

AKASH GANGA TRUST - RAIN CENTRE
ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2005-2006
(April 1, 2005 to March 31, 2006)

1. VISIT TO TOKYO

The first trustee of AGT, Dr. Sekhar Raghavan was invited by Dr. Makato Murase, a well known rainwater harvester and Chairman of People for Rainwater – a NGO in Japan to make two presentations in the Tokyo Asia Pacific Skywater Forum held in Sumida city, Tokyo during August 4-8, 2005. The first presentation was on “Rainwater Harvesting in India with special reference to urban areas and the Chennai experience” and the second on “The role of Rain Centres in Popularising and Promoting RWH in urban areas”. In November 2005, Dr. Murase visited the Rain Centre to learn more about ground water recharge.

2. IRCSA 2005 – COSPONSOR

The International Rainwater Catchments Systems Association (IRCSA) is an international association for rainwater harvesting. IRCSA has organized conferences every two years since 1991 in different countries. The responsibility of hosting the 2005 conference was entrusted with Action for food Production (AFPRO), New Delhi, Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC), Geneva and our Akash Ganga Trust (AGT). The conference was held in New Delhi during November 15-18, 2005 and was attended by nearly 500 participants from 24 countries around the globe. 57 papers were presented under 6 technical themes and a technical field visit was arranged on the third day. The conference was inaugurated by Dr.A.K.Walia, Hon’ble Minister for Urban Development, Govt. of Delhi and the valedictory function was presided over by Mrs. Sheila Dikshit, Hon’ble Chief Minister, Govt. of Delhi. On behalf of the trust a paper on “The Role of Rain Centres in Promoting Rainwater Harvesting in Urban areas” was presented by Dr.Sekhar Raghavan, Director, Rain Centre.

3. PUBLICATION OF A BOOK ON TRADITIONAL WATER HARVESTING

A book titled “The Ery Systems of South India – Traditional Water Harvesting”, written by T.M.Mukundan, an IITM graduate of the 1970 batch and now a practicing Yoga teacher was published by our organization in November 2005 and was released during the IRCSA conference. This book deals with the greatness and the current relevance of these traditional water bodies found in all the three states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

4. ECOSAN ACTIVITY IN KOVALAM

Our organization received a grant of Rs. One Lakh from ENVIKAL – the 1970 IITM Alumni group. This grant was meant to be used for meeting the day to day expenses of the Rain Centre as well as to promote Ecosanitation in any village found suitable

for the same. The Director visited Thiruvananthapuram to learn about the pioneering work done by Mr. Paul Calvert in Ecosanitation and the construction of several composting toilets in the coastal fishing villages of Kerala. He also had a detailed discussion with him on the cost-effective construction of such toilets. The Director visited villages near Thuraiyur, where several composting toilets have been constructed in individual houses by SCOPE - an NGO deeply involved in ecosanitation.

After finding out the need, relevance and method of construction of composting toilets, it was decided to construct one composting toilet in the fishermen's hamlet of Kovalam village, as a pilot project in a plot owned by CARD Trust. It was completed in January 2006 and is being used for the past 5 months. We have received enquiries from a few others in the same hamlet as well as from neighbouring villages to provide them with such toilets. They are even willing to share one third the cost of the toilet.

5. GROUND WATER RISE – A SURVEY

A survey was conducted by our Rain center in January this year to quantify the benefits of RWH in different areas of Chennai as a result of the RWH systems that all the residents have put up in their respective premises and the good northeast monsoon showers that the city had received. A note prepared by our center, wherein the residents were requested to answer 5 questions regarding their ground water status, was published in the neighbourhood newspapers - Adyar, Mylapore, Mambalam Times and Madras Musings. We received around 50 replies from which we were able to establish that the rise in ground water level in the entire city had gone up by 6 to 8 metres. The survey also revealed that ground water, which had gone brackish in some parts of Besant Nagar had become potable and wells, which had gone dry more than 5 to 20 years back, had come back alive.

The center had carried out similar surveys in the past 1) to evaluate the efficiency of RWH systems put up by the residents to comply with the law which made RWH mandatory and 2) to find out how the residents met their daily water needs during the summer of 2004.

6. AWARENESS RAISING AMONG RESIDENTS REGARDING PERIODIC MAINTENANCE OF RWH STRUCTURES

There is a definite need to observe the performance of the structures put up by the residents to comply with the law and take suitable remedial measures for proper and effective functioning of them. Awareness regarding this aspect was created by publishing articles titled "RWH – What more needs to be done" and "RWH: Is it all over?" in a few neighbourhood newspapers such as Adyar Times, Mylapore Times and Madras Musings during August to November for two consecutive weeks. In these articles, emphasis was made on the need, relevance and importance of maintenance of RWH structures and to do this the residents were asked to observe the RWH structures on a rainy day and if any overflow was observed from them residents were

asked to revert back to us for free advice regarding improvement of their performances.

7. VISITORS TO THE RAIN CENTRE

1. A staff member from Res. Foundation for Sci., Tech. And Ecology, New Delhi, (Vandana Shiva a well known environmentalist is the Director of this NGO) visited the center on 20.04.2005
2. Six school students, who were the winners of the quiz contest organized by Dept. of Environment, Govt. of Tamil Nadu jointly with Eureka Forbes, on 12.05.2005
3. Eight Civil Engineering students from Anna University on 21.05.2005
4. Thirty children of class XII from Govt. High School, Peerkankaranai (near Perungalathur) on 22.06.2005
5. Two students from the U.S. working as interns in Environment Management International: India an NGO visited the center on 22.09.2005
6. Sixteen students of class XII from St.Raphaels girls higher secondary school, Santhome visited the centre on 29.09.2005
7. A student from the Asian College of Journalism visited in connection with a project on RWH on 18.10.2005
8. Two staff members from the National Academy of Construction, Hyderabad visited on 28.10.2005
9. A group of forty persons representing various NGOs attending a workshop at AMM Murugappa Chettiar Research Centre visited the center on 11.11.2005
10. Dr. Makato Murase, Chairman, People for Rainwater – an NGO in Japan and three others visited on 19.11.2005
11. Students from Asian College of Journalism visited and shot a video film about the Centre on 22.11.2005
12. Ms. Tanuja Ariyananda, Chairman Lanka RWH Forum and Secretary, IRCSEA visited on 26.11.2005
13. 25 children each from Stds. II to IV of The School – K.F.I. visited the center on 13th, 15th and 16th December 2005
14. Twenty people (both men and women) from Thiruvannamalai district were brought to the centre by the NGO - Association for Rural and Tribal Improvement on 17.12.2005
15. A person from People for Rainwater group in Tokyo visited on 30.12.2005
16. School children of class V from Sivaswamy Kalalaya visited the center on two consecutive days 22.02.2006 and 23.02.2006 in batches of 40.
17. Seven II year B.Com. students from Tagore college of Arts and Science visited on 10.03.06 to do their project work on RWH in Urban areas.
18. Twenty II and III year Architecture students from Hindustan College of Engineering visited on 24.03.06

8. PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS WITHIN CHENNAI AND OUTSIDE

1. Gave a talk to the staff members of Integrated Rural technology Centre at Palghat on 2.4.2005
2. Made a presentation on “RWH - The Chennai Experience” as a panelist in the National Seminar “The Earth Vision 2020” organized by Good Shephard International school, Ootacamund during 16-17.04.2005
3. Made a presentation on “RWH in Urban Areas” in the Workshop on “RWH for Buildings” organized by The Institution of Engineers and held at Neyveli on 24.09.2005
4. Gave a talk in Srinivasapuram Resident’s Association, Puzhuhdivakkam, along with Lena Tamizhvanan and Raman of MSSRF on 2.10.2005
5. Made a presentation on “RWH Techniques” in the CAPART sponsored Training programme on “Rural Technologies” for NGOs organized by AMM Murugappa Chettiar Research Centre at Thirukazhugukundram on 09.11.2005
6. Gave a talk on RWH Techniques for NGOs organized by Assn. For Rural and Tribal Improvement (ATRI) in Vellore on 14.12.2005
7. Made a presentation on “RWH - Need, relevance and Importance in Urban Areas” in the one-day Seminar on “Green Buildings” organized by the School of Architecture and Planning, Anna University on 13.02.2006