



Herald Hindustan

Official Newsletter of **PROJECTS ABROAD INDIA** November 2011 Issue 41

VOLUNTEER INDIA



02	DIRECTOR'S NOTE	09	My Stay in Gandhigram
03	INDIA INSIDE AND OUT - VALAIKAPPU	SOCIAL EVENTS	
04	NEWS & UPDATE - VETERINARY PROJECT IN INDIA	11	UPCOMING WEEKEND TRIP
05	WHAT'S ON? @ PROJECTS ABROAD INDIA	12	DESTINATION OF THE MONTH - KHAJURAHO
06	LOCAL FAIRS, BIRTHDAYS & DONATIONS	13	COOKERY CORNER
07	NEW ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES	14	STAFF CONTACT LIST
08	VISIT MADURAI	15	VOLUNTEER CONTACT LIST
VOLUNTEERS' CORNER		18	SOCIAL MEDIA SECTION

Balli

Diwali – the name would just not lighten up the spaces but millions of hearts in India. For thousands of years this has been an integral festival to Hindus year after year. Recently, with all the technical invasions like Facebook, play stations and chat rooms people have little time to bask in these festivals which were already overshadowed by the invasion of televisions and now satellite televisions.

The mechanical world does not grace people with enough time for making sweets and savouries. Instead people like to laze and plant themselves as couch potatoes watching endless giggles and piffles of glitteratis.

Rather, we wanted to revivify the festivity in a distinctive manner that would enrich the cultural affinity for the children and cultural immersion for the volunteers.

It was Vallalar Illam we chose. A joyous day starting with games the number of inmates in Vallalar Illam counts to 70 children. And we (volunteers and the staff) were about thirty people who joined them to celebrate the day.

We started the day by planting some tree saplings on one-side of the Illam. Then we had some interesting games like ring game, Frog race, lemon and spoon, hit the target – all of these were memorable and exhilarating for the children, especially in the presence of foreigner guests. Then the volunteers and the staff members enjoyed the traditional sport of pot breaking. The children performed impressive Yoga in stellar perfection, truly amazing the volunteers.

We concluded the day by bursting some fire crackers which the children enjoyed a lot. During the day we offered a special lunch and a cash of 7000 rupees to the placement which we thought might be useful for the children for their celebrations.

It was a memorable day and our little contribution towards keeping our traditional festivals alive.

“The truth is that existence wants your life to become a festival...because when you are unhappy, you also throw unhappiness all around.”

JAGADISH KUMAR

COUNTRY DIRECTOR - INDIA

PROJECTS ABROAD

Valaikappu

India, being a vast and diverse sea of humanity, has many different customs and celebrations in different areas – Godh Bharai (North Indian Hindus), Valaikappu (Tamil Hindus) and Seemandham (South Indian Hindus).

Valaikappu is the ceremony to show care and concern to a would-be mother and pray for the well-being of the unborn child.

It is the mom-to-be who is showered with blessings and bounty - cash, clothes or even jewellery - a sort of a "mother-to-be shower". Also, traditionally it is attended by the women-folk.

Seemandham is a religious ceremony performed by most south Indian Hindus. It is performed to protect and nurture the mom-to-be and the baby in her womb. It is typically hosted by the in-laws of the new mom-to-be on an auspicious day selected by a priest. It is celebrated with great enthusiasm and fanfare across the southern part of India. These days, many South Indian Hindus opt for a combined Seemandham and Valaikappu. This is more practical and easier for both the hosts and the guests. In this case, the combined ceremony needs to be held in the 8th month (even numbered months). Of course, the ceremony is followed by a traditional feast.



The Legend:

The ceremony of Valaikappu is performed to please the deity Raka, who is known to bestow the pregnant women with good health and a fruitful pregnancy. The insinuations are that, after performing this 'Sanskara', the child is born with sharp intellect and beauty. In certain parts of South India, a Neem tree is worshiped as part of Valaikappu rituals.

Rituals of Valaikappu:

A full moon day is considered auspicious for the Valaikappu ceremony. The pregnant girl takes a bath in the morning and wears a new Saree bought especially for this day. Her mother-in-law takes her to a nearby temple and she buys bangles of her choice from a bangle store. These days, bangle sellers are invited to homes and ladies buy colorful glass bangles from them. Customarily, the would-be mother is adorned with the bangles which she wears until delivery. After that those bangles along with other gifts are offered to the midwife. After dressing up, she sits on a wooden plank and her mother arranges bangles in one hand and the mother-in law in the other hand. Odd numbered bangles are placed in left hand and even numbered in right hand. The girl is treated with all her favorite foods. According to the Indian tradition, it is considered inauspicious to buy any clothes or other items for the baby before the baby is born (possibly because in olden days, the percentage of babies dying during childbirth was high).



PROJECT UPDATE - VETERINARY MEDICINE

Veterinary project is one of the emerging projects in India destination. Most of the volunteers do not have the exact idea of how the Veterinary project here in India looks like. Here I gave you an exact explanation of how the Veterinary project in India will be.

As a first point, it's really very important for me to explain that – the animals you look after will include cattle, especially goats and cows. Relatively the number of dogs and chicken will be less than the cattle. Usually the volunteers will gain their general veterinary practice in two places; namely Virudhunagar and Madurai. In a typical day of the



volunteer work, the morning session will be at the Government Hospital and the evening session will be at the private Veterinary clinic. During these sessions, volunteers will be shadowing the Vet with plenty of scope for observation and some hands-on work. Depending on your experience and confidence, you may be able to participate in basic and simple procedures under supervision, such as pregnant diagnosis, artificial insemination etc. This will also depend on whether the Vet feels you have the capabilities to take part in these activities.

At times the work might be a bit slow, as it only becomes busy when animals are brought in. During these periods, there will be a variety of different jobs that you'll need to assist. Some of these will not be directly related to working with the animals, such as attending to the upkeep and cleaning of the premises, or helping out with Reception. In other words, the volunteers have to be mentally prepared to do anything and everything that needs to be done during the time they're there.

Once in every two weeks, volunteers will be invited to attend the Veterinary Camp which will be organised by Projects Abroad. During these camps, the volunteers will be taken to any of the rural villages in Madurai with the veterinarian as the team head, and volunteers will be assisting him. These camps play a vital role during the project period. Because the number of cattle attending the day ranges between 50 and 150 the volunteer might get hands-on experience during any of these camps.



In addition to the above, Projects Abroad India volunteers will be able to observe the animal surgery which includes ABC [Animal Birth Control] surgery procedures too.

There is a great opportunity during which volunteers can learn a lot from experts of veterinary field and about how they work in a culture that is very different to what they're used to. In addition, they will also gain new skills, more confidence, a greater understanding of a different culture, invaluable personal and professional development.

- ✓ Workshop on Dance and Song will be conducted for the Care and Teaching volunteers will be held at the Projects Abroad India - Main Office.
- ✓ Medical volunteers were requested to sign-up for the Hospital visit during which you will visit the Leprosy Hospital, Siddha & Ayurvedha Hospital and to the Mental Health Centre. Volunteers were also taken for a visit to St. Joseph's Hospice - a place for Dyeing Destitute.
- ✓ Projects Abroad India will be organizing veterinary camps at the villages near Madurai. And volunteers will be given an opportunity to observe the Animal Birth Control (ABC) surgery which will be held at the Thirupparankundram University. As an odd on, Veterinary Medicine volunteers will be taken to the Forest College to have a visit.
- ✓ Conservation project volunteers will be taken to the Market every Wednesday to canvas about the vermi-compost unit to the near-by villages. Also Projects Abroad India will be taking the volunteers to the children's home to do the follow-up work and to the School for the Environmental awareness campaign. Additionally, Projects Abroad India organize the workshop on Ayurvedha for the Conservation volunteers.
- ✓ During the month of October Projects Abroad India organises the weekend away trip to the places namely - Kanyakumari and Thekkady.

All the above activities and their dates are liable to change. Anyhow our staff will be in contact with you if there is any change. So, please try to catch up with the staff members to enjoy your time in India.. And by the way please don't forget to celebrate Christmas and invite the New Year 2012 with great enthusiasm!

Local Fairs & Festivals

In this section, we inform you the fairs and festivals that has been predominantly celebrated in the southern part of India during the month of December 2011. We hope everyone will enjoy this...!

Date	Festival	Importance
8 th ,9 th ,10 th December	Thiru Karthigai	This virtuous day is an ideal time to worship Lord Shiva at Thiruvannamalai during which a huge fire lamp is lit up on the hill. Also devotees fast during the day and in the evening, they break their fast at the temple. And decorate their house with lamps and colorful art at the front of their house.
25th December	Christmas	Predominantly, people attend the special mass at the Churches. After which, they have a big feast which is followed by a family get – together. Sometimes, people use to cut Cake to mark this special day.

Birthdays!!!

Here Projects Abroad celebrate the birthdays for the following volunteers and the staff members during the month of December 2011.. We wish the following a very happy birthday!!!

Volunteers....

Ms Leonie RODENBUECHER - 1st
December

Ms Christiane NIEWERTH - 1st
December

Ms Claire SOLOMON - 7th December

Ms Hrudaya BESTHA - 26th December

Ms Robin WIECZOREK - 13th December

Mr Tomas RAMSTEDT - 6th December

Ms Hermenegilda TESCHI - 8th
December

Ms Anna NICOLE - 4th December

Staff....

Ms Sangamithra - 7th December

Mr Ezhil Elango - 28st December

Donations

VOLUNTEERS' CONTRIBUTION

◆ One of our Medical Volunteer - Ms Janette van Hest contributed 3000 INR to the St. Joseph's Hospice. Thank you Janette!

PROJECTS ABROAD CONTRIBUTION

◆ Projects Abroad India contributes 8000 INR to Sowbackya Illam to construct the additional bathrooms for the Kids.

◆ Projects Abroad India contributes Sports Material to the kids at Amar Seva Sangam which costs around 3000 INR.

VISIT MADURAI



The best time to visit the Meenakshi Amman temple is from 09:00 to 11:00 am & from 06:00 to 07:00 pm..

Traditional Dance Show available at Madurai – You can watch Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi during the weekend evenings and the name of the place is Kadambhavanam.



Gandhi Museum - the museum where one can see the monuments of Mahatma Gandhi (the great Indian Freedom fighter and leader). The museum will be kept open from 10:00 AM to 13:00 PM and from 14:00 PM to 17:30 PM on all days except during National Holidays!

The rock-cut temple- Thirupparankundram is open from 05:30 am to 01:00 pm and from 16:00 to 21:00 pm. This is the place where you can see White peacocks, a rare variety Indian Bird.



My stay in Gandhigram

How to describe my stay in Gandhigram; it's an exercise rather difficult. The experience was so rich. Unfortunately I couldn't stay longer than 3 weeks because of my work back in Switzerland. I'm 44 years young and I travelled already a lot in Asia (Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand, Sri Lanka), but I didn't have the opportunity to discover India before.

From the first moment I arrived in Madurai, I felt so familiar with everybody and everything. I got a warm welcome from the children and also the staff in Gandhigram; the superintendent Neelamma is a very good person and I appreciate her work for all the kids.

The place is beautiful; the perfume from the jasmine trees is all around.

Each morning I went to the hospital near to the children's home; there I was helping the nurses with the bath of the babies and also for giving them their food and changing clothes. There were 8 cute babies and I wanted to take each of them with me when I left after 3 weeks. I also met some other people in the hospital, especially older people. They didn't speak a word in English but I went every morning saying "hello" and gave them a warm smile.

The hospital wasn't very far from the orphanage; the first few days I walked to it, and after I took a Rikshaw which was always very nice to travel with. The traffic isn't very "dense" in this place and I was never feeling in "danger". When you go to Dindigul, it's a little bit different, but you don't have to worry, the drivers were all very good.

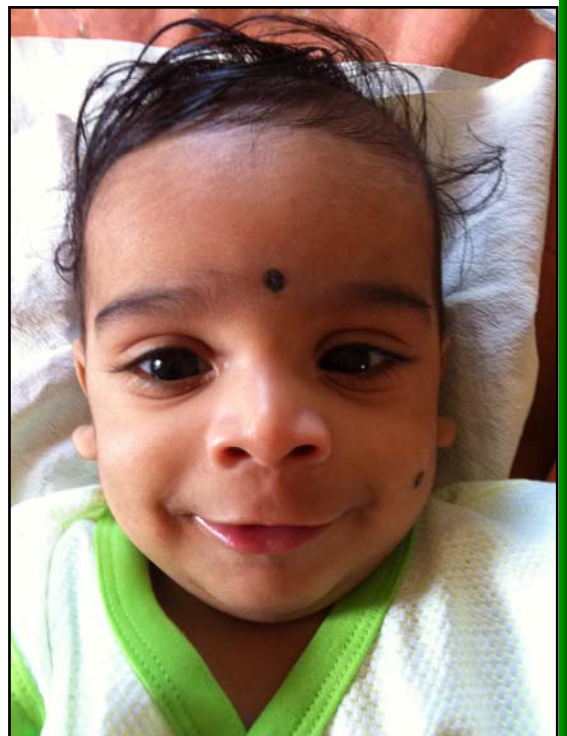
On a weekend, I took a bicycle from a boy in Gandhigram (nothing to do with bicycles we know in our country ;-)). I wanted to discover the town of Dindigul. But it was about 12 km from the orphanage and when you have to pedal by temperature which goes up to 35° or even more, you will sweat a little bit. I was very happy when I reached the town; there was a big crowd between the cows, the rikshaw, cars and other drivers. Everybody stared at me; I understood it better a few days later because in my 3 week stay, I didn't see a tourist and they must have been surprised to see me on the bike.

I was really happy to be on my own. So I had the possibility to meet people and they also get in touch much easier when you are travelling alone. I have never been scared.

A few days later, Kirsten from Holland came to Gandhigram. We spent 2 weeks together and it was just great. We shared a lot of time; mostly, or should I say every day, we went "shopping" ... not the way you think. It was shopping for the children. We bought a lot of clothes for the babies in the hospital and also for the children in the orphanage. As we had some donation from our families we wanted to buy something that the children needed. For the babies in the hospital we bought also milder soaps for the bath of them. The staff was very glad so see that we thought also to bring baby bottles. It was very nice to see them happy too.

We did also some shopping for us, of course. We felt in love with the "nighties". I think I had about 15 in my suitcase when I came back. It's a kind of nightdress, but we were wearing it even in late afternoon because you feel so nice and comfortable in it.

We bought also a saree; did you know that it measures about 5.5 m!? I need to find instructions on the Internet because I couldn't handle it otherwise. It's very difficult and hopefully, Radha was helping Kirsten and me the first time. But it was such a great feeling walking in the sarees. We looked a little bit like Indian women and we were very proud of it, even if they will always be looking much better in the sarees than we do. They have such nice black hair and their skin is also very beautiful.



Then we bought the "churidhar", it's a set of trousers and a kind of long shirt to the knee; you wear it with a scarf and it looks very nice too. My western clothes were not very suitable to the climate and the work.

After lunch we always had a little rest and at 3:30 pm the little ones came back from school. We were playing with them, sometimes in groups, sometimes all together. Or were drawing pictures and did some others games. When the bigger ones came back we were playing soccer or basketball. We also showed them pictures and they had to say the word in English. We learned a little bit of their language, but it seems to be difficult to speak fluently. We'll see, maybe I will start some lessons.

Then we had prayer. It was every time a magic moment. I was very touched by the words almost sung by all the children. It emerges a lot of strength and happiness.

After that, we mostly helped the children in their homework studies. At least we could be a support for the English lessons. They are working a lot in school and after and some of the children were anxious about the exams they had to get through the last 2 weeks of September. At 8:30 pm we had dinner. Usually we were sitting at the table (there's only one). For the others meals we did like everyone; we were sitting cross-legged on the floor. I had some troubles with my knees, because I'm not used to be in this position and I'm not 20 anymore ;-).

The food was always great; I love it. It's often very spicy, even for breakfast. There are the Idlis, kind of little white bread, made of rice flour and lentils. You eat it with some coconut-chutney or with sambhar (vegetables). Hum, tastes so good. (When I came back home I went to all the Indian shops until I found THE special pan with moldings. I have it now; but have to admit that my Iddlies aren't that good as the ones I had in the orphanage; but I keep trying to cook them). We also had Dosaï, a lot of rice, and always had several fruits at the end of the meals. Outside of the orphanage, Kirsten and I, often drank fresh fruit juices; they are really good; there's one place near to the hospital and we stopped each day when we came out of our "morning work".



With Kirsten we discovered a very nice vegetarian restaurant in Dindigul; a little one and with only local people. The food was very good and the sound too (mantra music). So we returned a second time and it was always very tasty. They don't have spoons, knives or forks; you eat with your right hand. I have to add, that I am a left hander so at first to the way I ate was a little bit clumsy, but after a few days it was easy. I still eat this way when I'm at my home. Food tastes better and you don't have to use water for washing tableware; there's only one plate; so it's quite ecological. Sometimes we didn't have electricity; one evening I was sitting alone for diner and suddenly there was no light anymore. It was funny to eat in an all dark room. In the morning we always had a little cut of electricity from 6:00 to 8:00 and the fan didn't work anymore. I didn't complain because I already had a nice room and a bed while the kids were sleeping on the floor.

Now I'm back in Switzerland, physically I'm here, but my thoughts are still nearby the children and Kirsten. I plan to go back in December and spend Christmas and New Year with them. It would be so nice to see them again.

I am a very lucky person and I'm grateful for everything I've seen in Gandhigram. It changed my life.

I wish every volunteer to spend a very good time, whether in India or elsewhere. Projects Abroad gives you the chance to do something really nice in your life.

Best wishes for everyone.

Ms Claudia SCHAUFELBERGER | Switzerland

Upcoming Weekend – Kanyakumari

Kanyakumari is located at the southern tip of the Indian subcontinent. The small temple dedicated to Kanyakumari, or the youthful form of the primeval energy Shakti (Mother Goddess) is located on the seashore, in the town known by the same name. Kanyakumari was referred to by the British as Cape Comorin.

A memorial built in his honor is accessible via ferry. There is also a recently built memorial to Thiruvalluvar, the author of the philosophical work Thirukkural - a treatise on the Indian way of life.

The Kanyakumari Temple is an ancient one and has been mentioned in the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and the Sangam works Manimekalai and Puranaanooru.

The temple: The black stone image of Kanyakumari in the sanctum bearing a garland is an enchanting one. Of particular significance is the glittering nose ring that is visible from a distance. Legend has it that the light emanating from this nose ring misguided arriving ships and caused them to crash onto the rocky coast. There is a door now, to the east of the shrine which is opened only five times a year. There are also shrines to Vijayasundari and Balasundari, friends and playmates of the Goddess in her youthful form. There are a total of 11 theerthams associ-



ated with the temple in the ocean surrounding the area. The confluence of the seas, at the southern tip of the subcontinent has been held sacred for centuries.

The Vaisakha Festival is celebrated in the Tamil month of Vaikasi where an image of the goddess is taken around town in procession on various mounts. The Car Festival, the Aaraatu (when the eastern door to the shrine is opened) and the Float Festival here are of significance.

The eastern door is opened also on new moon days in the months of Thai, Aadi (Capricorn and Cancer), during Navratri and in the month of Kartika.

The Kalabham (sandal) Festival in the month of Aadi is also of importance here, when the image is covered with sandal paste and on the 13th day, ie. the last Friday of the month, vast crowds throng the temple as the image is covered with vast quantities of flowers brought in from several villages in the vicinity.

An image of the deity is held in worship at the Navratri Mandapam throughout the duration of Navratri, and processions mark the festive celebrations on each of the nine nights.

Khajuraho

Temple town of Khajuraho is much different from any other temple city of India. It is not about religion and worshipping and deities. The temples of Khajuraho are instead famous for the eroticism etched on its walls in the form of sculptures. An amalgamation of science and art of architecture, these 10th-11th Century temples have a very interesting legend behind them that connects them to the origin of Chandela dynasty. It is said that in a fit of passion and lust, the Moon God seduced and ravaged a beautiful Brahmin girls known as Hemvati, resulting in the birth of Chandravarman (the founder of the Chandela dynasty). Later, Chandravarman had a dream where his mother requested him to make a temple, which would reveal all aspects of the treasure of passion and erotic fantasy to the world.



Thus he brought an artistic revolution by building the famous Khajuraho temples, in the town, which was his capital. Some people also believe these erotic art forms to be the visual depiction of Kamasutra between Shiva and Parvati, the divine couple. Khajuraho temples got lost into obscurity and were only discovered by chance but they quickly became India's second most favored tourist destination after Taj Mahal. This temple complex is perhaps the largest group of medieval temples. Other than eroticism, these sculptures also depict other refined courtly accomplishments such as music and dance. Only 22 temples have survived out of the original 85 temples. It displays one of the most unique stone-carving works and was declared a World Heritage Site in 1986.

The lovely temples can be divided into three broad groups, namely, the Eastern group, the Southern group and the Western group. However, the Western group is not only the largest one but also the one, which is most easily accessible.

The lovely temples can be divided into three broad groups, namely, the Eastern group, the Southern group and the Western group. However, the Western group is not only the largest one but also the one, which is most easily accessible.

1. The Eastern Group takes in five isolated sub-group of temples situated in and around the present town of Khajuraho. Along with the three Brahmanical temples, the three Jain temples also fall under this group.
2. The Southern Group is situated at the most distant location and includes mainly the two temples of Duladeo and Chaturbhuj, which are situated near and across the Khudarnala.
3. The Western Group is largest of all the temple groups of Khajuraho. It is not compact and located in the center but also include the most renowned and noteworthy monuments built during the reign of the Chandela rulers. They are also known to have been maintained well by the Archaeological Survey of India and the lush green lawns surrounding them with multihued shrubs and fragrant blossoms add to their beauty.

Chembu Curry Recipe

Chembu is used widely in Kerala in a wide variety of recipes. This is a starchy vegetable and is quite delicious steamed, fried or smothered with seasonings. These are found growing in most homes in Kerala and thrive without any attention. Chembu Curry is a tasty traditional curry from Kerala. Chembu curry is a unique and interesting dish that goes well with rice.

Ingredients:

- ½ kg Chembu (Colocasia/ Arbi)
- 1 cup Coconut (scraped)
- ¼ tsp Turmeric Powder
- 2 Green Chilies
- 1 Garlic (small)
- ½ tsp Cumin Seeds
- 1 stem Curry Leaves
- 2 Dry Red Chilies
- ¼ tsp Mustard Seeds
- 1 tbsp Coconut Oil
- Water (for cooking)
- Salt (to taste)



How to make Spinach Tambli:

- * Peel the Chembu. Wash well and cut into small pieces.
- * Place it in a cooker and add enough water, salt and turmeric powder. Pressure cook it.
- * Grind coconut, cumin seeds, green chilies and garlic pods in a blender, to form a smooth paste.
- * Add this paste to the cooked Chembu and add the required water.
- * Boil the mixture for 1 minute.
- * Heat coconut oil in a saucepan and add mustard seeds.
- * When they start spluttering, add dry red chilies and curry leaves.
- * Let them fry for a minute and add this to the Chembu curry prepared earlier.
- * Serve hot.

Keep on reading our Country Newsletters from India, as well as from variety of Destinations and get to have a clear idea about volunteering in Projects Abroad. For the Newsletters, you can visit our website - **"Projects Abroad Official Website"** @ www.projects-abroad.net



Stay connected with us in Facebook via our GROUP named **"Projects Abroad India - The Official Group"** and enjoy our latest news, updates and interesting pictures from India ..!

Try to post your blogs at the Projects Abroad's Blog website - **"My Trip Blog"**. Also continue reading our blogs to get the recent updates from this colorful Country - INDIA!!!



Projects Abroad India is at Twitter too. You can find us @



Proj_AbroadIN in Twitter. Please try to be connected with us and be informed with the

latest happenings in your respective placements and projects.

If you have any queries, feedbacks, comments regarding the Newsletter / Facebook / My Trip Blog / Twitter, contact Nadia at india-socialmanager@projects-abroad.org or at india@projectsabroadnewsletter.org