



## *Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team*

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### **Ghana, Burkina Faso and Togo News February 2007**

Dear Friends,

Heartfelt greetings! May this news update find you in good health and with a smile in your eyes.

The last update was sent in June 2006. Much has happened since then as we continue our efforts to please the Supreme, serve all, and move ever closer to achieving our organizational objectives.

I hope you will find much inspiration in the pages that follow and that you will share this with others in your area of the world.

With brotherly regards,  
Dada Pramananda

## **GHANA**

### **Ghana Centre for Homeopathy & Natural Health**

Radha (Linda Shannon) from the UK has been a homeopath for more than 20 years. She is also a visiting lecturer at leading homeopathic colleges in London. Radha first visited Ghana in April/ May 2006. She came with the intention of introducing homeopathy at clinics managed or assisted by AMURT and AMURTEL. She also hoped to share her knowledge with others interested in natural health care. Towards these ends Radha visited and gave initial training to staff at primary health care clinics in Mafi-Seva, Domeabra and Akwaakwa villages. Introductory workshops in homeopathic first aid were conducted over two consecutive weekends in Accra attended by about 25 people.

During and after these programs a shared vision developed. Plans were outlined to open a clinic in Accra and to continue to provide opportunities for further training.

Due to her reputation within the homeopathic community, Radha was offered British £1,800 for her work in Ghana even before she departed from London! She was additionally given donations of books and homeopathic first aid kits. After returning home Radha began to share her experiences in Ghana. This was the beginning of an ongoing effort to publicize, find support and raise funds for our work (Radha prepared reports in pdf format following both her visits and these are available upon request).

As support began to manifest in the UK, a project team formed in Ghana. The necessary legal and official arrangements were put in place. The Ghana Centre for Homeopathy and Natural Health was registered as a subsidiary of Ananda Marga Ghana Yoga Society. Contact was made with the Ministry of Health and the Traditional and Alternative Medicine Directorate. A project manager and clinic receptionist were hired. The shop front earlier constructed at the Ananda Marga Yoga and Meditation Centre (Madhu Shyam, MG quarters) was renovated with a partition wall, new paint, and furnishings to prepare for the opening of our first clinic.

Throughout this process Radha and Dada Pramananda communicated with Didi Ananda Rucira, Director of the Abha Light Foundation and College in Nairobi. Didi has practiced and taught Homeopathy for about 9 years – all of them in Africa. She is the author of the books Great Health Naturally Parts 1 & 2, and has developed a homeopathic preventative remedy for malaria and a natural treatment for HIV/AIDS – both which have been researched with very positive results. Her experience and knowledge of local conditions have proved invaluable. Arrangements were made to employ Joseph Nthiwa, a Kenyan and one of Didi's star graduates, as our resident Homeopath.

Didi and Joseph arrived in Accra on 10th October. Radha together with a friend and very experienced practitioner/teacher, Sheila Ryan arrived on 19th October. Sheila is a fellow of The Society of Homeopaths and Clinical Principal at the School of Homeopathy in Devon. She pioneered methodologies and set standards for clinical supervision and training in the UK, Slovakia and elsewhere. She is a recognized and sought after consultant as well as a published author.

In the weeks that followed, Didi, Sheila and Joseph were featured on the main morning TV show and were interviewed on the most popular weekly health program on FM radio. An article was printed in the main daily paper. The phone began to ring and patients began to visit the new clinic.

Follow on visits were made to Mafi-Seva clinic where Emperor, the clinic director, and local staff were further trained along with Pastor John and his wife, patients who were so convinced of homeopathy's effectiveness they wanted training themselves.

Another two-weekend course was conducted in Accra. Most of those who attended in April/May returned along with about 15 newcomers.

During the workshops we came in contact, and will soon register with the Association of Homeopathic Medical Practitioners. The President is also the head of the Rosicrucian Fellowship in Ghana and has known Ananda Marga since many long years. We have discussed the possibility of providing advance training seminars to members of the Association.



Didi, Joseph, Sheila & Radha (seated in centre) with workshop participants in front of the clinic

The clinic now operates three days weekly at the Madhu Shyam, and two days weekly at the AMURT office (jagrti) in Korle Gonno, a lower income area of Accra. Joseph visits Mafi-Seva village monthly where he and Emperor now give treatment in three or four additional villages. We will soon begin to conduct monthly mobile clinics in some of the poorest slum areas of Accra.

A strong base has been created but much more needs to be done, especially more public outreach and education. We are still far from our first target of 5 patients daily in Accra. Once this is achieved the clinic can become financially self reliant – one of our principal objectives.

Support continues to grow in the UK due to the work of Radha and Sheila. Our plans are expansive though and more resources will be needed to make them a reality. These include:

- increased services in more villages and slum areas (with volunteers from abroad),
- establishment of a lab and pharmacy,
- production and sale of remedies and health products,
- professional training (diploma level) in homeopathy and other forms of natural health care,
- construction of facilities for the above

### **Madhu Shyam Yoga & Meditation Centre (M.G. Quarters) –**

This is our owned and permanent centre in Accra – a large plot contains an organic vegetable garden, many fruit trees and a good size, two-storey house. First constructed 14 years ago, in time for the world tour of Purodha Pramukha (the spiritual head of Ananda Marga), there is still major work needed on the building. For the past two years continuing efforts have been made to both improve the facilities, and increase and diversify the activities and services offered at the centre.



Left: View from the front gate into the garden; Right: The sign board attracts most of our students

Yoga classes are conducted (by local brothers) three times weekly on a donation basis. The first Sunday of each month the local members of Ananda Marga gather for an extended spiritual program (Akhanda Kiirtan). Periodic conferences or seminars are organized for members of Ananda Marga and the general public. The homeopathic clinic is the most recent and significant development. A natural food/health shop is slowly taking shape in the reception/waiting area of the clinic.

A year and a half ago the entire house was repainted – inside and out; the front boundary wall was raised, plastered and painted; gate lights were installed, a bore hole well was dug and cemented, and the shop (now clinic) was constructed. One year ago a contribution from Kalinath (Colin Baker, USA) allowed us to complete the outside plastering of the entire building. In October 2006 we received a contribution from Sushila Goenka (of India and director of 3Fs Co. Ltd. in Ghana). Using this as an impetus, local members of Ananda Marga were inspired to also contribute and they certainly rose to the occasion...

The floor of the large main hall (where classes and programs are held) remained sealed but unfinished since the house was erected. Completing the floor has been considered by many as the priority need. Now there is a colorful, uniquely patterned, polished terrazzo (or mosaic) floor. In the next room on the ground floor a large window has been replaced by an even larger double door transforming the space into a much needed reception and meeting room. This space will also serve as a library, display area and a small office. Improvements have also been made to the rear (public) baths and toilets including sinks, a plywood ceiling, and washed terrazzo floors.

Running water from the city supply flows once a week at most. When it comes, a large concrete tank is filled and buckets are then used to fetch water for bathing, cooking and cleaning. Local members have now purchased a medium sized poly tank for storage and welded a gigantic iron tower for its elevation. It is not yet erected and a larger tank will be required but we look forward to having water on tap for most of the week very soon.



Our new terrazzo floor



...and some other nice designs

Much still remains to be done. There are no windows in the main hall (only netting to help keep out the mosquitoes). The main hall has no ceiling. The kitchen has for all these years occupied what should be a bedroom on the upper floor. Construction of a new kitchen at the side of the house is a major priority. This could also be used to produce vegetarian food products to sell.

Along with the homeopathic centre we have also started offering massage on a commercial basis (see below). With the homeopathy, massage, regular yoga classes, and periodic workshops we are well on the way to becoming a truly holistic centre. As more people come for treatment or to purchase products, increasing numbers attend the yoga classes and eventually ask to learn meditation. The centre is already a regarded source of knowledge and inspiration to an ever growing number of people.

### **Achieving Economic Viability!**

Projects such as the homeopathy centre and other clinics, schools and homes attract sponsors and donations. They often have an inherent capacity to generate recurring income with which to meet their operating expenses. Special initiatives such as specific renovations can also attract support as reported above. But paying the bills for ongoing expenses of the organization – support of its full time volunteers or missionary workers, and its properties (food, health care, transport, phone calls, utilities, land taxes, etc.) is often another story altogether.

Efforts have been and continue to be made here to establish income generating activity that will endure, provide employment opportunities for local members, support the centre and its workers, and ideally also provide enough for expanded social service activities and pracaar (publicity). Local people are involved in the management so the activity may continue despite

periodic changes in missionary staff.

### **Pure Touch Massage**

Jitendra is a local Ananda Margii and an experienced masseur who needed a more congenial environment for his work. He shared the vision of a holistic health centre at Madhu Shyam. The massage centre opened in late September 2006. People are coming, but there are not yet enough clients to pay reasonable salaries and earn something for the organization. More publicity is required. A new, larger and more attractive sign board will soon be made. This is important as we are in an upper middle class area, on a major and heavily traveled road. We also plan a display ad in the main newspaper, and a color brochure that will be distributed to targeted individuals and groups. Presently seven people are coming, but not weekly (others came earlier for therapeutic massage, were cured and no longer attend). Only two people daily or twelve weekly are required for the business to become financially viable.

### **Universal Enterprises**

Last year these two company names were registered as profit-making subsidiaries of Ananda Marga Ghana Yoga Society (a not-for-profit company). Accordingly, any profits generated must be contributed to the Yoga Society. Sales of torch lights from India have been encouraging. Pure Touch Massage and the health shop, being developed at the homeopathic clinic, are projects of Universal Enterprise along with small scale trade of natural food products.

### **Transport**

Plans have been made to begin a transport enterprise, operating mini buses in and out of Accra. An investor is ready to purchase two such buses and contribute a fixed amount monthly to the organization.

We anticipate that in the coming three to six months these enterprises will provide enough for meeting basic needs and hopefully more.

### **AMTech**

Trained at NIIT, a respected Indian-based computer school with branches in Ghana, brother Gunadiish had a vision – the introduction of IT/ICT (information and communication technology) based learning in the public and private schools of Ghana.

The first phase is to establish a base – a training lab equipped with up to twenty workstations. This will be utilized initially to train the trainers, i.e. instructors who will then be assigned to specific secondary schools in Accra. As resources become available, AMTech will assist each targeted school to establish its own computer lab and a resource library of reference materials, curriculum aids, etc. The effort is not simply to teach computer literacy skills but rather the use of ICT in imparting academic subjects and encouraging use of the internet for research and learning.

There are numerous computer training centres now in Ghana. Nearly all of them operate as commercial enterprises. AMTech has been registered as a non-profit organization and a local board formed. An office has been established. Discussions have been held with the Ghana Education Service. Resource people and mentors in Asia, Australia, Europe and the USA are in contact and provide valuable guidance. A proposal and budget has been prepared.

For more information please visit: [www.amtechghana.org](http://www.amtechghana.org)

## **Accra Bhukti – Margii led activity**

Accra is by far the largest unit in Ghana. While there are 80 to 100 margiis in the city, usually about 40 attend the weekly Dharmacakra (group meditation). The kiirtans (chanting a mantra, while dancing) at Accra Dharmacakras are some of the most vibrant in the world. Unit members take turns each week to read svadyaya (an inspirational passage), lead koasikii and tandava (yogic dances) and collect contributions for the finance secretary.

The Bhukti Pradhan (district secretary), at present sister Devakii, and her committee play a very active role. They meet each month to discuss and plan activities – social functions, visits to margiis who have been absent for a month or more, classes, retreat programs, service work, finances and more.

Monthly general meetings are also held to which all margiis are encouraged to attend. At the last meeting local boards were formed for Dharma Pracar, Relief, PCAP, RAWA, Commerce, and Food and Care (various organizational departments and programs).

Recently the committee was able to purchase a machine to crush tomatoes. The plan is to set it up in a local market as an income generating project.

Several times each year the margiis arrange visits to institutions which care for the sick, the elderly, or children, or to some of the poorest slum dwellers in Accra. Clothes and/or food are distributed and kiirtan is sung to raise people's spirits.

One of the most senior and respected margiis, Papa Shankarji gives a class on philosophy and spiritual practices/lifestyle at the jagrti (spiritual centre) every Wednesday evening. These classes started 20 years ago. Papa Shankarji celebrated his 70th birthday in late December!

Some of the younger brothers (Nikhil, Pradiip and Vishnu) formed a musical group and call themselves "Africa Inspiration". Under the banner of RAWA they are recording their first CD – a mix of popular beats with English renditions of Prabhat Sam'giita (songs composed by the founder and Guru of Ananda Marga) and kiirtans. This great opportunity was made possible by the generosity of brother Sudhiira, a Ghanaian living in Atlanta, Georgia, USA who owns the studio in Accra. We look forward to its release in the coming months.

The AMJAS nursery school at the jagrti/AMURT office has approximately 50 children enrolled. Brother Paunkaj is the Director. The project provides an inexpensive service to the local community.

Smaller units elsewhere in Ghana include Cape Coast, Ejura, Ho, Kumasi, Tamale and Winneba. In Kumasi there recently was a house entering ceremony for the new home of Vishvamitra and Vikashinii. Ho unit has a plot of land on which they plan to construct a jagrti and kindergarten.

The New Year's retreat was held in Adidome, Volta Region in the Southeast of Ghana with

margiis from most units attending as well as four from Lome, Togo. The annual summer retreat for all of West Africa (UKK) is held in the 2nd week of August – this is an event not be missed!



Scenes of last year's Celebration of Unity in Accra... Kiirtan



Papa Shankar addressing the audience

## BURKINA FASO

### Bissiri Master Unit

Our last news update was circulated in June, just after the shocking death of Dada Rudreshvaranandaji. The Bissiri master unit (MU) was one of Dadaji's major projects and initiatives.

Bissiri is located 57 kilometers south and slightly east of the capital city, Ouagadougou. Like most of Burkina Faso and the developing world, it is a poor village. Its 1,000 or so inhabitants are mainly subsistence farmers.

Four brothers, three of them natives of Bissiri, live and work at the MU. Rasmane who comes from another village is managing the project for the past two years. The land is in two separate pieces with a total of 3.9 hectares. A larger plot has three buildings and land for crops. The smaller plot (approximately 1 hectare) is used for market gardening including a small papaya and banana orchard.

Recent activities include literacy classes (in local language), a cereal bank (food security project) and the market gardening (by which the brothers strive to support themselves). We have also sponsored the local football team and the village chief considers this an important contribution.

The literacy classes given by Rasmane are appreciated. Attendance is seasonal, as people only

come when they are not required to work in their fields.

The cereal bank is a basic component or model project now in nearly all villages that have benefited from aid or development assistance. Ours needs an infusion of grains as well as more drums for longer term storage.

Future plans include efforts in local capacity building. There is interest to receive training in organic gardening. We have also discussed the establishment of a small clinic and pharmacy.

Nearly all subsistence farming – millet, sorghum and beans are the staple crops, along with groundnuts and cotton – is done without chemicals. But when they engage in market gardening (fruits and vegetables) most farmers in Bissiri use chemical fertilizers and pesticides in their soil.

Training in organic farming, composting and related practices is available from the government's agricultural service and from private NGOs. A proposal is under preparation to help find sponsorship for a small group to receive basic training. The four brothers from the MU along with 3 or 4 other villagers (preferably women) will be offered the opportunity to train and in turn become trainers for others in the village. We hope to conduct the training within the first half of this year.

Tarak, a margii in Ouagadougou is a registered nurse. He previously lived and worked at the MU and is prepared to return and open a clinic. We already have a two room building and a young, enthusiastic professional who knows the village and its people. More dialogue is needed with the villagers to ensure they will actively participate to support the project. Once this ground work is done a formal proposal can be forwarded to potential sponsors. Previously all activities at the MU were funded by Dada Rudreshvaranandaji. In the past months, patch work arrangements were made to continue the work underway. We now need to find sponsors and funding to carry forward Dada's vision and develop it further.



Two of the existing buildings at Bissiri MU. The smaller structure on the right will be used for the clinic



Inside the cereal bank



Rasmane, Amadou, Mahamadiya and Adama in the market garden

## **TOGO**

### **Lome Master Unit**

When you visit the Ananda Marga MU in Lome you may feel as if you are in a village even though Lome is the capital city. Our neighborhood is quiet and the land, a bit more than 2 hectare, stretches out behind the house. Tapan Brc. is managing the project and is currently in India to complete his Acarya (monastic) training.

Conditions are difficult here. Our jagrti needs completion – plastering, water and electricity connections, plumbing, etc. The margii committee members are supervising the construction of a partial wall for the water meter installation. Once completed water should be flowing from the city supply. This was designated a priority in order to also facilitate further construction – that of a new building for a kindergarten.

Before his departure to India, Tapan was active in befriending and assisting a group of street children. Now plans are being prepared for a child sponsorship program for orphans and underprivileged children.

Regular yoga classes are held each Saturday and Dharmacakra each Sunday. Another unit in Bepota, Lome conducts Dharmacakra each Friday at the home of Bhukti Pradhan Divyam'shu who converted his garage into a meditation hall.



Lome jagrti at the MU

There are many other wonderful projects and activities underway in Ghana and Burkina Faso.

For more information please check the following web sites:

[www.amurt.net](http://www.amurt.net) (follow links to Africa)

#### GHANA

Lotus Children's Centre, Accra

AMURTEL clinics, Akwaakwa and Domeabra

International Neo-Humanist School, Ejura

Mafi-Seva Clinic, North Tongu District

#### BURKINA FASO

Midwife Training and Safe Motherhood project, Deou