



Swami Dayananda
Educational Trust

Annual Report 2014-15





We can bring about changes. They are not just dreams, they all become realities. You have the opportunity to make it a reality. You can make a difference in the lives of many others, wherever you are.

- Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati



Dear Friend,

The Mahasamadhi of Pujya Swamiji Dayananda Saraswati in 2015 is an occasion for us to reflect on the imprint of his personality in our lives. Swamiji was a Vedanta teacher of the highest eminence in the best traditions of guru-shishya parampara.

AIM for Seva and SDET are the legacies that he has left behind for us to carry forward. For a simple non-descript idyllic village Manjakkudi in 2000 to be transformed into a hub of excellence in education and a model village in 2015 is an astounding wonder. Manjakkudi is now synonymous to Rural Resurgence, a case-study for community involvement through focused interventions over a decade.

SDET has addressed so many social issues in these years.

Women's empowerment: The girls in the village were losing out on education; they were married off young for colleges were distant. Swami Dayananda Arts and Science College, started in 2001, has emerged as the centre of educational excellence with top rankers in the university. Students from 200 nearby villages and almost 1500 girls pursue their graduation with Manjakkudi emerging as an educational hub.

Value Based Education: SDET manages three schools in Manjakkudi and Sembangudi with emphasis on value-based education. Yoga and meditation are part of the curriculum; SDET is committed to raising a generation that takes prides in Indian values and culture.

Health & Sanitation: As the village population grew SDET set up an Ayurvedic Clinic. We are also involved in the cleaning of the water tank in front of the Sri Varadaraja Perumal Temple besides providing toilets for the convenience of devotees.

Preservation of Culture: There is allure to listening to the chanting of Vedas. SDET set up two Veda Pathshalas – both in Shivite and Vaishnavite traditions - so that this generation does not lose on this traditional practice of worship and rituals.

Employment Opportunity: The graduates in Manjakkudi now have an opportunity to work in the village itself with the opening of Wipro BPO. SDET has also made agriculture a profitable activity with its 23 acre organic farms. The floating population of day's scholars for the College has provided local traders an earning potential.

Fine Arts: Kumbakonam would be incomplete without Carnatic music and Bharatanatyam. SDET established a collaborative initiative with Bombay Jayashri and alumni of Kalakshetra Foundation.

SDET started in 2002 with a mission of using education as a transformative tool. Almost imperceptibly we got involved in other spheres. All this could not have been possible without Swamiji's guidance and grace, the donor community, and more importantly how Manjakkudi residents embraced these interventions in improving the quality of their lives.

The sight of girls riding bicycles, cows wandering the mud roads, sounds of nadaswaram in the temples and Vedic chants is the coming of age of a village that has taken the character of a mini-city: modern in its activities and yet rustic simplicity of a village.

SDET has impacted over tens and thousands of families to a better quality of life. It can be a trailblazer for other villages to adopt. We look forward to 2016 for your support.

Manjakkudi - where abundance and prosperity flows much like the Kaveri

The mention of “Kumbakonbam” conjures up images: of temple architecture of the Cholas and Pallavas that speaks of the rich cultural past and now heritage sites that attract tourists and pilgrims from all parts of the world, of sounds of nadaswaram artists who to this day play in the temple festivals, to the beat of a Carnatic song, the fertile green paddy fields where River Kaveri flows in all her majesty.

Little wonder it is in this region Pujya Swamiji Dayananda Saraswati was born in 1930 in a small hamlet Manjakkudi.

Now within a lifetime and eighty five years later this obscure village is the education hub of the entire district spawning hopes and dreams in the new generation, supporting the parent generation in their traditional occupations, and efficient health care for the grandfather generation.

In short, Manjakkudi is a village like no other in the country as it has empowered and embraced its residents to dream higher with urban facilities.

And it is one institution that shaping the destiny of Manjakkudi, SDET. This Annual Report shows how a decade of sustained efforts transforms a village to set world-class benchmarks in education, hygiene, sanitation, healthcare, organic farming, fine arts, and reviving traditional occupations.



Swami Dayananda Educational Trust (SDET)

Swami Dayananda Educational Trust (SDET) is a public charitable trust that has adopted Manjakkudi village for sustained development.

Manjakkudi is a small village situated in Tiruvarur District and has been at the heart of SDET's activities since 2002. SDET runs the day-to-day activities of three schools and one college that serve the educational needs of Manjakkudi and the nearly 200 surrounding villages apart from a number of other initiatives.

While SDET started out with a missionary zeal of “education is the transformative quotient for community development” we discovered other fields of activities just as important at Manjakkudi.

SDET undertook the cleaning of the water tank in front of Sri Varadaraja Perumal temple bringing issues of sanitation and health to the forefront. As the village population grew there was a need for a medical facilities, SDET set up an Ayurvedic Clinic that treats over 200 patients a month. Setting up a school where the best exponents of Carnatic music and Bharatnatyam conduct workshops and regular classes is our effort at preserving fine arts. When we found youths venture into bigger cities to follow bigger dreams, we decided to make agriculture attractive through 23 acre organic farms to stem the tide of urban migration. Wipro set a BPO in the village as a testimony of employable graduates passing out from the College. Cows needed protection and SDET set up a Dairy farm.

As each new venture blossomed, the local community prospered with new business opportunities. The tea stalls, the flower stitching women before the temples, and the dying professions got a new market and a new lease of life: of potter ware, brass lamp making, sculpture moulds of gods and goddesses, and more. It has taken less than a decade for an idyllic sleeping village to be throbbing with excitement and action. Manjakkudi became a hub as it drew in surrounding villages and towns to its beehive of activities.



Women's Empowerment

Swami Dayananda Arts and College, Manjakkudi

"The girls of this village were losing out on higher education. We were unwilling to send our girls to distant colleges. As parents we just can't risk their safety and security," was the constant lament of villagers to Swami Dayananda during the 1990s.

Swami Dayananda Arts and Science College was started in 2001 and since then has grown into a reputed institution.

In 2015 the College has an enrollment of 2000 students – 1600 undergraduates, 300 post graduates, and 100 M. Phil and Yoga. The gender ratio is 1:3; nearly three-quarters of students are girls.

The infrastructure of the College is on par with any college in urban centers with 35 classrooms, twin computer labs, Physics and Chemistry labs, a healthy student faculty ratio of 1:40.

Students come to the College from more than 150 surrounding villages, there are 11 college buses serving in the 35 kms radius.

Says 18 years old Ms. Mohana Krishnan who is doing B.Com II year, "The admission procedure is simple: there is no donation and no recommendation. My fees is Rs. 8000 per semester, compared to other colleges it is less." This College is the living symbol of women's empowerment.





Value Based Education

Dayananda Matric School, Manjakkudi

Durai Murugan is a temple priest as he voices a prevalent concern of parents in the village, “Both my wife and I have not studied much; we want at least our son to study in a good English medium school and get a good education.”

In 2005 was born the Dayananda Matric School due to this overwhelming desire of parents for a English medium school. In 2015 the School has 500 students who are making their parents proud with their fluency in written and spoken English. There is an increased sense of confidence knowing that job opportunities and earning potential would be greater.



TTN- Swami Dayananda Higher Secondary School, Manjakkudi

Started as a village school in 1935, it is now a fully equipped government aided higher secondary school with more than 2000 students studying from LKG to Std 12. This Tamil medium school and affiliated to the Tamilnadu State board scored 92% pass percentage in Class XII and 80% for Class X in June, 2015.

Semmangudi Higher Secondary School, Sembangudi

Established in 1958 this government-aided school has classes from Class 6 to Class 12. The school has modern facilities such as fully equipped science and computer laboratories, an open air theatre, skill development programmes and an excellent sports infrastructure. The school has received the coveted A+ Grade from the education department of Tiruvarur District.

Both TTN-Swami Dayananda Higher Secondary School and Semmangudi Higher Secondary School are managed by SDET. Apart from rigour in academics, SDET emphasizes in value-based education that includes sports, yoga, meditation, fine arts.

Health & Sanitation

Mrs. Lakshmi Rajagopalan, a daily visitor to the temple, reminisces, “The Sri Varadaraja Perumal Temple used to be very dirty and the water tank full of sewage and algae. But now I get to hear the sounds of Vedic chanting and daily rituals performed on a grand scale. The temple reverberates with auspiciousness and piety.”

SDET is involved in maintaining the hygiene and sanitation of the temple. This involves cleaning the water tank besides providing toilet facilities to the devotees. There is a team in place that cleans the temple premises every day, removing cobwebs, washing utensils of puja items, disposal of flowers and more.

As the influx of visitors to Manjakkudi increased SDET set up a Ayurvedic Clinic that treats over 200 patients a month. This clinic, equipped with a doctor and a pharmacy, attracts patients from as far as 30 kms.



Preservation of Culture

The octogenarian Srinivasa Shastrigal, Vaidika priest, says, “These days even my grandsons don’t do their Sandhya Vandanam. They don’t even know how to chant Vishnu Sahasranam.”

The smartphone generation of 2015 has their own priorities but those don’t include observance of rituals and daily prayers. Swami Dayananda Veda Pathasala runs a residential course that teaches Rig Veda, Krishna Yajur Veda, Shukla Yajur Veda, and Vaikasana Agamas to its students. The rigorous seven year curriculum includes exhaustive study of Vedas and also conventional subjects like basic Mathematics and Science. The students also get to conduct pujas and arathis at the Sri Varadaraja Perumal Temple as they prepare for a career as Vaidika priests.



Employment Opportunity

Venkatesh 23 says, “My parents are old and they need care. I cannot afford to take up a job in Chennai or Coimbatore. It would be nice to have a corporate job in Manjakkudi itself.”

Wipro's first rural BPO delivery centre at Manjakkudi is an acknowledgement of the excellent educational infrastructure. The centre witnessed an unprecedented growth of nearly 150% since its inception in 2011. The Manjakkudi centre employs 150 that services one of Wipro's largest U.S. based clients while extending back-office support for its internal operations.

Classical Music & Dance

Sarada Nagarajan observes, "Today's youngsters consume only film songs and Bollywood. Even in December festival in Chennai I hardly notice any youngsters. It seems that schools for Indian classical music and dance is only in United States."

The Swami Dayananda School of Carnatic music and Bharatanatyam reconnects the residents of Manjakkudi to our rich cultural heritage. SDET has teamed up with Smt. Bombay Jayashri Ramnath and alumni of Kalashetra Foundation so that finest exponents are involved and the teaching is in its pristine form without any dilution.

SDET has been involved in so many activities that's part of Manjakkudi's everyday life. "I am proud to be a farmer" is an initiative for the students of Swami Dayananda Arts & Science to pursue their interests in Organic Farming. This 23 acre farm has revived 32 types of medicinal plants is a zone of experimentation and innovation.

SDET has impacted over tens and thousands of families to a better quality of life since its inception in 2002. Manjakkudi has seen so many developments that it is unrecognizable in a decade.



Vedanta does not remove any limitations - it merely makes you understand that you are already free from all of them.

- Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati

