

# Why can't Tamil Nadu villages aim to be like these?

● India, having an agro-based economy, depends the most on its villages for growth. The *gaon* always has a distinct nostalgic charm. But as India becomes urbanised, the villages are, unfortunately, deteriorating. Poverty, lack of education, lack of sanitation, etc. are what we now associate with villages. Tamil Nadu, despite its rating as one of the best States in the country, is no exception to this.

There are, however, increasing examples of villages that are different. These ten villages featured here could even make metros blush. Can't Tamil Nadu villages emulate these, showing examples of rural progress?

– THE EDITOR

(Dr. Y. Ramalinga Sarma sent us this feature which he states was sourced from BABA-MAIL)



**Mawlynnong – Asia's cleanest village**

Mawlynnong, a small village in Meghalaya, was awarded the prestigious tag of 'Cleanest Village in Asia' in 2003 by Discover India magazine. Located at about 90 km from Shillong, the village offers a skywalk for you to take in the beauty as you explore it. According to visitors, you cannot find a single cigarette butt/plastic bag lying around anywhere. – (Source: Flickr).



**Hiware Bazar – The village of 60 millionaires**

Hiware Bazar, in the Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra, has transformed from being a place fraught with issues to being possibly the richest village in India. The sole reason for this fairy-tale change is one man called Popatrao Pawar. He banned all addictive substances to minimise expense and encouraged the villagers to invest in rainwater harvesting, milch cattle, etc. There are a record 60 millionaires in the village and barely any poor. From 168 Below Poverty Line families in 1995, Hiware Bazar now has just three. The villagers continue to strive to see a day when not one person is poor (Source: Hiware Bazar).



**Ballia – the village that beat arsenic poisoning with indigenous method**

Ballia village of Uttar Pradesh had an itchy problem to deal with. The water that the villagers were drinking contained arsenic, which caused serious skin problems and even physical deformation. What is arsenic, you ask? A harmless element on its own, but when combined with oxygen or water, it turns toxic. Ironically, the village faced the problem after the government introduced many hand-pumps in the area for easy water access. The level at which the hand-pumps were dug led to excessive interaction between arsenic and water. When the villagers realised what had happened, instead of waiting for the government to act on it, they (physically) fixed their old wells and went back to an older, safer time. (Source: The Better India).



**Dharnai – First fully solar-powered village**

Dharnai, a village in Bihar, beat 30 years of darkness by developing its own solar-powered system for electricity. With the aid of Greenpeace, Dharnai declared itself an energy-independent village last July. Students no longer need to limit their studies to daytime, women no longer limit themselves to stepping out only in the day in this village of 2400 residents. (Source: Greenpeace).



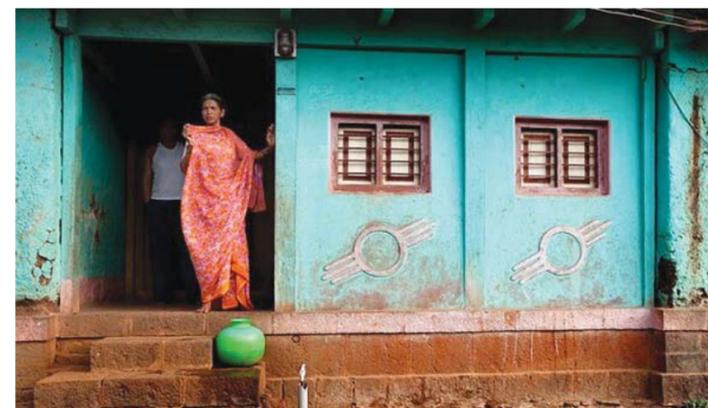
**Pothanikkad – The village with a 100% literacy rate**

Unsurprisingly, in Kerala, Pothanikkad village was the first in the country to achieve a 100% literacy rate. Not only does the village boast of city-standard high schools, but it also has primary schools and private schools. Guess the number of people the village has educated? Well, according to the 2001 census, there are 17,563 residents living in the village and all of them are considered literate! (Source: Deokothamangalam).



**Chappar – a village that distributes sweets when a girl is born**

Chappar village in Haryana has a woman Sarpanch. But Neelam is no ordinary Sarpanch. She has made it her life's mission to change the attitude of the villagers towards women, and she has succeeded. Not only do the women of the village not wear the ghunghat any more, but despite Haryana being the State with the lowest girls ratio (an abysmal 877), every newborn in this village, regardless of its sex, is welcomed into the world with sweets and festivities (Source: Youth Connect Mag).



**Bekkinakeri – the village that rid itself of open defecation by 'greeting' lota-bearers**

Bekkinakeri village in Karnataka has redefined the point of wishing someone a 'Good morning'. Frustrated with the practice of open defecation, the village council attempted to curb it by requesting people not to do so. When that didn't work, they stationed themselves early morning near 'popular' defecation sites and wished every perpetrator a very good morning. The trick worked! Too embarrassed to go on with their business, the openly defecating population has now stopped the practice completely (Source: World Bank).



**Punsari – the village with WiFi, CCTVs, AC classrooms and more**

Punsari, in Gujarat, puts most metros to shame. Funded by the Indian Government and the village's own funding model, Punsari is no NRI-blessed zone. The village also boasts of a mini-bus commute system and various other facilities. – (Source: Dainik Bhaskar).



**Korkrebellur – A village that really loves its birds**

Korkrebellur, a small village in Karnataka, believes in the conservation of nature. While most other villages consider birds a nuisance because they harm crops, Korkrebellur boasts of rare species of birds that fly around and don't even mind humans much. The villagers treat their winged compatriots as family and have even created an area for wounded birds to rest and heal. (Source: Flickr).



**Shani Shingnapur – A village so safe that people don't need doors**

Shani Shingnapur, in Maharashtra, is a village that defies every newspaper report you have ever read. Touted as the safest village in India, this place is known for its lack of doors to houses. Not just that, there is no police station in the village. And Shani Shingnapur has 'broken' another interesting record. The village has now the country's first lockless bank branch (UCO Bank). (Source: Woman Planet).