AGAPE INTERNATIONAL

Fostering change through community action

The new millennium is here but today's society is still strangulated by poverty injustice and alienation. Radical solutions are the need of the hour to ameliorate the human condition. There is nothing more radical than the transforming power of love.

AGAPE is a Greek word denoting love in the New Testament to demonstrate the selfless love that God has bestowed upon humanity by asking his only Son to take on human form and live amongst us and die for our liberation.

From the font of this inspiration, AGAPE INTERNATIONAL has blossomed forth to try and transform society and its oppressive structures through the power of this spiritual love and to organise a new heaven on earth where love, justice and equality reign.

The initiative to form AGAPE INTERNATIONAL came from Bishop A. George Ninan and his wife Rachel, who both put precepts into practice by setting aside a modest part of their personal wealth for sharing the Gospel of AGAPE with their fellow human beings. They realised at the outset that a meaningful initiative would have to be taken to kick-start action and further the process of social transformation by bringing together individuals, corporates and other non-governmental organisations in an all-encompassing sweep to tackle unjust social structures and sticky situations in personal or societal life. The impetus for this change, they envisioned, would be powered by the concept of AGAPE.

AGAPE INTERNATIONAL is a non-sectarian, voluntary movement which unites as well as ignites people across the social divide to pool their resources and achieve solutions through voluntary action and cooperative endeavour. AGAPE INTERNATIONAL provides opportunities for betterment, by empowering lesser privileged communities to find their own solutions to their own problems.

To translate these ideas into initiatives and action the core members of AGAPE INTERNATIONAL form AGAPE CHAPTERS within their community. The CHAPTERS identify the particular problem/s of the community and come up with solutions, based on the AGAPE philosophy.

For its first practical initiative AGAPE INTERNATIONAL came down to God's own country and chose the village of Kaviyoor in Kerala, India, a rural enclave with a predominantly poor population comprising a big segment of elderly people. Thus was born AGAPE BHAVANAM (home) to tackle the problems of senior citizens.

Another offshoot of AGAPE INTERNATIONAL is the AGAPE VISION IN ACTION which endeavours to facilitate economic independence, gender equality and equal opportunities for all in backward rural communities.

AGAPE INTERNATIONAL invites you to join this dedicated group and experience the power of LOVE and transform not just the lives of the lesser privileged but your own.

AGAPE INTERNATIONAL
Fostering change through community initiatives
India is a diverse country with each state, region and district having its own intrinsic problems. The binding factor in these multifarious problems however is the fact that the majority of the population live in the rural areas. Most of India’s population also falls below the poverty line and have no means of livelihood.

This is very common in north India where entire belts of villages are economically backward and steeped in grinding poverty and its inhabitants struggle to survive on the natural resources of the land for their daily upkeep.

The diversity of India's social, cultural and political fabric demands a customized approach to the task of providing solutions and addressing specific issues at the particular level.

Striving to create a just society and equal opportunities for all persons, AGAPE INTERNATIONAL hopes to initiate programmes and concerted initiatives that can result in the economic empowerment of the people of these rural communities through Agape Vision in Action.

Agape Vision in Action encompasses three major categories of activities that underpin the guiding philosophy of AGAPE INTERNATIONAL. Each of these activities is developed with the objective of providing economic independence, gender equality and equal opportunities for everyone in the community.

Category 1: Economic Empowerment of a Society

This envisages formation of large groups of members, initially for their own betterment, to reap immediate economic benefits through micro-credit cooperatives, savings cooperatives and Bachat Ghat groups.

As they gather strength and clout, by being empowered with financial independence, they take up issues that concern society at large.

These issues could range from demanding and cooperating with the local administration to building basic infrastructure facilities, healthcare initiatives or other developmental activities.

They also tap professional resources outside their group with the help of Agape Vision in Action to help them meet the challenges of today's market.

For example, the group could install modern irrigation systems, or adopt better animal healthcare and farming methods with the assistance of experts in the field who can be brought in with the help of Agape members. Agape Vision in Action empowers the group to find solutions to shape the future of their community.

Category 2: Developmental Assistance and Support

Smaller groups of a community come
Fostering change through community Initiatives

together for a common objective under this category. These groups are often from the same community, bound by the same profession, mostly finding solutions to their common problems.

The support required could be financial or technical in nature. Agape Vision in Action also helps in facilitating redressals to long standing complaints.

For example, weavers could form a group to buy a modern power loom or potters form a group to tap bigger markets in the city.

Agape Vision in Action assists these groups to tap external and internal resources and dramatically change their own lives.

Category 3: Roj Ki Roti (Daily Bread)

This category encourages individuals to become economically independent and shape their own future.

Agape Vision in Action provides support in the form of vocational guidance and skill training to individuals. Financial loans are also offered for education, setting up small businesses or expanding current business activity.

A person wanting to set up a small business enterprise approaches Agape Vision in Action for financial assistance after putting forth a proposal along with his monthly debt return plan.

Agape Vision in Action provides him the loan and also monitors his business activity to ensure that he adheres to his loan payments. Agape Vision in Action also provides technical support, if required.

Research and Documentation

All new activities are supported by research. Agape Vision in Action will act as a facilitation centre and provide general guidance and information on other activities conducted elsewhere in the country.

These varied initiatives, it is hoped, will provide an impetus to individuals and groups in less privileged rural communities to improve their own individual and collective lot and become instruments of change where it is most needed.

Agape Vision in Action can provide the spark that will kindle a conflagration of progress, development and social transformation but it is the individuals and groups who must fan these flames and spread them to all corners of the earth.

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Prevention is the key

Agape Bhavanam, which is ideally located in the centre of the village, houses a clinic with a pathological laboratory and also provides an ambulance service to transport patients in serious condition either to the clinic or the hospital as the case may be.

Since prevention is a part of any wholesome healthcare system, Agape Bhavanam members pay attention to imparting knowledge to the people through medical camps and seminars on sanitation and hygiene.

These camps, conducted by experts, emphasise on personal and general healthcare, safe sanitation methods and prevention of water borne and infectious diseases.

Locals are encouraged to grow herbal gardens and practise traditional methods of medical care, including ayurveda and naturopathy, under the guidance of experts. Home remedies are also taught and prescribed for common ailments.

Fostering community initiatives

The Agape Bhavanam members prefer to act merely as facilitators to these activities. The aim is to create communities that care for their own senior citizens.

This requires that all members of the community be sensitised to the current problems faced by the senior citizens through a holistic approach to community care which includes planning and conserving of natural resources and creating better equipped senior citizens for the future.

Future planning involves forecasting and working towards solutions to the current and anticipated problems within the community.

Continuing the Agape philosophy

The results of these endeavours will fructify in a period of time. However ensuring continuity of actions and philosophy is only possible with the participation of the youth and children.

Members of Agape Bhavanam strive to inculcate community care as a part of the day-to-day activity of the entire community.

Youth specific activities such as vocational guidance, leadership training, enhancing communication and interpersonal skills are developed in accordance with these principles.

The success of Agape Bhavanam will be measured by the creation of a wholesome community that cares for its members, both young and old, and strives together for a better tomorrow.
Built solidly on the vibrant philosophy of AGAPE INTERNATIONAL stands Agape Bhavanam (home) in the remote village of Kaviyoor, Kerala, India. Agape Bhavanam strives to tackle the issues faced by senior citizens in this area and find radical solutions within the community.

Agape Bhavanam currently extends its activities to 2 wards in the Kaviyoor Panchayat where senior citizens from 814 families, including 193 living below the poverty line, eke out a miserable existence.

**The plight of senior citizens**

It is universally acknowledged that senior citizens require special care. In India, most of them do not have any form of social security and healthcare facilities. In the absence of these requirements, they are fully dependent on their younger relatives living with them.

But migration of the younger generation to cities in search of employment, a chronic problem in the states of Kerala and Goa, has deprived them of this option too.

**Extending support**

Deriving strength from the Agape philosophy of love, the Agape Bhavanam members work to create a model society which collectively takes care of its senior citizens. The members constantly develop activities that involve the entire community.

In contrast to the prevailing system of providing institutionalized care for the old, Agape Bhavanam promotes the need to care for the senior citizens within their own homes, living within their own environment and community without having to be moved to an institution.

This doorstep-care is ensured through an integrated programme that involves the community. It attends to all needs, including regular medical care, easy availability of indigenous food, community interaction and preparing the people to become senior citizens of tomorrow.

**Attending to healthcare issues**

Promoting the doorstep-care philosophy, Agape Bhavanam members are constantly trying to provide medical assistance and food to the senior citizens living in the 2 wards of Kaviyoor Panchayat,

This programme involves nurses who regularly visit the senior citizens in their homes and monitor their health. They also bathe the very sick patients. Doctors too conduct home visits when required.

Hitherto, senior citizens had to go to a hospital for all their medical needs including regular medical check-ups. Chronic ailments such as diabetes and blood pressure, common among senior citizens, require regular monitoring but since the nearest hospital is situated several miles away the senior citizens often ignore their medical needs.
AGAPE CHAPTERS

People from different walks of life bound by the commitment and urge to build a new haven on earth have come together to form the Agape Chapters. The Agape Chapters are formed to help people like you and me who want to help in building a new tomorrow based on caste, creed and gender equality.

Agape Chapters are the umbrella under which people from across the spectrum can come together to meet, discuss and plan a course of action and initiatives to effect change in society at any level or in any particular sphere of activity. Agape Chapters will be formed in every village, town, district or region and members will meet regularly to address the issues of the day that affect their lives.

Not all members of Agape Chapters need to be full-time with their commitment. They are free to give off their time, money or any other resources as and when required or possible.

The core activities of Agape Chapters will be coordinated by full-time professional social workers who will streamline the functioning and conduct of programmes in such a way as to make them effective to the optimum possible degree.

I am convinced that the philosophy of Agape International is a good solution to the problems of our society. I would like to become a member of the Agape Chapter which is located in my area and help in fostering change. I promise to support the activities of the Chapter and help build a society that lives on LOVE.

I also would like to contribute a sum of Rupees / USD / GBP/ ______________
(In words)________________________________________________________

Please tick which one of the activities you would want your contribution to be utilised for:

☐ Agape Chapters  ☐ Agape Bhavanam  ☐ Agape Vision in Action

☐ Agape Trust  ☐ Agape international

Please forward your cheques or drafts to Mr, A, Jitendra Kurnar, Finance and Administration Officer, Agape Trust, 11 Sujata Nivas, SM. Road, -Bandra, Bombay 50.
All cheques to be drawn in the favour of Agape Trust

Name -
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Address-________________________________________________________________________
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Tel No; -------------------------- fax ------------------------------------------- email ___________
Pledge

for Agape Members

We, the members of Agape Chapters, pledge to commit our lives to work for the betterment of society. We shall strive to create a community that is based on love and expressed in a caring and sharing society that is free from caste, creed and gender bias. We shall seek solutions that unite the community and help it move forward to a better tomorrow. We promise to give our time, effort, ideas and suggestions to realising the objectives of AGAPE INTERNATIONAL to create a more humane and just world by involving each and every member of society in our joint endeavor.