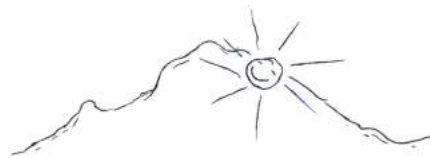


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SHANTHIMALAI TRUST



TOUCH A LIFE.

GIVE HOPE TO MANY.

TIRUVANNAMALAI, SOUTH INDIA

WHO WE ARE

Shanthimalai Trust (SMT) was founded in **1986** to support local efforts to improve the lives of impoverished villagers in Tiruvannamalai district, South India, through

- **direct support of poor and needy people,**
- **access to medical care,**
- **education,**
- **project development for income generation,**
- **community projects.**

All these are brought about through a network of separate legal entities which includes the Shanthimalai Trust, the Shanthimalai Research and Development Trust, as well as other projects. They were originally developed by SMT, later handed over and now independent, e.g. the Shanthimalai Handicraft Society or the Girivalam project. However, we see ourselves as **One Family**. Since its inception SMT has helped on a large scale to effect social change comprising around 40 villages.

Despite rapid economic development and growth in other parts of the country, this rural area still suffers severe poverty. **Drought. Monsoon floods. Death or illness in the family. Tsunami disaster. Job loss. Forces like these can devastate lives that are already difficult.**

India experiences longer periods of drought, and more frequently, specifically in the Tiruvannamalai district. And more than anything else, the livelihood of villagers depends on water: farming, construction works, construction jobs almost come down to total zero. Prices for water and food are rocketing. Poor families suffer the most as inflation eats up there anyhow meagre belongings. To recover from a long period of drought, it takes sometimes years for a family, if at all possible.





OUR VISION AND PHILOSOPHY

All activities of the Shanthimalai Trust are the expression of the living compassion realised by the founders of the Shanthimalai Trust, Dr. Hugo und Anne Maier who explained their vision of the Trust in the following way:

„Oppressed by misery and sorrow, enfeebled by suffering and want, man is paralyzed through his hopelessness. He can't think of anything but of his survival. In this situation, how can he turn to the higher values of life? Even the memory of them has disappeared. Having lost all faith in himself, he flees into the abyss of disbelief and superstition.

The true meaning of financial help is to enable man to find out of this dull state, with its inherent fatalism. When man finds back to himself, he finds also back to his fellow beings, through re-awakened love for his neighbor! He is, once more, capable of living up to a real community life.

Only when man knows himself as a self-confident individual, will he be able to make efforts by his own initiative to grow into his true spiritual identity. This is the ultimate aim of our material aid – that man rediscovers who he truly is, not that he loses himself once again in newly-found material well-being.

When money dominates man's life, he is enshrouded in darkest ignorance. When it is shared, it becomes a blessing for both the helper and the helped - for the giver, as well as for the receiver.

In life, it often seems that the spirit of complacency, passivity and despair, is the mightier power. But the Spirit of truth, commitment and compassion has always the longer breath.

To help the people here truly requires the longer breath, which can only arise from this spirit of truth, commitment and compassion. This spirit alone can bring up projects which are of lasting value.

Our Motto: ‚Help for Self-Help’ is not just empty words. It is the only dignified way to help, for the givers as well as for the receivers. We are learning this daily –and we continue to learn it better and more profoundly.“



GIRIVALAM SEVA

Cleaning the Feet of Lord Arunachala in service to the community living around the Sacred Hill.

Tens of thousands of pilgrims come each full moon day to circumambulate the Hill on the 12 mile path that has been trod for thousands of years by sages and saints in veneration of Lord Arunachala according to an ancient tradition.

The number of pilgrims attracted by the Holy Mountain has been largely increasing over the past 20 years, and so has the amount of waste they leave at the feet of the Hill when they go back to their homes. In the early days, a great deal of this litter was bio-degradable. Leaf-plates, wooden spoons, bananas, coconuts, etc. would be piled and burned or left to disintegrate with the help of sun and rain. But today, almost all the litter is plastic and styrofoam. **It mounts up and causes serious problems for animals, drainage systems and public health.**



Shanthimalai, together with local authorities, and encouraged by the Swachh Bharat (Clean India) initiative of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, initiated the Girivalam Seva project to pick up, collect and thoroughly dispose of the waste of the roadside – day by day – and thus serve Lord Arunachala and the community in a most practical way, in the spirit of truth and commitment.

Thanks to generous donations, 480 trash barrels have been designed, fabricated, and installed at intervals of about 30 yards on both sides of the Giripradakshina Road. These barrels are regularly emptied, cleaned on the outside and disinfected inside and out by a crew of mostly women employees who otherwise would be destitute. The area that has been cleaned stretches over

more than 7 kilometers. **Gradually attitudes toward litter are changing, and villagers are becoming more environmentally aware.**

The far end of this endeavor is aimed at heightening the awareness of cleanliness starting with the attitude towards the most precious spiritual heritage. Holiness, cleanliness and health go together, they are one thing.



If each single pilgrim kept his waste with himself and put it into his own pocket or the bins at the road side rather than throwing it into the bushes, the problem would simply not exist. Slowly, but surely, this project will contribute to **a change of heart toward littering in a holy place**, and eventually to a change in behavior.



EDUCATION

Only through education can the circle of poverty and illiteracy be broken.

Education empowers our future.

About 15% of the population of India is below the age of 15. Subsequently, the Shanthimalai Trust focuses on developing an efficient local education infrastructure. In 1994, the **Ramana Matriculation Higher Secondary School** was established by the Shanthimalai Trust. Together with the Nursery and Primary School, today 1300 children enjoy education up to 12th Standard. A strong emphasis is given to reinvigorate Tamil culture and values, and at the same time to introduce students to the modern world of computers and learning media. Lessons are taught in Tamil and in English. From the very beginning of their school experience, students learn values of equality and respect for one another regardless of caste, religion or family income.

According to their abilities children receive **individual assistance** if they are not able to remain interested in their studies, follow the school routine, or are about to drop out. Regular parents' meeting at the schools include them to take responsibility of the educational progress of their children. In 2017 100 percent of the students passed the final 12th Standard exams.

