and sarpanches, to actively participate in seva (selfless service) and **communal activities** towards improving sanitation. The central mission was to reinforce the message 'Sanitation as Everyone's Business.'

During the nationwide Swachhta Hi Seva campaign, Amrita staff organised rallies, awareness sessions and cleaning drives in all the Amrita SeRve villages. More than 1,000 people committed to provide at least two

hours for cleaning every day. Amrita SeRve village coordinators and health workers worked together with AMMACHI Labs and CREATE staff to form groups of youth to participate in the campaign. These groups took on the responsibility of organising cleaning sessions in every part of their village, which in turn, inspired more than 2,600 others to join in. Activities were conducted by school children, as well as SHG, village development committee and farmers' group members.



*"As soon as we wake up in the morning, we brush our teeth. Environmental cleanliness is just like that. It's for our own health and wellbeing. If we clean a sewage canal with the right attitude, even that becomes a service to God. In Sanatana Dharma, the Creator and the creation are not two different things. Cleanliness is the most important thing."*

– Amma





Most education in India's small villages takes place in a local government primary school where children typically between the ages of five and ten attend classes from 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> standard. There is one primary school **in every village** and in many of them there is **just one teacher** who has to teach the entire group of children of different ages at the same time. With today's education system, where standardised curriculums and centralised examinations are definitive, such a setup puts rural children at a **great disadvantage**.

There are **many constraints** in villages that make it extremely difficult for the situation to improve. For example, there is a clear **lack of teachers**, as well as the unclear relationship between formal education and day-to-day village life. The **Central Government** has launched several **far-reaching programmes** to address the shortcomings of the Indian education system, including the *Right-To-Education (RTE) Act* of 2009, which has taken up the goal of delivering elementary education (1st to 8th standard) to all children between six and fourteen years of age.

Over the last decade, the government has proactively addressed issues of infrastructure, qualified teachers and enrolment, which lead to significant improvements in the education levels of the rural poor. However, at least as important as enrolment is the continuation of studies. According to the official government statistics of 2016 (U-DISE Report), nationally **29% of children drop out** before completing their elementary education (1st to 8th standard), at which point they would be considered literate.



For **Scheduled Tribes**, the same rate is as high as **50%**! This is an **area of serious concern**. While the systemic reforms underway will take a long time to trickle down to the villages, there are several areas where **immediate support** can be offered to support the government's initiatives.

Amrita SeRVe carries out a range of different activities to promote education, support the children in their studies, as well as supplement academic learning with value education.

Amma repeatedly mentions the two types of education: **education for life** and **education to make a living**. The latter is primarily delivered in school. It is this learning that enables us to earn a decent livelihood. Education for life, on the other hand, is what enhances our experience of living by giving it meaning and purpose. By putting **values and selfless thoughts** into every action, life becomes meaningful for the individual and their actions become beneficial to all.



## AMRITA TUITION CENTRES



One of the first steps in each new village is to identify a tuition teacher who can conduct **daily tuition classes** for the local children. The aim of these Amrita Education Centers is not to replace formal education, but rather to **supplement the government education** already received by the children in 1<sup>st</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> standard. Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham's CREATE manages the tuition centres by providing the teachers with a curriculum, extensive training and materials.

A tablet containing CREATE's own **learning resource platform** (named RITE - *Rural India Tablet enhanced Education*) is provided to each teacher and used in the classroom for

**multimedia demonstrations** and **adult-literacy classes**. The children also learn with this platform through educational games and apps. Amrita CREATE's app for adult-literacy has earned the centre international acknowledgment and a 2018 finalist nomination for the **\$7M Barbara Bush Foundation's Adult Literacy XPRIZE**. The work done by the M.A. Math and CREATE in the field of tribal education also resulted in the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, awarding Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham with the status of '**Centre of Excellence in Tribal Education**' in 2018.



## SWASTHA KANYA SAAKSHAR KANYA



In April 2017, the Amrita SeRve Swastha Kanya Saakshar Kanya, “**Healthy Girl, Educated Girl,**” campaign was initiated in support of the government’s *Beti Bachao, Beti Bathao*, “*Save the Girl, Educate the Girl*” initiative. The government’s programme is aimed at ensuring education and participation of girls, as well as improving the efficiency of welfare services intended for girls. The Amrita SeRve Swastha Kanya Saakshar Kanya programme seeks to support these national efforts by bringing about **awareness in rural India** on the issues affecting young girls and uniting people in the villages to provide girls with complete education and appropriate healthcare.

The programme commenced with **nationwide rallies** involving nearly **1,400 participants** in 15 of the Amrita SeRve villages. Around **450 children** pledged to attend school regularly and adhere to good health practices. As part of

the programme, children performed plays that portray the **vital role of families** in ensuring their children receive an education and adopt good health practices. Up to this day, the children have been asked to **study inspiring stories of women** who have excelled in life and overcome many barriers to realise their dreams.

School attendance has been monitored through *Bade Bhai, Bade Bahain*, which literally translates to “Big Brother, Big Sister.” It is an initiative that was started along with the SKSK campaign to follow up on the pledge made by the children to **attend school regularly**. Just like an older sibling, one child in each class was identified by our coordinators to take daily count of their classmates’ attendance. Once a week they share their records with the village coordinator, who can then intervene whenever actual attendance is declining.

## STORY TELLING

Twice in a month, **our coordinators** visit the local schools, Anganwadis and tuition centres to **share stories** to illustrate **moral values** and to give the children a perspective on how they can enrich their lives by putting these values into practice. Two stories are prepared at the headquarters **every month**, where particular care is put into the significance and relevance of the topic. Inspiration is taken from India’s vast scriptural and **cultural heritage**. There are innumerable stories from ancient India, a time where Gods lived among men. As an example, we have shared several beautiful stories from the popular epics **Ramayana and Mahabharata**. The stories are adapted to suit the young audience, translated to the main languages spoken by our staff (mostly Hindi, English and Malayalam) and voice-recorded before sending.

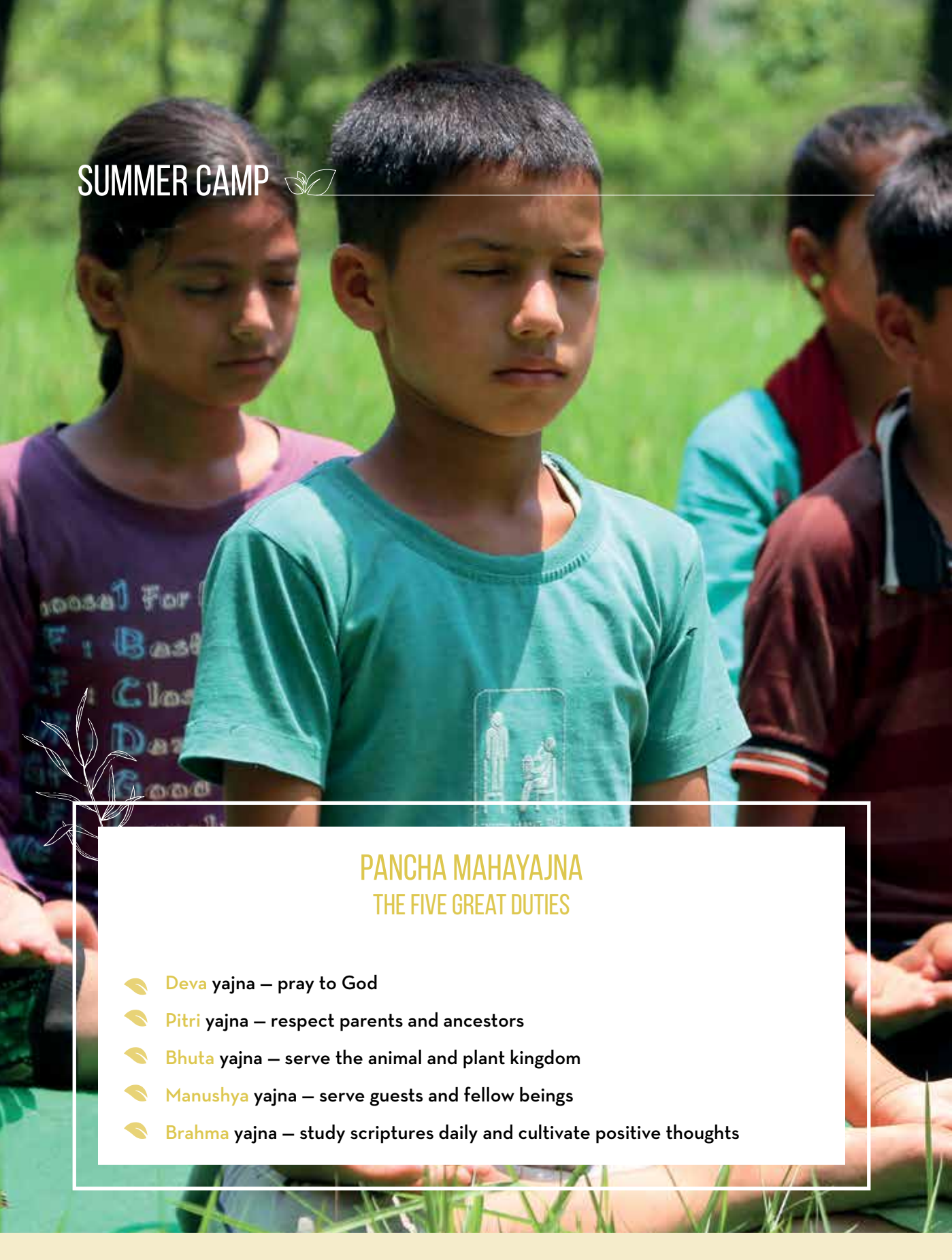


## LANGUAGES IN INDIA






India is a huge country with nearly 1.3 billion people. There are hundreds of languages and dialects spoken in different parts. The official languages used by the Central Government are Hindi and English, but in several states other languages are predominant among the population, especially in rural areas. Some examples:

- Malayalam in Kerala
- Tamil in Tamil Nadu
- Kannada in Karnataka
- Telugu in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh
- Marathi in Maharashtra
- Gujarati in Gujarat
- Urdu in Jammu & Kashmir
- Punjabi in Punjab
- Odia in Odisha
- Bengali in West Bengal





## PANCHA MAHAYAJNA THE FIVE GREAT DUTIES

-  **Deva** yajna – pray to God
-  **Pitri** yajna – respect parents and ancestors
-  **Bhuta** yajna – serve the animal and plant kingdom
-  **Manushya** yajna – serve guests and fellow beings
-  **Brahma** yajna – study scriptures daily and cultivate positive thoughts



Since June 2017 Amrita SeRVe has conducted summer camps with village children during their school vacation. The goal is to help today's 21<sup>st</sup>-century children understand that they can still rely upon the traditions of **India's ancient culture** for wisdom and guidance in creating a **successful life**. During the **one-week camps**, children participate in activities such as yoga and meditation, storytelling, games that carry messages of good citizenship and environmental responsibility, craft workshops using freely available materials, studying local herbs, as well as studying and practicing the

*Pancha Mahayajna* (instructions on how a person can lead a good and purposeful life).

All summer camps culminate in a **drama performance** enacted by the children in front of parents and the public on the final day. The well-rehearsed plays have an underlying message for the whole community about **righteous and happy living**. But for the children especially, the purpose is to give them something valuable that is packaged as entertainment, so that the **moral lessons** stay with them even once the drama is over.



## PARENT-TEACHER MEETINGS

Every month, parent-teacher meetings are organised to emphasise the importance of parents supporting their children in their studies. This includes **sending the children to school** and the tuition centre, as well as preparing for a **continuation of**

**studies** after primary school. The meetings are typically held at the primary school in the **presence of the teacher**, but can sometimes also happen more informally. Our priority is to have **monthly follow-up** with the parents and their children.



## DROPOUTS – MONITORING, TUITION AND RE-ENROLMENT

Preventing school dropouts is one of the most important and challenging tasks in the area of education. After the completion of primary school (4th or 5th standard depending on the state), most children will be required to enrol in a middle school that is often a few kilometres from their small village. Although admission fees are low and government fee waivers are available, paperwork, deadlines and distance pose significant obstacles to both children and parents. Amrita SeRVe not only encourages continuation of studies, but also facilitates the process.

Throughout the year, coordinators are vigilant in reaching out to dropouts and helping them **reintegrate into the education system**. There can be different reasons for dropping out. Some children are simply not interested in studying. They skip school to go playing instead. In these cases, the children usually do not receive sufficient **encouragement to pursue their studies** from their parents and relatives at home. In other cases, some children are helping their parents in the field or with household chores.

Once identified, our staff will talk to parents and teachers, help file necessary paperwork and guide them along in the re-enrolment process. In several cases, the coordinators and tuition teachers will conduct special classes for dropouts to help them enter the new class.



*“Youngsters need to understand the purpose of life. They need courage and wisdom to face the challenges of life. With that understanding they become the light of the world. If we care for them responsibly, moulding their whole character with love, then the future of the world will be safe.”*

– Amma





## LITERACY CLASSES FOR ADULTS



**29% of the rural population in India is illiterate** according to the latest National Sample Survey (NSS) from 2014. In our villages, that leaves about **one third of the population without having completed the 8th standard**, which is recognised as the qualification for an elementary education. It is important to note the vast differences in education standards from village to village. As such, there are some places, especially tribal settlements, where the rate of illiteracy can even exceed 50%.

Not being able to read or write has an enormous negative impact on life. Besides severely limiting the variety of jobs that can be taken up, commonly confining illiterates to low-paid manual labour, it also acts as a barrier between government services and the community. Amrita SeRve has witnessed many cases where **illiterate villagers** were reluctant to visit the nearby Primary Health Centre (PHC) for free medical services or were **unable to apply for health insurance,**

**social security and pensions.**

To address these deficits, several different approaches have been tested to try and organise adult-literacy education. In some places, Amrita SeRve staff, the village coordinators, health workers and tuition teachers **have been teaching smaller groups of adults basic reading and writing skills.** Even being able to read a bus sign or a notice board is a great step of empowerment for previously completely illiterate adults.

Simultaneously, we are promoting an **Each-One-Teach-One** approach. As our own surveys show, there is a mixture of literates and illiterates in all the villages. Consequently, our coordinators have identified not only illiterates willing to learn, but also **literates willing to teach.** This empowers the villagers to take matters into their own hands, thereby being empowered, as well as to share and spreading the valuable message of the **importance of education.**







Agriculture provides a livelihood for farmers. Most **families are completely dependent** on the success of one or two crops per year. Nowadays it is common practice to purchase costly hybrid seeds. The seeds produced by these plants cannot be used as seeds for the following year. Additionally, the use of vast amounts of chemical fertilisers and pesticides is the mainstream approach to obtaining good yields. Over the years, however, this has **drained the soil of its natural fertility** provided by minerals and micro-organisms. Consequently, the need for artificial supplements has increased, further adding to the **financial burdens** of farmers.

For individual marginal farmers, it is very difficult to break from these established practices. Any changes to the methods applied on their own land (mostly around one or two acres) can put their entire crop at risk. After various discussions with such farmers, whose primary concern is making sufficient income to feed their family, it became apparent that in order to enhance their income, **group farming is the best method**. As a group, it is much easier to receive all-round support from governmental and nongovernmental organisations.

Amrita SeRVE has been promoting and supporting farmers to form groups consisting of 10 to 30 farmers. To date, eleven such agricultural societies have been established in different states. Farmers' capacities are thereby increased through collective savings, use of government subsidies, well-planned cultivation methods, conversion to **organic agriculture for restoring land fertility**, which in turn, has been increasing revenue and improving overall health. All these steps can lead to a sustainable livelihood, economic independence and social empowerment.





## AMRITA FARMERS' GROUPS

- ☛ Increase the **livelihood** of poor and marginal farmers
- ☛ Improve the overall **health** and **security** of farmers in food, social welfare and safety
- ☛ Involve **government** and **local authorities** in supporting sustainable agriculture
- ☛ Adopt **innovative methods** to make effective use of available resources and restore the land





## ORGANIC RICE CULTIVATION IN TAMIL NADU



In May 2016, 20 of the most deprived farming families of Sadivayal village in Coimbatore District joined together to start the first Amrita Farmers' Group for the cultivation of organic rice. The members themselves defined their responsibilities and formulated rules for their collaboration. With guidance from Amrita SeRVe, they started with activities like selection of seed variety, soil and seed testing, crop planning, water budgeting and

water conservation measures. Every step was discussed among the group to find solutions.

The cultivation in Sadivayal is a prime example of an effective implementation of the agricultural society structure. **Government subsidies** were secured, training was provided by Amrita SeRVe, and farmers contributed land, labour and savings to increase both crop yield and income for the farmers.



**“We took a chance and tried something different. The result was selling a new crop for double the price of anything we had grown before. Not only that; the seeds we sowed gave us a double yield” – Rajan, member of Amrita Vyavasayam Kulu**

On the 20th of June, the farmers planted nearly 600 kg of organic rice on their joint 35 acres of land. Cultivating without chemical inputs meant learning and practising with organic fertilisers and pesticides such as Jeevamritam, a natural fertiliser. This organic venture paid off in January 2017 when they harvested their

**first profitable crop in five years.** Here they saw a phenomenal increase in net income—from a loss of ₹23,600 in previous years to a profit of ₹27,000 per acre using natural farming methods.

After this great success, they decided to expand to 40 acres and **surrounding villages expressed interest** in learning from the farmers so that they too could convert their farming to natural methods. So far 150 acres of fallow land in nearby villages have been converted to rice fields for the adoption of a similar approach.



## TRADITIONAL FARMING IN KERALA



Valaramkunnu is a **tribal village** located in Wayanad District, Kerala, where three tribal settlements were adopted by the Amrita SeRve project. Paniya colony, Kattupara Nayakar colony and Kuruchur colony comprise a total of 75 families. In Valaramkunnu, thirteen farmers formed the Amrita Organic Farmers Club and

registered under the *Cooperative Societies Act*. They are collectively growing five acres of organic Athira rice on land they have leased. The activities are guided by the local Amrita SeRve coordinator. This project has been supported by the *Integrated Tribal Development Programme*, Wayanad.



## CHILLI CULTIVATION IN ANDHRA PRADESH



Andhra Pradesh's **first agricultural society** was registered in July 2018 by the members of the Amrita Gudipadu Cheruvu Farmers' Group. They immediately organised themselves and began the preparations for organic chilli cultivation. Initially they were trained on the preparation and usage of natural fertilisers, such as Jeevamritam, as well as how to treat organic seeds before planting.

A month later, Teza Lepakshi chilli seedlings were purchased for 16 acres of land. More meetings followed to complete **subsidy applications** for a tractor and borewell motors. All steps were guided and supported by Amrita SeRve's local coordinator and experienced agriculture programme manager.

## ORGANIC WHEAT CULTIVATION IN RAJASTHAN

In Harirampura village, Rajasthan, nine of the 55 tribal families in the village had already initiated the process of forming a farmers' group in the year 2015. They set aside four and half acres of land for organic wheat cultivation. Their first organic harvest was a **big success**, culminating in a total of 4,000 kg of high-quality grains.

Although it is common that yields are initially lower on land previously cultivated with chemical fertilisers, the **added sales value** of their organic crop easily made up for the yield loss. Their profits were further boosted by **reduced expenditure** on costly seeds and chemical fertilisers and pesticides.

Usually such small-scale farmers sell to middle men, who then deliver the goods to a larger market. For the first time this year, the **farmers**

**sold their produce directly** to consumers, which further increased their revenues. For this purpose, an organic wheat sale was organised at the Mata Amritanandamayi Math branch in Delhi. There, the farmers' club was able to get an average of ₹30 per kg, instead of ₹15 that they would have received otherwise.

Based on this success, the farmers are currently expanding the share of organic cultivation for the next season, eagerly pursuing the vision of **converting their entire village to fully organic agriculture**. The Amrita Farmers' Club Harirampura was formed and registered under the Central Government scheme with the *Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA)*.





## LEMONGRASS CULTIVATION



In many villages, the lack of water and foraging wild life make regular agriculture difficult and often times unprofitable. The **yields vary tremendously** from year to year. That in turn affects the prices on the markets. For example, if the country has had a fruitful season, the supply of crops will be high, resulting in lower rates for farmers' produce. How much money farmers earn depends on a wide range of

variables: weather, pests, market prices, as well as the costs of seeds, fertilisers and pesticides. The farmers depend on their agriculture, and if there is not enough income to be gained from it, they will **migrate to the cities** in search for work. In the cities, the vast experience of farmers has no value. and now more than ever, farmers need a steady source of income.

Amrita SeRve has been looking for ways to give farmers a **consistent stream of income** throughout the year. In order to try and create more reliable sources of income for farmers, in December 2016 Amrita SeRve signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with CIMAP, the *Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants* (the plant research laboratory of the *Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, CSIR*), to help guide farmers in **planting medicinal and aromatic plants.**

Aromatic plants such as lemongrass are used in a wide range of commercial products, ensuring that the farmers' produce is in **consistent demand.** Most importantly, these plants are rarely disturbed by wild animals, they are **resilient** and also do not require large volumes of water or fertilisers. A crop like lemongrass can be harvested around four times per year, allowing farmers to have regular income throughout the year.

The project was launched in January 2017 in Malgaon village, Chhattisgarh, and within a few months taken to Bihar, Haryana and Jharkhand. The farmers were trained in cultivation methods, received free slips for initial planting and were supported in administrative tasks. By now more than 70 families have taken advantage of the **expertise and experience** offered through the CIMAP-Amrita SeRve collaboration.

Part of the programme is not just cultivation, but also **distillation** of the lemongrass. This rather simple secondary process results in significant value addition, and allows farmers to reap the **maximum economic benefits** from their efforts. CIMAP has installed the first water-and-steam distillation unit in Chhattisgarh,







where the farmers have already successfully extracted and sold the essential oil from their first harvest. Amma inaugurated the sale of village-produced lemongrass essential oil at a public programme in 2018 in Chandigarh, Haryana, where She presented Punjab's Minister of Forestry and Social Welfare, the Honourable Sadhu Singh Dharamsot, with a bottle of the golden extraction.

Lemongrass cultivation is **not a substitute for the farming of food crops**. However, due to

its resistance to pests and drought, as well as low requirements for minerals and fertilisers, it can provide a consistent and regular income for farmers, who set a portion of their land aside for this. It is ideal for **reclaiming barren land** for agriculture, and plants can easily be multiplied, eliminating the need for the purchase of new slips. Over the coming years Amrita SeRVe seeks to further strengthen farmers in finding a balance between making a steady income and profitable, healthy food cultivation.



*"There is more to society and life than the bright lights of the big cities. Unfortunately, we are forgetting this. There are also rural villages and agricultural communities. It is the people who live there that produce the fruit, vegetables and grain that feed the entire world. Without them, how can we continue to exist?"*

– Amma





# INCOME GENERATION

## ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT



At present, the primary sources of income for the people in most villages are agriculture and daily labour, with only very **few people having regular jobs**. The profitability of marginal conventional agriculture has declined so dramatically over the last few decades that many farmers have been driven into economic and psychological depression.

The only alternatives are daily labour jobs, which pay, on average, ₹300 per day—approximately \$4.20 US. However, the **work is highly irregular** and also does not offer much emotional reward. Much of the income from daily-labour jobs is spent on alcohol and tobacco, before it ever reaches the families waiting at home.

In the villages, women are doing a lot of manual work, both in the household and in the fields during the main agriculture seasons. They carry large quantities of water in pots hoisted up to their waists or gracefully balanced on their heads. They also help prepare the fields, plant the crops, and are fully involved in the harvests as well. When the family does not have enough basic income from their agriculture, the **women too are forced to go for daily labour**, inevitably leaving children and households to manage for themselves.



It is clear that additional income opportunities must be nurtured in the villages. There are many kinds of enterprises that can be started by villagers, most of whom don't have access to sophisticated equipment or specialised education. Over the last five years Amrita SeRve has supported a vast range of different income generation projects.

During this time many lessons have been learned. At the heart of the process lies the **empowerment of the local people**, offering inspiration and guidance wherever required to put training into practice and to ensure that undertakings run self-sufficiently. The following pages contain a broad selection of such activities.

## TAILORING CENTRES & SANITARY PAD PRODUCTION

71



### SIMPLE INCOME OPPORTUNITIES IN VILLAGES

- 🍃 Food processing: drying, powdering, oil extraction, pickle preparation
- 🍃 'Superfood' cultivation: mushrooms, wheatgrass, spirulina
- 🍃 Naturally occurring plants: neem, lemongrass, moringa, mahua
- 🍃 Crafts and manufacturing: tailoring production, crocheting, pottery
- 🍃 Animal husbandry: dairy collection, goat rearing, chicken farming
- 🍃 Services and retail: village shop, tailoring service, chai stall, food stall

Tailoring is a part of life. Amrita SeRve and AMMACHI Labs have set up tailoring centres in the villages where women are trained in the making of clothes, bags and purses. Activities are happening in our villages in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Bihar, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala.



Amrita SeRve has also trained more than 60 women across nine states in stitching reusable pads of either cloth or banana-fibre variant. The pads address the need for adequate hygiene during menstruation, as well as sparking much needed discussions on the topic. By giving the women a space to talk about the issues, and also involving the new generation of adolescent girls, it creates relief and empowerment for everyone.





## MUSHROOM CULTIVATION



Growing mushrooms is a great means of income and gives access to a highly nutritious food. SHG members in Jammu, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Odisha and Bihar have received training through Amrita SeRVE on cultivating oyster and button mushrooms. The villagers have quickly developed enthusiasm for the

endeavour and have found ingenious ways to provide favourable environments for the fungi to thrive. Mushrooms are high in protein and minerals, and they taste delicious. At harvest time the SHG's produce is so popular that it does not even make it to the market before selling out.

## GOAT RAISING



Goats can easily be raised in the villages where there is space and grass. In Odisha and Bihar, Amrita SeRVE has either partially or fully subsidised a number of baby goats that were given to SHG members. The members have agreed to raise them and give the first offspring

to another member. SHG members are free to choose how to profit from this activity. Some may harness the highly nutritious goat milk, while others may choose to sell the animal once raised.




## MASALA AND SPICE PREPARATIONS

Women in the villages know how to cook a variety of delicious foods. As such, they are experts in preparing masala powders and pickles. Each region has their own traditional recipes and methods, using only locally sourced

ingredients. There are several SHGs that are using this knowledge to generate additional income for their families. Their products are sold either to neighbours or to local markets. On special occasions, they also sell at fairs.

## CROCHET BAGS & BASKET WEAVING

75



Side-by-side, with their children playing in their midst, the women of Uttar Pradesh are joyfully gathering to increase their income. They are making fashionable bags and purses, as well as crocheting with colourful nylon threads and woollen yarn. At the same time, they have also developed the weaving skills needed to prepare baskets from upcycled plastic.

Both ventures emerged from a 'Waste to Wealth' workshop held by Amrita SeRVE in 2016 on using old and discarded materials to make new, beautiful and high-quality products they could sell. Recognising the craftsmanship these women acquired, a local businessman partnered up with the SHG women in Uttar Pradesh and introduced new designs and materials for a range of items that he would take to the market.





## PAPAD MAKING



The popular side dish *papad* (in the West more commonly known as *poppadum*) can be found all over India. Using few ingredients, the SHG women of Kalinagar in West Bengal have started preparing the thin, disc-shaped dough pieces, which are dried in the sun and then sold in the nearby market. This activity has virtually zero setup cost and requires a minimum amount of training, since most of these women are already familiar with the process. This makes it an ideal first business venture for SHGs.

## JEWELLERY MAKING

With great care and patience, several women's groups have adopted traditional techniques of jewellery making to meet the high demand for timeless, beautiful and affordable jewellery in cities and villages alike. Students from the Coimbatore campus of Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham have trained women from the nearby Amrita SeRve tribal villages in the craft of making earrings from coloured thread and beads. Clearly enjoying the work with the villagers, they have been supporting the sales for the last couple of years at campus events.



## BEE KEEPING



The indigenous people have collected honey from the dense forests surrounding their settlements for generations. They are experts in climbing the tall trees to collect the honey from huge hanging honeycombs. Without wearing any protective gear, the climbers would torch the hives, kill the bees and bring down the whole comb. Through Amrita SeRve, 30 people from the Komalikudi village in Kerala were trained in a less invasive and more profitable method. They were taught to drive the bees out of their hive using smoke, and to cut out only a small portion of the comb where the mature honey is stored. This approach reduces the burden on the bees. Each trainee was given 10 bee boxes to start a new venture of producing high-quality forest honey.

## SOAP & DETERGENT MAKING

Soap and detergent products are used in literally every household. Having received training, several SHGs in Kerala and Tamil Nadu villages have been making such products themselves. Ingredients are purchased in bulk, and sales happen locally. These low setup-cost enterprises have the advantage of providing a commodity that meets regular and consistent demand. Through on-site production, SHG products can be significantly cheaper than their commercial alternatives. This fact alone secures them a place in local markets.





## LEMONGRASS ESSENTIAL OIL



In Wayanad District, Kerala, nature has provided lemongrass in abundance. Several years ago, people from the remote villages would walk through the high mountain landscape to harvest bundles of it. The extraction of lemongrass essential oil used to be a profitable business in the region and there were several distillation units and traders. However, when the government began enforcing forest conservation laws, the large quantities of firewood required for the distillation process rendered it unfeasible.

Three years ago, a group of business students from Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham visited the Amrita SeRVe village of Valaramkundu and rediscovered the potential of wild lemongrass essential oil extraction as an income opportunity for the poor and

isolated tribal community. Following their analysis, a team of engineering students and faculty devised plans for the construction of a solar-powered distillation unit in the village. This would eliminate the need for firewood entirely.

With great enthusiasm the team went ahead with the construction. Due to time constraints on the side of the students, the construction took longer than originally anticipated. Nonetheless, the distillation unit was fully operational by 2017. At this point, the construction team trained four SHG members on the operation of the new unit and the production process. Now many women from the village can again go out into wilderness to collect the herb in order to distil and supply its essential oil directly to the market.





## MILK COLLECTION



In Nani Borvai village, which is located in Aravalli District, Gujarat, agriculture is the primary source of income for more than 100 farming households with a combined land holding of 300 acres. 85 percent of these farmers are marginal. Their main crops are groundnuts, rice, cotton and maize. A farmers' group was formed in July 2018. And they have already organised themselves and opened a joint bank account for their registered group.

There is something very special about Nani Borvai. They have a tradition of animal husbandry. More than 300 buffalos and 75 cows are in the village. The well-priced buffalo milk is held in high demand in the commercial dairy sector. Recognising this opportunity, villagers were encouraged to approach the Amul Dairy Cooperative, one of India's top milk and dairy brands, sourcing from 15 million milk producers throughout the country. As a result of this meeting in July 2018, a deal was made to set up a milk collection centre in the village itself.

For this purpose a **Village Dairy Cooperative Society** was formed in October and a committee of ten women now manages the process of collecting milk twice a day. On arrival at the collection unit, the milk is weighed and tested. The average price per litre of buffalo milk is 40 rupees. The data is entered on the spot into an online register provided by Amul. The milk producers get their payment twice a month in a joint account.



### STRONGER TOGETHER

#### THE WOMEN ARE LEADING THE VILLAGE COOPERATIVE SOCIETY

When the marginal milk producers of Nani Borvai formed a Village Dairy Cooperative Society, it was not just a step towards financial security, but also a catalyst for social change. All aspects of the organisation and finances are managed by elected representatives based on a democratic process. In Nani Borvai, the women were identified to run the society because of their efficiency, thereby breaking down barriers of gender, caste and wealth. They are the ones taking care of the administration and finances. By joining the Amul Cooperative structure, the Village Society is also benefitting from Amul's profit redistribution and subsidy schemes.



# ECO-FRIENDLY INFRASTRUCTURE

FAIR AND EFFICIENT USE OF RESOURCES



Even today we can find the remains of a faintly remembered time of gracious architecture in those parts of India that have been either left behind, or even forgotten, by consumerist society. Massive wooden pillars with woodcarvings are standing strong in dimly lit rooms to support hand-sawn beams. They hold up a neglected roof structure that is silently yielding to the weight of time. The roof tiles were once made from local clay, moulded into shape by dozens of hands and baked in fire to gain the toughness needed to protect the family from rain and storm over decades to come.

But now, **instead of rushing into repair efforts**, the family is merely looking at their curving roof. They cover broken tiles and gaps with scraps of rusty metal sheet or half-decayed tarpaulin. No longer are they making tiles or carving wood to maintain their home. When asked about their wishes, they only talk about **a house made from cement and steel**, with an asbestos roof and electric lights. A culture of thousands of years is finally being buried by dreams poured in grey concrete.

Traditions and sacred rituals are the link between man and the world that surrounds him. They ensure that there is always a **balance between giving and taking**. The big question of sustainability begins with identifying basic needs and finding efficient ways by which these needs can be met with locally available


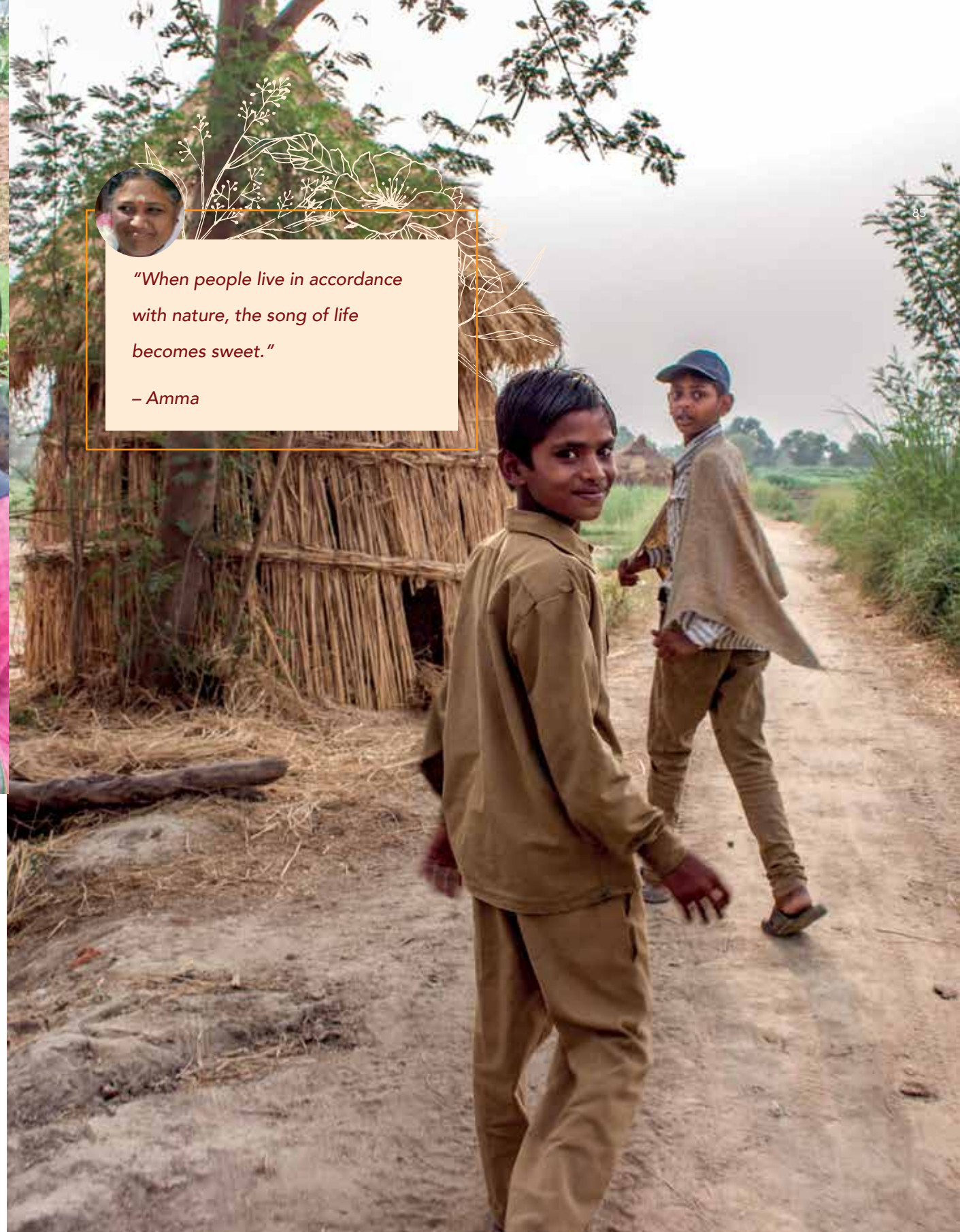




resources. Besides food and water, these are the **typical primary needs**: a home for each family, electricity for lighting and charging of phones and the means for cooking food.

Amrita SeRve recognises the importance of **sourcing raw materials locally** and to that end, explores options to **preserve traditional building methods** while meeting modern requirements, such as durability and cleanliness. Electrical demand is met either through the national grid or, wherever necessary, from **renewable energy sources** independent of the government supply.

Finally, **alternative fuels** and more efficient heating methods for cooking are explored. This comes along with great emphasis on the importance of **reforestation**, which not only compensates for the historic depletion of forests, but also **improves groundwater levels**, balances the local climate and increases soil fertility. Eco-friendly infrastructure is a vision that requires everyone to think of the whole, **caring for our environment**, the community and all of society—today, tomorrow and for generations to come.

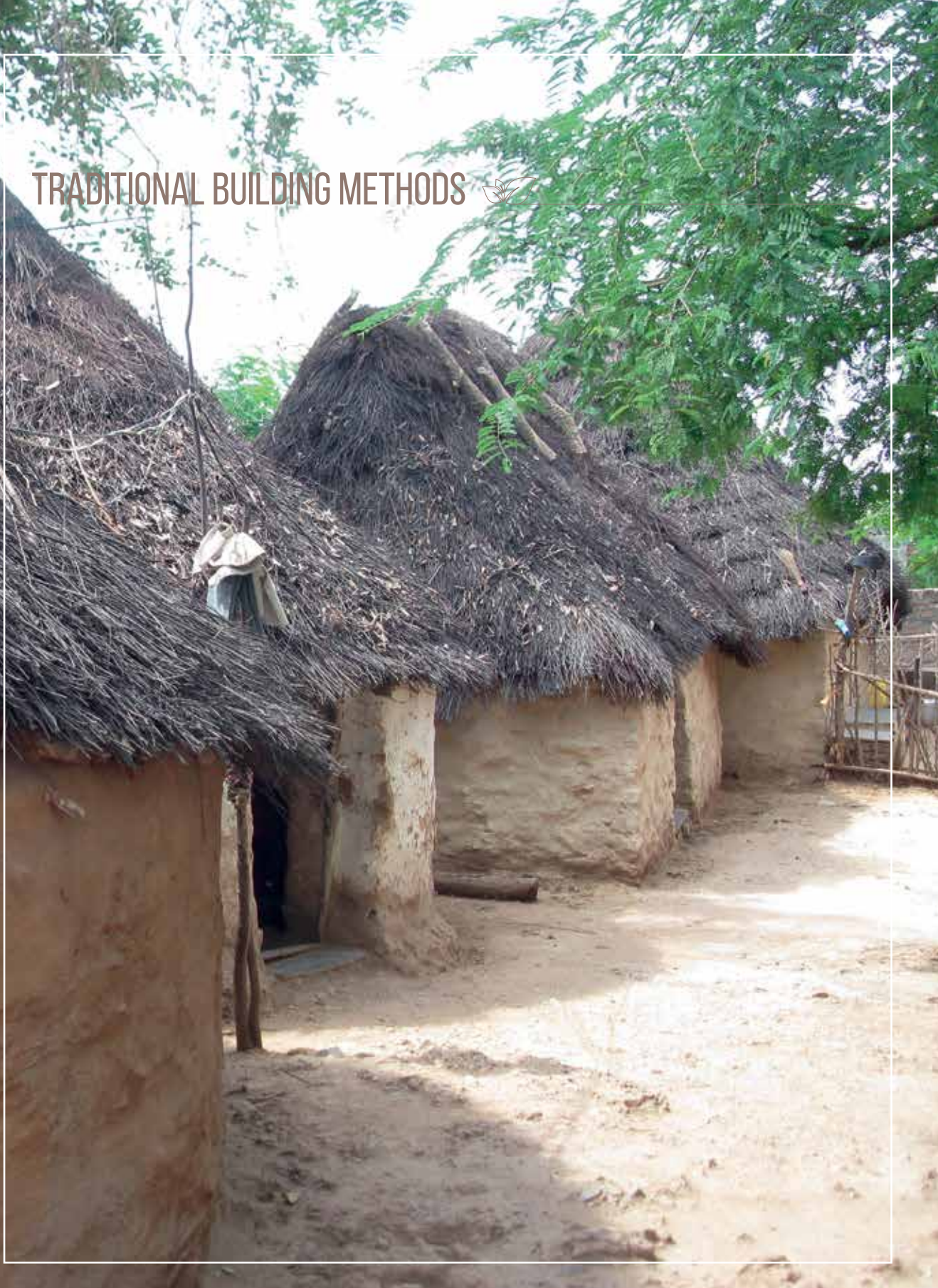


*“When people live in accordance with nature, the song of life becomes sweet.”*

– Amma



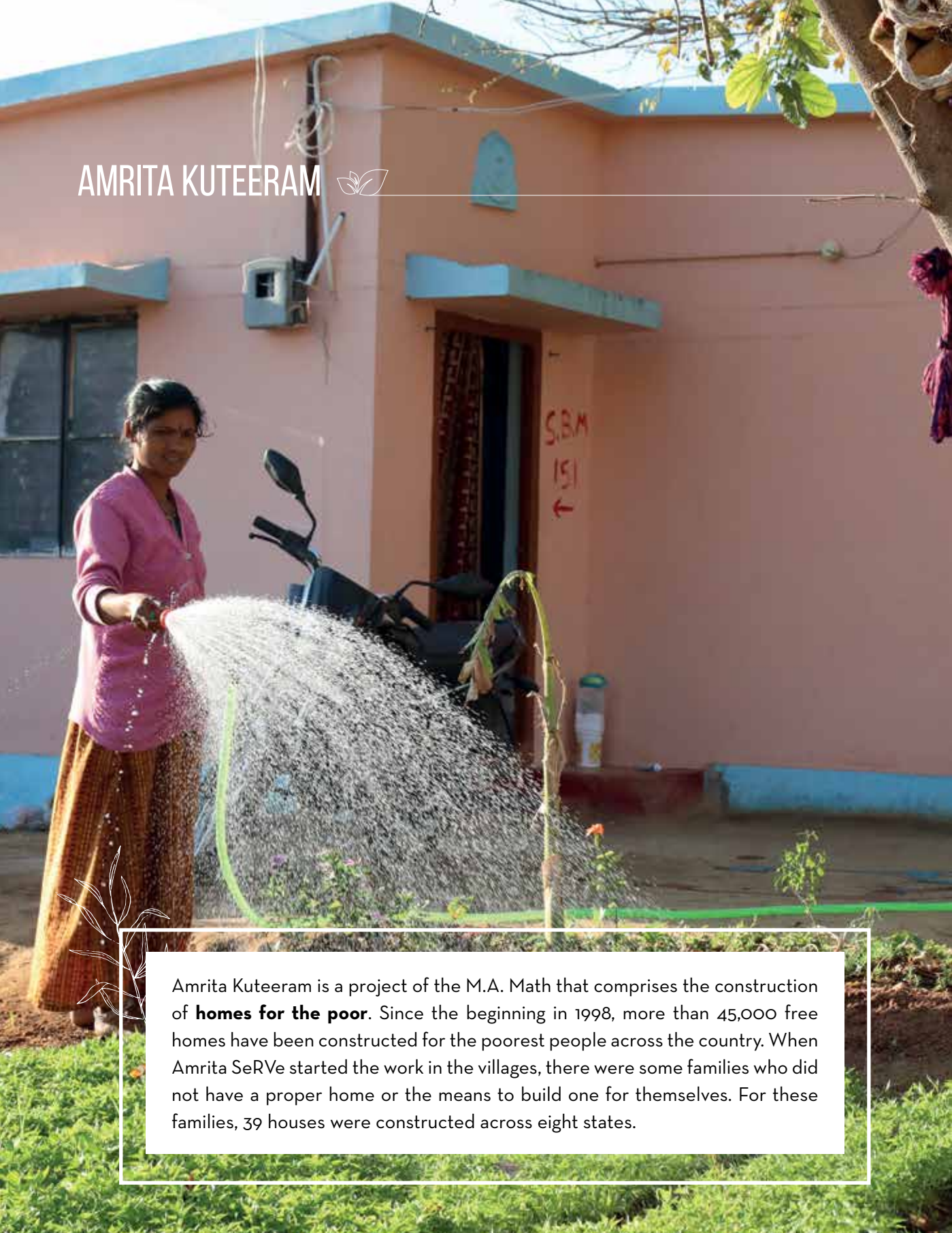
## TRADITIONAL BUILDING METHODS



Amrita SeRve is committed to preserving and developing traditional building methods. Every village community has special techniques using **locally available natural materials**. With the rise of ferrocement construction, these methods have been neglected and there are **only very few knowledge-bearers alive** from the olden days. There are countless techniques—ranging from clay tiles or thatched roofs, to wood carving and mud buildings—that have endured decades with little or no maintenance. The greatest advantage of natural building materials over cement is the **thermal properties of the houses**. Regardless of whether it is burning hot or freezing cold, traditional buildings have a strong tendency to **maintain a comfortable climate inside**. On top of that, all-natural materials feel warm, are nontoxic, and decay without harm if abandoned.

Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham is presently conducting research on the methods of **tribal craftsmanship**. It is also exploring ways to blend contemporary practices with the traditional techniques—paving the path for innovation, especially in the area of weather resistance. As such, a team has begun exploring the widely known modern construction material, **Compressed Stabilized Earth Blocks (CSEBs)**, by constructing a model house on Amrita's Coimbatore campus. In 2016, Amrita SeRve took a group of villagers from Andhra Pradesh to the **National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD)** in Hyderabad to partake in a CSEB manufacturing workshop. Because Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham's activities are closely coupled with in-depth research in the tribal villages, we can expect a vast number of advancements in this area over the coming years.





Amrita Kuteeram is a project of the M.A. Math that comprises the construction of **homes for the poor**. Since the beginning in 1998, more than 45,000 free homes have been constructed for the poorest people across the country. When Amrita SeRve started the work in the villages, there were some families who did not have a proper home or the means to build one for themselves. For these families, 39 houses were constructed across eight states.



During the last two centuries the amount of **deforestation** surrounding the villages has been so severe, that today only a handful of isolated trees can be found in the midst of dusty fields or plain grasslands. This has a **serious impact** on agriculture and groundwater levels. Forests maintain **soil fertility and cool local temperatures**, as well as allowing rainwater to sink into the ground. With their strong roots and branches, they provide protection from landslides, flooding and strong winds. Relentless forest clearing has resulted in forest boundaries receding from civilisation; now the people are suffering the consequences of being **exposed to drought and extreme weather**.

Amrita SeRve is supporting tree planting through **sapling subsidisation** and seed-ball preparations. So far more than 15,000 saplings have been subsidised and distributed in villages across India's 21 states. Since planting a tree is a lifelong investment, a lot of emphasis is put on the **environmental education** of school children. For example, on World Environment Day (5th of June), the children were taught how to prepare **seed-balls** from soil, cow dung and fertilising herbs. One or several seeds can be enclosed by this mixture, dried in the sun and then thrown into available space right before the onset of monsoon rains. This ensures effortless sprouting and growth of the plants.



## RENEWABLE ENERGY



The most important end-use of electricity is to light homes and streets. Houses in the villages often have very small windows (because most of them don't have shutters), allowing only tiny amounts of natural light to enter. Especially at night, the **rooms are immersed in darkness**. Not only does lack of lighting pose a challenge for women when they are cooking, also it seriously limits the ability of school children to do their homework. Absence of light, always carries with it a feeling of vulnerability and can make walks along **unlit roads** an uncomfortable, and even dangerous experience.

Although the government recently announced that the last Indian villages have finally been connected to the national grid, the supply is sometimes interrupted, usually at crucial times. In such scenarios, it is preferable to install small solar-powered **home lighting systems**,

consisting of one small panel, a battery unit and three lights. Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham's *Center for Wireless Networks and Applications* (WNA) and Amrita SeRVe have fitted such systems to homes in Chhattisgarh and Kerala. In some of these locations, they have also installed solar **streetlights** while training locals in their maintenance.

Also, some larger projects were implemented in Kerala wherein a solar **micro-grid** was installed in Wayanad District and a **hydroelectric power plant** commissioned in Idukki District. Both plants function entirely self-sufficiently, providing a steady supply of electricity to all the households in each community. These systems were pioneered by students and faculty of WNA. The work in the villages was facilitated through the Live-in-Labs® programme and Amrita SeRVe.



# SELF EMPOWERMENT

REAL STRENGTH FROM WITHIN



Real strength comes from within. When relying only on the external, there is no stability. Through yoga, meditation and other spiritual practices, we can achieve this goal. In the past, the people of India's villages knew their inner strength. They were also completely in tune with Nature. This led to a complete harmony of being. For many millennia, a completely self-reliant village was at the centre of Indian life. By **rediscovering inner strength** and building on it, true self-reliance can be achieved once again.

Amrita SeRve facilitates activities that, on the one hand, empower the individual—especially women—by opening bank accounts, availing of social-security schemes and forming **Self-Help Groups** (SHGs) to become financially independent. Moreover, respected members from each community are encouraged to form a **Village Development Committee** (VDC), thereby creating a platform to identify, discuss and implement solutions to problems faced in their respective villages. It is primarily through such Village Development Committees that **government support** can be secured to benefit the entire village community.

Addressing the subtle aspects of Self Empowerment, Amrita SeRve is facilitating regular **yoga and meditation** sessions, as well as encouraging the preservation of **local traditions and rituals**, including religious festivals, poojas and devotional singing. Such occasions allow worries to be left aside for a little while, celebrate as a community, appreciate the joyful moments of life and also to gain some **peace of mind**. Especially for the youth, Amrita SeRve is organising regular **sports and games** sessions, as well as reaching the kids with **moral stories** taken from a range of material, including India's most popular epic, the Ramayana.



## YOGA & MEDITATION



In the villages, generally both women and men work in the fields or do physically challenging labour to earn their income. They also have emotional stress and financial burdens in their lives, such as their children's education, low incomes and even lack of food. To combat such mental stress, Amrita SeRVe is reviving India's traditional culture of yoga and meditation. When yoga is practiced for even half an hour, the practitioners can **concentrate on the body**

**and mind**, ensuring they get some relaxation away from these life stressors.

Health workers and village coordinators are trained to facilitate these **simple yoga asana sessions** for children and SHG members. Yoga sessions are held everywhere: on rooftops and fields, at home or under the trees, in school classrooms or verandas, in playgrounds, local community centres, parks, or any other suitable place.



Each session starts and ends with **prayer and short meditation**. A sequence of Surya Namaskar and simple asanas are practiced with breath awareness. Every month, around 680 people are participating in regular yoga sessions. On the **International Day of Yoga 2018**, there were 1,200 participants partaking in events organised in 18 villages to support the global celebrations with a guided asana practice.

The aim of the yoga and meditation activity is to get in touch with the **power of the inner being** and thereby realise one's inherent strength (as well as reap the **health and vitality benefits** resulting from a **regular practice**). Participants have shared that empowerment is indeed taking place, as they are gaining more confidence in themselves and in managing their day-to-day lives.



## SELF-HELP GROUPS



A Self-Help Group (SHG) is formed by 10 to 20 individuals, typically women, who agree to meet once or twice a month to deposit a regular amount that is decided upon by the members. To date, Amrita SeRve has supported more than 850 women in organising themselves into SHGs. Their monthly savings are paid into a **joint bank account** that is opened in the name of the SHG and managed by a group-elected president and treasurer. As these savings build

up, SHG members in need of an immediate **short-term loan** are able to make a request at a group meeting. When approved by the other members, the loan will be given at a small interest rate along with a feasible repayment schedule.

There are several benefits to this self-administered micro-finance scheme, such as an absence of hindering bureaucracy on the one hand, and an increase of **group earnings**



through **interest collection** on the other. However, the real advantage of an SHG lies in the strength of the community spirit that develops over time. As these women pool their resources and get used to **collective decision making** on a financial level, thousands of SHGs mentored under the M.A. Math's AmritaSREE project in Kerala have demonstrated clear signs of empowerment. These groups have grown into **highly efficient and compassionate institutions**, benefitting not only their members' families, but their entire communities.

For Amrita SeRVe, the SHGs are one of the primary gateways into the community. Health workers are joining SHG meetings at least once in a month to give **awareness on various health-related topics**. In addition, each SHG is asked to appoint one health leader and an education leader to take the responsibility of looking out for other members and their families in regard to their health and education. In the domain of health, for example, people who have fallen sick are encouraged to visit a hospital. Furthermore,

they can explain hygienic practices and set an example. At the same time, the education leader will keep an eye on regular school attendance and continuation of studies of members' children. If in any area there seems to be lacking, it can be addressed in the group and collective solutions can be found.

It is through SHGs that Amrita SeRVe implements income generation projects. The women are encouraged and supported in every possible way to start an income-generating venture. The M.A. Math has offered all of its affiliated and eligible SHGs dedicated **seed money** to their accounts. The intention behind this boost in their common fund is to **increase their lending base**, as well as making it easier for them to embark on an **income-generating activity**. Village coordinators also deliver stories on empowered women and moral values adapted from India's great epics for reflection and inspiration.



*"Happiness depends on how you accept, understand and surrender to situations."*

– Amma



## LOCAL TRADITIONS AND SPIRITUAL HERITAGE

All villages have a series of traditions and beliefs dating back thousands of years forming the moral fibre that binds the community together. Instead of political unity, India has always been unified through Her culture. There are many national festivals, such as Holi, Diwali, Shivaratri, Navaratri and many more, which are celebrated across the length and breadth of this nation. The names and practices may vary from place to place, but the **significance of each**

**celebration remains the same.** The values of hospitality, respecting elders, caring for nature and cultivating compassion and selflessness are known and worshipped wherever these rituals are practiced. Amrita SeRve is supporting a continuation of the local traditions, primarily because these are the **roots of society**. They bring the people together in joyful festivities and also keep alive a long tradition of preserving **virtue and dharma**.

Amrita SeRve practices the ancient Indian tradition of *Matru Puja*, a ritual to worship one's own mother. It was included as a common activity in the summer camps, as well as for certain national celebrations, such as Guru Purnima. Guru Purnima is dedicated to celebrate one's Guru or teacher. According to the scriptures, the **mother is the first Guru in life**.

On this occasion, children pay homage to their mothers by expressing their gratitude for giving life to them and taking care of them with love and patience. They perform a Pada Puja on their mother's feet, using sacred items, such as water, flower petals and sometimes kumkum and sandalwood paste. It is on such heartfelt occasions that we come to witness the **divinity contained in each person**, revealed for a brief moment in the glistening eyes.





## VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES

A Village Development Committee (VDC) consists of several villagers who have come together, committed to developing their communities. Amrita SeRve encourages committees of five, seven or nine members that include women. At least one meeting should be conducted every month to maintain continuity. Village coordinators explore various initiatives that could be taken up by the local VDC, make suggestions and provide support wherever needed. VDCs are essential in applying for any government scheme for the benefit of the entire village, such as construction of roads, water infrastructure projects or schools.

Amrita SeRve also encourages VDCs to organise campaigns to get large numbers of eligible people to sign up for a range of **government schemes**. These can range from health insurance to land-deed applications. Availing the right government scheme can have a huge impact on a villager's life. In some cases, there are significant **financial benefits**, as well as **improvements to the quality of life** and easing hardships. Village coordinators and health workers obtain details on a wide range of schemes and support the VDCs to get people to sign up. In some cases, our staff facilitate the entire application process, also with the help of SHGs and local government institutions.



## SUCCESS STORY

Hariya ki Dhaani is a hamlet in Rajasthan. This settlement of 550 people is a little removed from the main village, Sankada. As a result, government funds have only ever reached the main village and no facilities were provided to the hamlet. Taking matters into their own hands, the inhabitants formed a VDC and decided to **apply for the status of a revenue village**; after all, their population was in excess of 500 people. This application was finally granted in 2018. Under the new name of Harirampura, the VDC was able to secure funds directly from the government for the construction of a road to the village, which was desperately needed.

## FACILITATED GOVERNMENT SCHEMES FOR INDIVIDUALS

- Health insurance
- Social security
- Aadhaar card applications
- Individual bank account openings
- Pension applications
- Disability certificate applications
- Ujjwala LPG scheme
- Land-deed applications



# UNIVERSITY INTEGRATION

## RESEARCH IN ACTION



*"When we try to love or serve without understanding those whom we are serving, we often end up harming society and ourselves. In order for service to be beneficial, it needs to go hand in hand with discernment. This is the essence of sustainable development. All universities should send their students to impoverished rural villages or city slums for at least one or two months during their education. Students will be able to see directly the issues and problems that the poor face. They could then develop solutions and write papers on everything they studied. This would help us to help the poor in the most effective way and also awaken compassion in today's youth."*

– Amma

If professionals graduating from universities are to serve the public and contribute to society's overall quality of life, then their **inner values** have to be nurtured during their **student experience**. Capabilities such as awareness of social and collective struggle, informed vision, empathy, integrity, practical reasoning and having the confidence to act for change are important attributes that need to be cultivated to bring forth informed, socially aware and ethical graduates. This **expanded consciousness** will ultimately lead to thinking and practices consistent with development that is sustainable.





Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham is a private university with six campuses in four states around India. Following the inspiration of their chancellor, spiritual and humanitarian leader Sri Mata Amritanandamayi Devi, the university is combining latest advancements and discoveries with compassion and service-mindedness. Besides rising to the top of India's private higher-education institutions, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham gives its students, and those from its growing network of international universities, opportunities to participate in different programmes that are focusing on the **alleviation of the suffering experienced by India's rural poor**.

In recognition of these efforts, the university has received several awards. Most recently, in 2018, it was named a **Centre of Excellence in Tribal Education** by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. In 2016, the United Nations officially made Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham India's first-ever **UNESCO Chair on Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment**.





**SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS  
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH AMRITA SERVE**

-  Wayanad solar distillation unit
-  Wayanad solar-micro grid
-  Idukki hydro-electric power plant
-  Solar home and street-lighting systems

Since 2014, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham's Live-in-Labs® has been bringing together students and faculty from **multiple disciplines** and helping them to take their research directly to the rural communities whose problems they are aiming to identify and address. The teams of researchers spend some time **directly living and engaging with the local people**. By listening first-hand to their stories and struggles, and bringing their vast theoretical knowledge to the front, the problems and the solutions they come up with can **solve real life problems**.



*Live-in-Labs® is a multidisciplinary experiential learning programme that breaks classroom and lab barriers by applying learned theory in real-world settings. This credit-based academic programme draws on principles of lean research for the development and deployment of sustainable solutions for current challenges faced by rural communities in India.*

*By directly living in rural communities (labs) and co-designing solutions to development challenges, programme participants gain first-hand knowledge and know-how of identifying and assessing community needs and subsequently developing and implementing viable solutions through various participatory methods.*



## STUDENT INTERNSHIP



The student internship programme offered by the Corporate Industry Relations (CIR) department of Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham was launched in 2014 to give students an opportunity to immerse themselves in the villages. For a short period between one and two weeks, the students conduct various activities to better understand both the **challenging and beautiful** aspects of village life.

Students from the internship programme refer to the love, happiness, bonding and warmth of the villagers as having a positive effect on their own levels of contentment and humility. Many also express a **desire to do more selfless service**. Some students have also pursued further studies to help the poor as a result of their time spent in the villages. More than 500 students have participated in these rural

internships during the last five years.

The interactions between the students and villagers have not only enriched the students' lives, but have also left a **very positive impression** on the villagers: suddenly there was this frequent influx of people from the cities interested in their way of life! Bringing with them immense joy and enthusiasm, the students plunge head first into every activity, putting smiles on the faces of the locals. Seeing this, the villagers understood that a bright future was possible for their children as well, provided their children completed education first. Soon after the first internship, a girl from Maharashtra became the first in her village to enrol in college and inspired many others to follow suit.

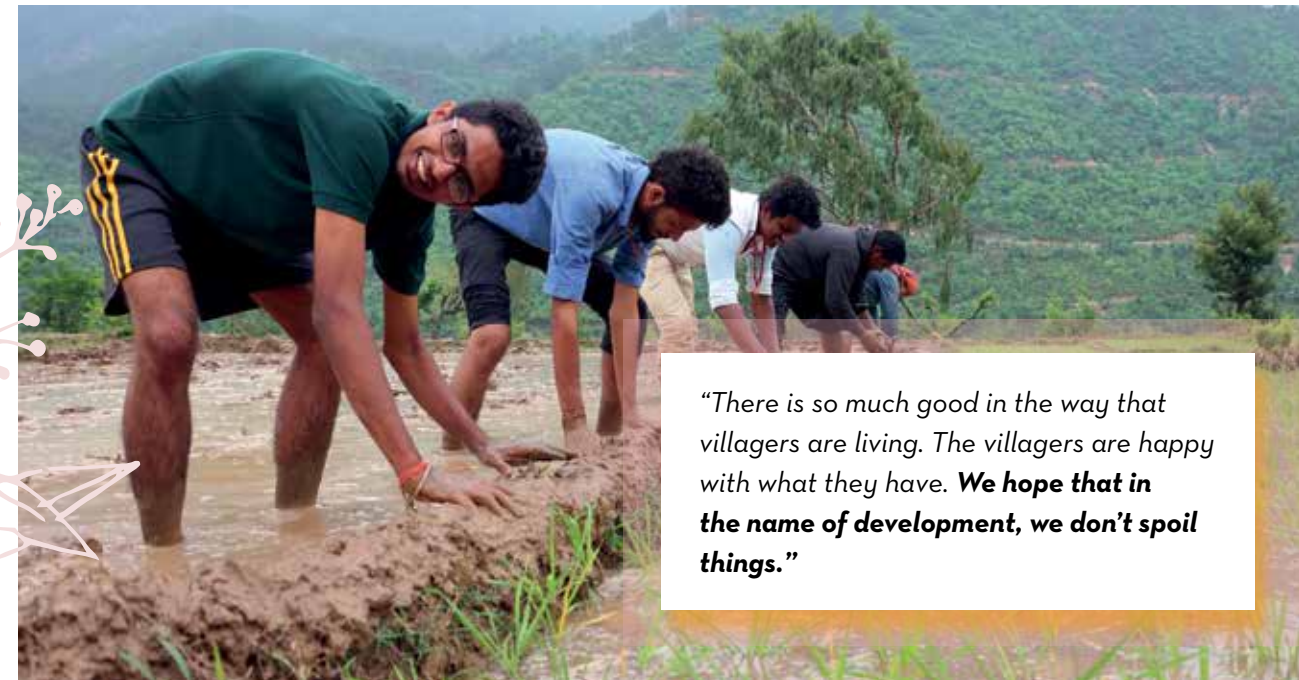




*"After the internship, my total outlook towards life has changed. My outlook towards village life, poverty and also about the concept of happiness have also changed... Even now we are in touch with them, and the love and care we receive is beyond words. I think this bond between us makes this internship so successful."*



*"Language was not an issue—we were communicating through hearts and smiles."*



*"There is so much good in the way that villagers are living. The villagers are happy with what they have. **We hope that in the name of development, we don't spoil things.**"*



## PARTNERS



AMMACHI Labs

Center for  
Rural Education and Tablet Education

Center for  
International Programs

Center for  
Wireless Networks and Applications

Directorate of  
Corporate and Industry Relations

Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences

Amrita SeRVe is the Self-Reliant Village Project of the Mata Amritanandamayi Math in India. Amrita SeRVe's sole purpose is the upliftment of India's impoverished villages. Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham is a private university with different programmes supporting the mission of Amrita SeRVe in the villages. The Live-in-Labs® programme, organised by the *Amrita Center for International Programs* (ACIP), organises student projects in the villages, involving also members from partnered international universities.

The *Research in Analytics & Technologies for Education* (CREATE), AMMACHI Labs (*Amrita Multi-Modal Applications and Computer Human Interaction*) and the *Center for Wireless Networks and Applications* (WNA)

are departments that are conducting specific research and related projects in the villages. For example, the tuition centres in the villages are run by the *Rural India Tablet enhanced Education* (RITE) programme, which is a part of CREATE.

Student internships on the other hand are organised by the *Directorate of Corporate and Industry Relations* (CIR). Professional support in the area of health is provided by the *Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences* (AIMS) through its hospitals, research centres and community health department at its main campus in Cochin. Amrita SeRVe's SHGs are affiliated with the AmritaSREE (*Self-Reliance, Education & Employment*) self-help group network of the Mata Amritanandamayi Math.



## ABOUT THIS BOOK

The Amrita Self-Reliant Village Project (Amrita SeRVe) is the embodiment of Amma's vision for returning India's impoverished villages to their original self-reliance and prosperity. Several departments from Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham (a private university with six campuses in four states around India), such as AMMACHI Labs, CREATE, WNA and Live-in-Labs®, have been working together with Amrita SeRVe for more than five years to implement a vast range of activities to benefit the people in more than 50 villages across 21 states. This book is both a reflection on the work that has been carried out since the project's inauguration in September 2013, as well as a journey exploring different aspects of the lives of the people we support.

“Be like the honeybee  
who gathers only nectar  
wherever it goes.  
Seek the goodness  
that is found in everyone.”

-Amma



[amritaserve.org](http://amritaserve.org)



+91 4762 804 412



[info@amritaserve.org](mailto:info@amritaserve.org)



[amritaserve.org/youtube](http://amritaserve.org/youtube)



[facebook.com/amritaserve](https://facebook.com/amritaserve)