

# Herald Hindustan

Official Newsletter of **PROJECTS ABROAD INDIA** September 2011 Issue No. 39

## VOLUNTEER INDIA



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# Shagatom

What do our volunteers actually do? Do they play an integral role in the place they work? In my opinion, they don't have to bring a sea of changes everywhere they go and this is impossible. Even if their contribution is a drop in the ocean that is suffice and we want to go slow and steady in bringing changes.

I met a Placement Supervisor, a lady from California, who has visioned a school with a difference in a South-Indian village and it has now blossomed. It is wonderful to know that our volunteers have contributed in a small way to the difference she visioned and the children are greatly excited to have our volunteers. The children seem to have learnt German words and sang German songs, ate German food and played German games - thanks to a German volunteer. It is wonderful to teach some German to the children in a remote village of Tirunelveli.

There is another set of volunteers busy in another part of Tirunelveli with a film crew, acting for a short documentary about a noteworthy person. It is one of our volunteers who would be playing the protagonist and few other volunteers in a variety of roles. The head of the crew came to meet me in person and thanked me for our volunteers' co-operation. This was another small contribution by our volunteers who volunteered to play the roles of white people and support the film makers who are making a meaningful film without profit as an aim.

A host mother was talking about the guests she receives, exclusively to spend some time with the volunteers, to get an insight into their culture. It seems that their house has become a place of cultural integration, in a small way.

These small contributions become remarkable when they grow into a big changes. Our volunteers are always doing something but in different capacities and in different small ways they can.

*You must be the change you wish to see in the world. - Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.*

**JAGADISH KUMAR**

**COUNTRY DIRECTOR - INDIA**

**PROJECTS ABROAD**

**GANESH / VINAYAKAR CHATURTHI**

As per Hindu Mythology, it is believed that the god Ganesha is the beginner of all things and he removes all the obstacles of our lives. Hindu religion says that Ganesh is the son of Goddess Parvati and she created her first son Vinayaka out of clay and gave him life. A story in Hindu mythology says that Goddess Parvati went to have her



bath by asking her son Lord Ganesh to guard her at the door steps. At that time Lord Shiva returned, the child Ganesh who had never seen him before didn't allow Lord Shiva to enter inside.

At this moment Lord Shiva got angry and severed the head of the child. Goddess Parvati returned back after finishing her bath and saw that her son was killed by her husband. Devi begged Shiva to give him back alive. Lord Shiva accepted her obligation and searched for the head of any child, but he didn't find a human child's head. Finally he got the head of a baby elephant and fixed it on to the body of Vinayaka and gave



re-birth to him. This is the birth of Lord Ganesha's story. The festival of Ganesh Chaturthi is celebrated in the states of Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh and many other parts of India. In Tamilnadu it is been celebrated in the name of Vinayakar Chaturthi. This festival is celebrated to thank Lord Vigneshwara for giving wisdom, prosperity and auspiciousness in life. The Hindu mythology tells that Ganesh Chaturthi is the birth day of Lord Ganesh. This year Ganapathi festival is celebrated on September 1st 2011. Every year Vinayakar Chaturthi comes on the fourth day after the new moon in the Hindu month of Bhadrapada.



The festival is so popular that the preparations begin months in advance. Ganesha statues installed in street corners and in homes and elaborate arrangements are made for lighting, decorations, mirrors and the most common of flowers. Poojas (prayer services) are performed daily. The artists who make the idols of Ganesh compete with each other to make bigger and more magnificent and elegant idols.

The relevantly larger ones are anything from 10 meters to 30 meters in height. These statues are then carried on decorated floats to be immersed in the sea after one, three, five, seven and ten days. Thousands of processions converge on the beaches to immerse the holy idols in the sea. This procession and immersion is accompanied by drum beats, devotional songs and dancing. With the immersion of the idol amidst the chanting of "Ganesh Maharaj Ki Jai!" (Hail



Lord Ganesh) the festival ends with pleas to Ganesha to return the next year with chants of "Ganpati bappa morya, pudcha varshi laukar ya" (Hail Lord Ganesh, return again soon next year). In Tamil Nadu, Vinayaka Chaturthi is celebrated as a one day festival. Each day special prayers are performed by preparing



Prasadam (food which is favorite to Ganesh) in all Hindu homes. It is also celebrated in the streets of Tamilnadu. Thousands of Vignesh idols are installed in various public places of Tamilnadu. At the end of the festival, the idols are immersed in the large water bodies which are popularly called Ganesh Visarjan ceremony.

◆ During the month of September, Projects Abroad India organized the Workshop on Fabric Painting at Velli VEDIYAR Girls' School in Madurai. The workshop was held on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2011 to demonstrate the volunteers (doing Care & Teaching project) about how to make the children more happy by utilizing their valuable time and helping them to be innovative.



◆ Veterinary Medicine volunteers participated in two of the veterinary camps which is being held at the villages namely - Vilacherry, Kannanur organized by Projects Abroad India in the month of September. And observed Animal Birth Control surgery which is been held at Thirupparankundram University. As an additional program, veterinary and the model farm volunteers participated in the Masala ball programme which is been held at Chinnupatti and in the near-by village namely Rettiyarpatti.

◆ Projects Abroad India organized the visit to Leprosy Hospital and to the Siddha & Ayurvedha Hospital and about 20 volunteers participated in the program and had a great chance to gain knowledge about the various treatment practices in India.

◆ About 4 Model Farm volunteers were taken to the Covenant Centre for Development (CCD) for visiting the organic farming techniques. The follow - up session in the St. Joseph's Development Trust been finished and the first ever harvested vegetables been distributed to the local people. With the help of the Veterinary medicine and the Model farm volunteers, the Masala balls been prepared with the herbs and the spices from the Model Farm and from the market. Also the volunteers conducted an enriching session about environment for the girls at the Holy Cross Covent at Batlagundu which is followed by art and games session.



- ✓ Care volunteers will be having a workshop on Games and Activities on 18th October 2011. And volunteers will be taught about new games which would be useful for the volunteers to teach in their respective placement.
- ✓ 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 two veterinary camps at the villages near Madurai. And volunteers will be given an opportunity to observe the Animal Birth Control (ABC) surgery and that will be held at the Thirupparankundram University.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ During the month of October Projects Abroad India organises the weekend away trip to the places namely - Munnar, Rameshwaram and Kodaikanal.

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 the Ganesh Chaturthi and Pooja festivals during the upcoming month!

# Local Fairs & Festivals

Here we introduce the new column in our Newsletter - Local Fairs & Festivals. In this section, we inform you the festivals that has been predominantly celebrated in the southern part of India during the month of September and October 2011. We hope everyone will enjoy this too...!

Date	Festival	Importance
01 - Sep - 2011	<b>Vinayagar / Ganesh Chaturthi</b>	One of the most popular Gods in India, lord Ganesh or Ganpati is considered a symbol of wisdom and a bringer of good luck. Ganesh is remembered on Chaturthi which is celebrated as his birthday. Ladoos are distributed on the day-by tradition and eaten before the meal. Milk is offered to idols of lord Ganesh at home and at temples, and Ganesh puja is performed at all temples and hi-house prayer rooms. Fasting, feasting and distribution of sweets offered to Lord Ganesh are important aspects of Ganesh Chaturthi rituals in India. Hindus pray to images of Lord Ganesh, large and small, many of them made specially for the occasion by cottage industries and street side artisans, and those that do not wish to keep the idols alive by daily prayers, offerings and lighting oil lamps, immerse them in the nearest water body (all rivers, lakes and the sea which are sacred to Hindus).
09 - Sep - 2011	<b>Onam</b>	Onam is the most important harvest festival of Kerala. Ranging from four days to ten days, all the activities during this season are centered around worshipping, music, dances, sports, boat races and good food. It is celebrated in the Malayalam month Chingam (ending of August and beginning of September). Elaborate procession of Thirussur and spectacular snake boat races on River Pampa mark the merry-making nature of the festival. Women dress up in new saris and heavy jewellery and make elaborate and intricate designs of 'rangolis' (with coloured rice paste) and 'pookkolam' (with flowers) in front of their homes.
28 - Sep - 2011	<b>Navratri begins</b>	Navratri - the nine sacred nights is one of the most celebrated festivals of India. This nine days festival is essentially celebrated to worship Devi and to commemorate the victory of good over evil. During Navratri Devi is worshipped in the form of Sri Durga for the first three days, as Sri Lakshmi for the second three days and as Sri Saraswati for the next three days. In the south, during Navratri the occasion is also used to invite all the friends, relatives and neighbours over to home to look at the Kolu that is arranged. Every year the young girls in the house along with their mothers vie with each other to create a Kolu with a different look. All the nine days are a non stop entertainment period with songs and dances.
02 - Oct - 2011	<b>Gandhi Jayanti</b>	Gandhi Jayanti is celebrated on the very day every year as the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, Father of India. His teachings are promoted even today to avoid violence and find peaceful solutions to conflicts. The United Nations General Assembly announced on 15th June, 2007 that October 2nd will be celebrated as the International Day of Non-Violence.
05 - Oct - 2011	<b>Saraswati Pooja / Ayudha Pooja</b>	The last day of Navratri, which is also the Mahanavami day, is observed as Ayudha Puja and Saraswati Puja. Books and tools are placed in the puja room or in front of the idol or painting of Goddess Saraswati on the previous day evening, which is the Durga Ashtami day. The most significant part of the Saraswati Puja is, nobody touches books on that particular day. This signifies that the goddess is blessing the books placed in front of her that day.
06 - Oct - 2011	<b>Vijayadasami</b>	The books and tools are removed from the Pooja on the Vijayadasami day. The children take back their books but stand before the goddess and read from them or write in them. Many people visit temple on that day, to worship God Saraswati to get her blessing to get Best of Education / Art / Culture.
26 - Oct - 2011	<b>Deepavali / Diwali</b>	Diwali celebrations may last for up to five days. Many people decorate their home and workplaces with tiny electric lights or small clay oil lamps. Bowls of water with candles and flowers floating on the surface are also popular decorations. Many people make a special effort to clean their homes and yards before Diwali. They may also wash themselves with water and fragrant oils, wear new clothes and give gifts of sweets to family members, close friends and business associates. Fireworks are set off in the evening. <i>Melas</i> (fairs) are held in many towns and villages. People in different regions in India may celebrate Diwali on various dates. This is because traditional lunar calendars can be interpreted in different ways. For example, Deepavali in Tamil Nadu is celebrated in the Tamil month of Aipasi.

## 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.



### Katharina shares her first impressions of India...

"Unforgettable!" that's what I thought during my first drive from the airport to the centre of Madurai. And truly this awesome first view of India through the dusty window of the jeep still stays in my mind like yesterday. The intensive smell, the shiny colors, the expanding rubbish, the back-breaking heat, the craggy road which made you jump up every now and then; but most of all the people in the small villages we passed through are burned into my memories.

I traveled a lot, or at least tried to do it, but nonetheless I never saw something comparable to that.



Almost everything seemed to be different. Each corner showed a new interesting facet of the Indian life and made my wish grow, to jump out of the jeep and go around to see all the little things closer and get in touch with them and the people.

I saw locals sitting in front of their door, talking to their neighbors and eating with their hands from palm leaves, while some other washed their clothes in a bucket in a small backstreet. Equally impressing was a man sitting next to a lying cow, which had bounded her feet together (probably the man was a kind of a blacksmith).

Most of the Indians who noticed the jeep and his charge were starring at me like at an alien. Some of them smiled, some others waved to me and again others were just standing still and watching.

At this moment I remembered a certain sentence of a movie, a book or maybe a song, which captured my situation and my feelings exactly: "She was a stranger between strangers."

Totally unprepared and lost in my thoughts, I was shocked as a cow crossed slowly and unimpressed our road. But this lonely cow was just a perfect example for all the following animals I saw on this trip to the centre; dogs, cats, donkeys, goats and - how already mentioned - cows seemed to live without any problems in a certain harmony with humans. Like is it was nothing to see a woman was sitting in a shady place next to a dangerous looking horned cow.

However not just the obvious things made me wonder but also the culture and tradition behind it which I got to know later. Like the different types of religion which you can recover everywhere by just holding your eyes open. On almost every wall, car (or rickshaw) and even every shop you find little stickers or paintings of Jesus, Ganesh, Krishna and many other symbols of belief. It would take a while to get into this colossal aspect of religion in India - which includes so many different types of persuasions like Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism and a lot of other small groups. So in the end if somebody asks me to tell him something about India, I must confess that I'm not able to do this because with the eyes of a foreigner everything seems to be extraordinary and kind of unreal, so that it's hard to recognize the real life beyond this strangeness. As if you watch a big anthill, everything appeared chaotic but with a hidden system behind it.

Ms Katharina SCHNEIDER | Germany

## Journalismus Projekt 2011

Meine Zeit im Journalismus-Projekt war sehr interessant, ich habe von Sozialarbeit gewechselt und war überrascht, dass ich soviel Spaß hatte, obwohl das Projekt nun ein ganz anderes war..

Das Journalismus-Projekt beim Madurai Messenger ist sehr gut organisiert. Am Montag Morgen setzen sich alle zusammen in einen Kreis und diskutieren über ihre Fortschritte der letzten Woche, neue Ideen für weitere Artikel und was sonst so am Wochenende passiert ist. Es ist immer eine aufgeweckte lustige Runde und ein guter Start in die neue Woche.

Das Magazin ist sehr hochwertig und wird an Bildungseinrichtungen weitergegeben um die Schüler/ Studierenden zu über ihre Stadt und Umgebung zu informieren.

Inhaltlich ist der humane Aspekt sehr groß geschrieben. In den monatlichen Ausgaben gibt es verschiedene Kategorien die immer einem besondern Überthema untergeordnet sind, wie zum Beispiel Village Voices, People, Art, Business, Beauty, Travel und es gibt natürlich immer eine Titelgeschichte.



Jedenfalls ist für jeden was dabei, und es gibt eine Vielzahl an Auswahlmöglichkeiten.

Fährt man zu einem Interview, ist man nie auf sich alleine gestellt: Da die meisten Leute, die man interviewt kein Englisch sprechen, hat man einen Dolmetscher dabei, der alles übersetzt. Es ist wahnsinnig interessant, so viele echte Erfahrungen und Informationen über das Leben und die Menschen in Indien zu bekommen. Meistens kommen auch erst während des Interviews die spannenden Geschichten zum Vorschein.

Neben den Interviews, der Recherche und dem Schreiben unserer Artikel war immer noch ein bisschen Zeit fuer diverse Workshops. Unter Anderem besuchten wir einen Foto-Workshop, einen allgemeinen Medien-Workshop, eine Art Schreibwerkstatt und lernten dabei mit viel Spaß neue und vor allem professionelle Seiten des Journalismus kennen.

Außerdem ist toll, dass man den ganzen Tag Internetverbindung hat, sei es zum Recherchieren für die Artikel oder um den Kontakt nach Hause zu halten.

Die Stimmung im Journalismus-Projekt ist sehr offen und familiär. Man kann mit seinen Problemen, seien sie kulturell, persönlich oder projekt-bezogen, immer einen Ansprechpartner finden und fühlt sich sehr gut aufgehoben und wirklich ernst genommen. Die Arbeit ist außerdem nicht zu streng, man kann während der Arbeitszeit, die man größtenteils selbst einteilt, viel mit den anderen Freiwilligen rumalbern, somit ist kommt auch der Spaß nicht zu kurz.

Ameli Ziegler | Germany

## One of my interesting day

It was the last day I spent in Seva Ashram. On one of the former days we had played a game with the girls. I asked them to sit in circle and, one after the other, they had to tell me the name of a country. The one who didn't know or said a name that had already been said was out. I realized that a lot of them thought that some states of India were countries. So the next day I bought two maps; one of the world and one of India. I showed them to the girls who were interested. I showed them were my country, Switzerland, was and the trip I had to make to come to India. I showed them were India and Tamil Nadu were and we searched for all the other countries and other states they could name. I had such a lovely time and some of them showed such an interest that I really felt I was bringing a little something, even if it wasn't much. I really had a great time with them and I'm happy my last day went so well. It was the best way to end this wonderful trip, although it made me even sadder to leave.



Caroline LETTRY | Switzerland

## BIRTHDAY REMINDER

**Projects Abroad India's hearty greetings to all the volunteers and the staff members who are all celebrating their birthdays during the month of October 2011..!**

### *Volunteers....*

Ms Marlene BORCHERT - 1<sup>st</sup> October

Ms Chloe SMITH - 7<sup>th</sup> October

Mr Matthew PENTICOST - 8<sup>th</sup> October

Ms Natalie DEBOURSAC - 11<sup>th</sup> October

Ms Rachel McCOY - 15<sup>th</sup> October

Ms Lea SCHUNK - 22<sup>nd</sup> October

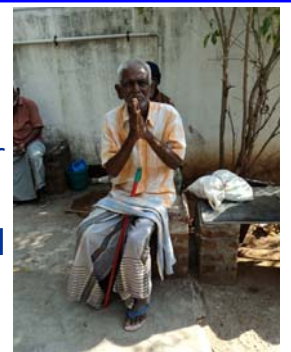
### *Staff....*

Mr Victor Chelladurai - 22<sup>nd</sup> October

## DONATION FOR THE MONTH

### *Projects Abroad's Contribution*

Projects Abroad India appreciates St. Joseph's Hospice for their continued support towards our volunteering work and feel proud in donating an amount of 7000 INR..!



### Upcoming Weekend - Kanyakumari

Kanyakumari is the southern most point of peninsular India and the meeting point of three oceans - the Bay of Bengal, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. Besides its importance as a Hindu pilgrim center, it is famous for its beautiful views of sunrise and sunset over the waters. The multicolored sand is a unique feature of the beach here.



» **Kanyakumari Temple:** The epitome of attractions! The presiding deity of the

temple of Kanyakumari is Paraasakthi as a virgin Goddess in meditative mood. The life-like image of Devi with a smiling face is a combination of innocence, purity and beauty. It is smeared with sandal paste, decked with different varieties of valuable ornaments and decorated with beautiful garlands of flowers. She creates a sense of devotion and "peace that passes understanding" in the mind of every worshipper.

The deity, Devi Kanyakumari, is the protector of India's shores' and has an exceptionally brilliant diamond on her nose ring which is supposed to shine out to sea.

» **Gandhi Mandapam :** Not far from the Kumari Amman Temple is the Gandhi Mandapam, constructed at the spot where the urn containing the ashes of Mahatma Gandhi was kept for public view before a portion of its contents was immersed in the three seas. It resembles an Oriyan Temple and was designed so that on Gandhiji's birthday (2nd October), the sun's rays fall on the place where his ashes were kept.

» **Vivekananda Memorial :** It is one of the most visited tourist places in Kanyakumari .This memorial stands on one of two rocks separated by a distance. This memorial is dedicated to Swami Vivekananda, the greatest social reformer. Swamy Vivekananda was supposed to have meditated on the rock where the memorial stands today. A meditation hall is also attached with the memorial.

» **Padmanabapuram Palace :** Known for its strategic planning and military architecture, the palace was the seat of power for the Travancore emperors. Its main attraction is its sheer aesthetic beauty, innovative designs and time tested wooden carvings.

## Natarajar Temple

Chidambaram is the seat of the cosmic dancer Nataraja (Ananda Tandava pose; the Cosmic Dance of bliss). It is one of the Pancha (five) Bhutasthalas.

Chidambaram is the Akasa sthalam - Space. The other four are at Kanchipuram (Prithvi sthalam - Earth), Tiruvanaikaval (Appu sthalam - Water), Kalahasti (Vayu sthalam - Air) & Tiruvannamalai (Thejo sthalam - Fire).

The 108 dance postures as seen in the Natya Sastra are sculpted in the towers of Natarajar temple. It has five principal sabhas known as Kanakasabha, Chit sabha,

Nritya sabha, Deva sabha and Raja sabha.

The sanctum of Sivakama Sundari lies to the left of Natarajar Sannidhi. The images of Ratnasabhapati (Nataraja of Ruby), the Spatika Lingam of Chandramauleeswara, Swarnakarshana Bhairavar, Mukhalingam are also to be found in the Chitsabha. Here many of the rituals of worship are performed, but at certain times devotees are allowed to have close darshan (viewing of, audience with) of the Nataraja in the



sanctum from here. The images of the Saiva Saints Appar, Sambandar, Sundarar and Manikkavasagar are placed in the temple entrances through which they entered the temple (Appar - West, Sambandar - South, Sundarar - North and Manikkavasagar - East).

Two annual Bhrammotsavams are celebrated. One in the Tamil month of Margazhi, during Arudra Darisanam Festival and the second in the month of Aani concluding with Aani

Tirumanjanam, when the deities are taken out in procession. The huge Ganesha in the outer prakara considered to be one of the biggest in India. The temple of Shiva Nataraja (Shri Sabhanayaka), of Chidambaram, is one of the great temple complexes of South India. The temple is a living religious institution, and it is therefore still developing.

# Urad Dal Vada Recipe

Urad Dal Vada is a very popular recipe. Usually Indians will have Vada for breakfast as well as during tea time.

## Ingredients:

- 2 glasses Black Gram
- 1 big Onion (chopped)
- Salt (to taste)
- 2 Green Chilies (chopped)
- 1 tsp Pepper
- Few Curry Leaves (chopped)
- 1 inch piece of Ginger
- ¼ tsp Soda Powder
- Oil (for frying)



## How to make Urad Dal Vada:

- ◆ Soak dal in water for 1 hour. Grind into a thick smooth paste, without adding water.
- ◆ Stir in salt and grind again.
- ◆ Transfer into a large bowl and add onion, green chilies, pepper, curry leaves, ginger, and soda. Mix well.
- ◆ Shape the mixture into small balls. Flatten them a little and make hole in the centre by inserting your little finger.
- ◆ Heat oil in a frying pan and fry the vadas until golden brown.
- ◆ Serve hot with sambhar and chutney.

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](http://www.projects-abroad.net)



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