

## How an International Level Arya Samaj was formed at Gandhidham

Arya Samaj a worldwide movement was started in Mumbai on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1875 by Swami Dayanand Saraswati and then in Gandhidham-Gujarat Arya Samaj was established by Late Shri Laljibhai Gohil in 1954. It was good that the foundation of a charitable organization like Arya Samaj was laid and which served as a launching pad for bigger activities in the future.

Arya Samaj in Gandhidham is very active and is the first to rush to the help of the people in times of natural calamities and also simultaneously working for the upliftment of the constantly deteriorating moral values in the society. We are having a rich library through which the public can come to know about our glorious past and also come to know about the richness of Vaidic Religion and the teachings of Swami Dayanand and various other Arya scholars and Sanyasis.

We are running a 24 hour medical oxygen bank for the last 15 years which has proved to be a boon to many critically ill persons who would have otherwise lost their lives just for the want of an oxygen cylinder. The services of this medical oxygen bank had even been requisitioned by the India Army in time of warlike situation.

We are also running many other developmental activities like District level Elocution competition, Children's Personality Development camps, Medical Camps, Yoga classes etc for the benefit of the society.

Kutch is a remote place and an arid region which constantly faces the wrath of nature. Following the Sixth principal of Arya Samaj we are always ready to help the people and this was first put to test after the cyclone which hit Kandla on 9<sup>th</sup> June 1999. We immediately started a public kitchen and rushed food packets to the affected people and we also performed *Antyeshthi Sankar* of many departed souls. We collected a lot of relief material like clothes, blankets etc and distributed them amongst the needy. As Kutch is a desert region it is constantly faced by droughts and we have always been there to help the people during the droughts.

It was in the year 1986 when Shri Vachonidhi Arya the eldest son of Late freedom fighter Shri Ramchandra Acharya was asked by Shri Motiram Jeswani to join Arya Samaj which was on the verge of becoming extinct. At that time Shri Vachonidhi Arya was only 25 years of age and at that young age he was full of enthusiasm and zeal to do something for the society. He infused new life in the moribund Arya Samaj in Gandhidham and also inspired many youngsters to join and work for Arya Samaj as soldiers of Rishi Dayanand. The joining of youngsters in 1986 started the success story of Arya Samaj Gandhidham, attaining the present status from nothing in 1986. Today after 55 years of its inception Arya Samaj Gandhidham is India's model and constantly active Arya Samaj.

Since then Arya Samaj in Gandhidham, got an impetus and has now become a model Arya Samaj in India due to constantly increasing activities and relief work done during natural calamities. Arya Samaj is one of the most prestigious-social and voluntary organization in Gujarat State.

Shri Vachonidhi Arya has dedicated himself fully for the cause of Arya Samaj and for the lives of the children of Jeevan Prabhat. He is serving in a bank and all his non banking hours are reserved for Arya Samaj. He is in the Arya Samaj office at 8.30am and then goes home after 8.30pm. He does not take any leave from the bank for personal reasons but all his leaves are used for going out of station for the Arya Samaj work. He visits Pondicherry regularly to monitor the progress of the children. Whatever dakshina he receives for performing any sanskar he gives it to Arya Samaj. We need more persons with his dedication and determination so that Arya Samaj can come up.

26<sup>th</sup> January 2001, India's 52<sup>nd</sup> Republic day dawned bright & clear, but precisely at 8.46 am it turned into the blackest day of the history as a devastating earthquake shook the very foundation of the whole Gujarat state and in the process rendered thousands homeless and thousands dead, many of them widows and

orphans.

Relief aid came from all over the world, but was mainly concentrated to temporary shelters and food. We also worked to provide all possible help and also thought of providing long term assistance to the society. We felt that widows and orphans were the most affected but least attended section. We immediately planned a project at a cost of **Rs. 4.5 Crores** to provide them a permanent shelter with all possible help to boost their morale, rehabilitate and shape up their future to make them self sufficient, and thus we started an orphanage and aptly named it "Jeevan Prabhat" for as the name signifies it is really a new dawn in the lives of these earthquake orphans and widows. At present we have 162 children and 8 widows under our care.

People have built stone and metal monuments in memory of the earthquake and its devastation but we have taken up the challenge of building the lives of these live monuments.

We are rearing these children just like our own children without the distinction of Caste, Creed or Religion. We have made it a policy not to accept anything old or any leftovers for the children. When they are the children of Arya Samaj then they should be treated in the same manner and given an equal opportunity to compete with the other society children and show their mettle.

Before this devastating earthquake Arya Samaj Gandhidham was totally dependent on local donations for all its activities. After Earthquake, seeing the organized way in which work was being done by Arya Samaj Gandhidham, national and international community has started donating in a large way and helping us in all our projects.

On December 26<sup>th</sup> 2004 an earthquake in Indonesia brought huge tidal waves in the form of Tsunami to the eastern coast of India. The sea water gushed into the land mass and within seconds everything was destructed. Again many lives were lost. The fertile land was rendered useless due to the salty sea water.

Arya Samaj Houston, a member of Arya Pratinidhi Sabha America which had been playing a major supporting role to Jeevan Prabhat Gandhidham since its inception, right after Tsunami, Arya Samaj Houston raised \$ 60,000 & wanted to start similar projects with the help of Arya Pratinidhi Sabha America provided that Arya Samaj Gandhidham also joined the team to manage the project. All the three teams came together and the Jeevan Prabhat Pondicherry project was started.

We have now taken up the challenge of starting and running Jeevan Prabhat in Pondicherry for the Tsunami affected children. This project is being funded by Arya Pratinidhi Sabha America.

Just like their siblings in Jeevan Prabhat Gandhidham, these children are also going to school and living a normal childhood. It is our endeavor to mould these children to be God fearing patriotic citizens of Mother India. Jeevan Prabhat is doing this without any distinction of caste, creed or religion and totally free of cost. Jeevan Prabhat does not take any government grant for any of its projects but is totally dependent on donations to run them. The children are treated like our own children. We love these children and want to ensure a bright future for them.

This is how we entered new horizons when Arya Pratinidhi Sabha America joined hands with us and we were able to expand the scope and area of our activities to the southern most tip of India.

It is a matter of pride for us that Shri Dev Mahajan ji President of Arya Pratinidhi Sabha America and his team considered us capable of handling a project which was situated some 2500 kms away from our base at Gandhidham. We have accepted this challenge and also have made it a policy decision to start Jeevan Prabhat with the help of Arya Pratinidhi Sabha America in any place in India which has been hit by a natural calamity.

It is with the help of donations and contributions from the society that any organization is able to run its activities and we are no different from others on the contrary we require regular funds for we are dealing with human beings who are innocent and do not have any other place or person to whom they can turn for help, they are none other than the un**FORTUNATE** children of Jeevan Prabhat. We cannot tell them that we will not serve food to them as we have not received any donation today. It is our responsibility to fulfill all their

needs in time so that they are able to hold their heads high in the society and not suffer from any complex.

We request you to contribute on and celebrate all your occasion with the children because after all you are their parents while we are just their managers. You can give your ahuti in this havan in any of the ways given at the end of this book.

You can also contribute online by just visiting [www.aryagan.org](http://www.aryagan.org) and going to the online donation section. We have even got permanent FCRA permission from the Indian Government which enables us to accept foreign contributions.

When we started this project we had no idea from where the funds to come or how we would be able to sustain, but we had full faith in the Almighty God that he would definitely send some person who would be able to help and the children. The children were so lucky that instead of one person God sent two persons one in the form of Shri Girish Khosla who is the grandfather of the children. He is always inspiring people to sponsor the children and also visits the children every year and spends one month with them. The other is Shri Shekhar Agrawal of Arya Samaj Houston who inspired Dr. Vinod Prakash the president of IDRf (India Development and Relief Fund) to contribute for the children and so far IDRf have contributed more than Rs. 2.25 crores for the construction of the complex.

At this Juncture we would like to specially thank **Girish ji** for it was he who introduced us to the USA and he is now a regular visitor of **Jeevan Prabhat**, in fact he has now adopted **Jeevan Prabhat** and is the proud grandfather of the children. **Jeevan Prabhat** is the dream land of **Girish ji** and he invites every one to visit it once. We do not have words with which we can thank God for sending **Girish ji** to us. We will forever remain indebted to **Girish ji** for the love and affection he showers on us. It is his nature and love for us and his magnetic personality which keeps us attached to him. The children fondly call him "**DADAJI**".

We are thankful to Shri Dev Mahajan ji President Arya Pratinidhi Sabha America and his team for placing trust in us and having faith in our capability by entrusting on our shoulders the responsibility of starting and running Jeevan Prabhat in Pondicherry. We are also thankful to the people of USA who have been the major contributors who have been the major contributors in our crusade for the benefit of the lives of these children.

We assure you all that we will do our best to live up to the faith you have placed on us and do our level best to build the lives of these children as moral patriotic citizens of Mother India who will be able to face the challenges and the realities of life.