Noolaham Foundation - At 9th Anniversary

Introduction:

Noolaham Foundation is a non-profit, charitable organization (GA 2390) founded to provide enhanced access to information sources and foster knowledge-based development in Sri Lanka. It has successfully passed many milestones in its past 9 years of journey. It maintains an online digital library, facilitates information preservation programme, provides financial assistance and technical guidance for digitization initiatives and actively participates in awareness-raising campaigns. It also co-ordinates a range of fund-raising activities and collaborates with other organizations functioning with the same goal of documenting such as Asian Art Archive, Roja Muthiah Research Institute, the French Institute of Pondicherry and Raking Leaves and with other institutions like Vision Global Empowerment which is a USA based global nonprofit organization serving youths and communities through education development programs. Volunteers of Noolaham Foundation engage with Noolaham Activities globally and establish Noolaham chapters in their respective countries to achieve the mission of the Foundation.

Digital Library:

The free Internet library [www.noolaham.org] maintained by the Foundation serves as a learning centre incorporating local knowledge and enabling social interaction with a view to achieve constructive social outcomes. It functions as a repository for various institutions and fulfils the information needs of students, researchers, historians, activists and the public. It documents and preserves all spheres of knowledge related to Sri Lankan Tamil speaking communities and make accessible to all. Noolaham digitizes all printed documents such as Books, Magazines, Journals, Newspapers, Newsletters, Booklets, Reports, Souvenirs & Felicitations, Annual Publications, Posters, Flyers & Leaflets, Fact sheets, Invitations, Memorial Publications, Dissertations, Ephemera, Trade & Advertising Publications and handbooks which are related to Sri Lankan Tamil speaking communities as well as the hand written documents such as palm leaves, notebooks, letters, diaries and manuscripts. It has to be mentioned that by May 2013, Noolaham has documented 13,000 publications. *(Please visit www.noolaham.org to view our digital library.)*

Objectives:

Noolaham Foundation holds its area of expertise having value added input to the Tamil speaking society consisting peculiar features and goals. Through four unique objectives, it has been servicing the targeted society for more than eight years. Under the first objective, community and the targeted beneficiary can involve in searching and researching of socially hidden features, bring out many manuscripts and other heredities, and would share with all the finding and the

documents. The second objective is exclusively aiming at documenting and digitizing the printed and written productions which has been produced by Tamil speaking community of Sri Lanka. The third objective focus on the provision of reference services to the self and institutional researches and entrepreneurs. And the final objective concentrate on organizing related events and trainings to create awareness and make more strengthened network to provide more concrete collaboration and participation to enhance the engagement of contributors and stakeholders to have platform for social stability of Tamil speaking community of Sri Lanka. Under project portfolio of Noolaham Foundation, many viable interventions have been implemented by Noolaham Foundation Sri Lanka. Particularly, targeting vulnerable student communities, 'Pallikoodam' is unique example which create virtual platform to increase wisdom of the targeted student groups.

Pallikoodam:

'Pallikoodam' aims at combining formal education with alternative forms of education to create a virtual platform that supports and empowers students at the grass-roots level within the Tamil speaking communities in Sri Lanka and promote education as an avenue to strengthen the democratic foundations of society. 'Pallikoodam' has been implementing many projects with the focus of fulfilling its mission and the projects of conducting the 'G.C.E A/L model examination' project jointly with Moratuwa University Tamil students and the project of conducting pre-examination seminars in Mathematics and Science for G.C.E O/L students by collaborating with the Tamil students of Uva-Wellassa University are remarkable. It should also be mentioned that the USA based global non-profit organization, 'Vision Global Empowerment' came forward to collaborate with 'Pallikoodam'. 'Pallikoodam' has succeeded in implementing the Virtual Learning Environment which brings together the students and the teachers from different regions into a virtual space and facilitates for a wide range of knowledge sharing and has taken its initial steps in uploading the study materials and question banks to the moodle system, an Open Source Course Management System (CMS), also known as a Learning Management System (LMS) or a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) which has become very popular among educators around the world as a tool for creating online dynamic web sites for their students. 'Pallikoodam' has implemented various projects in benefitting the students from Sri Lankan Tamil speaking communities and supported nearly 5000 students throughout the country in 2013 and it targets to support 10,000 students in 2014. *(Please visit our **www.epallikoodam.org** website to find more information on Pallikoodam.)*

Manuscripts Archive:

Noolaham Foundation has also succeeded in documenting and archiving the manuscripts of Sri Lankan Tamil speaking Community which, are the identification and precious assets of our ancestors. It has first digitized and documented 10 manuscripts of Chunnakam Public Library in 2012 with the help extended by the French Research Institute Pondicherry regarding technical knowledge in digitizing manuscripts. It has also digitized and documented 5 manuscripts of Jaffna Public Library and is now focusing on its upcoming manuscripts digitization processes of digitizing the personal collections of 36 manuscripts of Mr.Pathmanaban, Lecturer, Department of Hindu Religious and Affairs, University of Jaffna and digitizing the manuscripts which has been preserved by Sivagurunathar Missionary.

3T (Technical Tools for Tamil) Laboratory:

Noolaham aims to lay the groundwork for the technological tools that are essential to make the language available with the up-to-date technology and further preparing the Tamil language as a user friendly interface for the next generation. On this background it involves in some research works such as Natural Language Processing Tools for Tamil, Creation of an Open ended Framework for Language Modelling, Tamil Optical Character Recognition (Tamil OCR), Tamil Speech Recognition and etc.

Noolaham Foundation is joining as a digitizing technical contributor in the 'Tamil OCR' work plan which is being jointly conducted by the Computer Science department of Jaffna University and the School of Computing of Colombo University. This is the testing effort taken to create a Tamil OCR mechanism through Google 'Tesseract' technology. Very old 1000 Tamil documents has been digitized and tested through this mechanism. OCR, usually referred to Optical Character Recognition, is the mechanical or electronic conversion of scanned or photoed images of typewritten or printed text into machine-encoded or computer-readable text. Dr. E.Y.A Charles, Head of Computer Science Department, University of Jaffna has also expressed his interest in working jointly with Noolaham Foundation in creating a complete 'Tamil OCR' mechanism at the initiative event of this work plan. According to this, Noolaham foundation has given the digitized version of the books received from Jaffna University and some old books which were with the foundation itself to this work plan.

Special Collections:

Noolaham Foundation functions as special repositories for up-country archive, Muslim archive, women archive and 'Thalith' archive. A working committee has been formed to develop up-country archive and as the initiatives, training was given on digitizing processes to Mrs. Radhika Perumal Thinakaran to digitize the approved list of books and to share with Noolaham Foundation's digital library. Aiming at the expansion of contributors from up-country, it has been decided to have an introductory meeting with up-country community on documenting the up-country archive. Muslim archive plan came up in 2008 and Mr. Shaseevan Ganeshananthan gave an interview in Nethra TV about the importance and need of Muslim archive. Although Noolaham Foundation had come up with the idea of Muslim archive in 2008, it came under practice in 2011 and published only script documents categorizing under books, magazines, newspapers and publications. Noolaham has collaborated with Women's Education & Research Centre (WERC) in digitizing their publications and other women related publications. It should be pointed out that Noolaham Foundation's first ever collaborated project was carried out with WERC back in 2007. The broad objectives of the organization are to increase women's awareness, their resources and opportunities for effective participation in the economic, political and social life of the country.

Documentation of Organization-Schools:

Under the work plan of Documentation of Organizations, Noolaham foundation has carried out two projects, viz. 'Aaram'- Jaffna Hindu College and 'Vethiyar thamizhavanam'-Colombo Royal College Tamil publications. It has digitized 135 publications from 'by laws of the Jaffna Hindu College 1933' released in 1933 to 'Jaffna Hindu College Sivagnana Vairavar Koyil Kudamuzhukku Vizha Malar' released in 2013 by the Jaffna Hindu College. A great support was extended by the

Jaffna Hindu College youth wing in collecting all the publications released by the College. Thereafter, Colombo branch of Jaffna Hindu College Old Boys' Association released all the documented publications as a CD named 'Aaram' along with the handbook titled, 'Aaram- Induvin Aavanak Kalanjiyam'. Noolaham Foundation has digitized the books published by Royal College Tamil speaking students for the past 48 years. This pioneer event has been named 'Veththiyar Thamizhavanam 2013' by the Students of Royal College Tamil Debate Council. Royal College Tamil Debate Council involved in activities of collecting 93 publications from 1964 to 2012 released by the Tamil societies and Associations of their college. The occasion of releasing the CD was held with the collaboration of Noolaham Foundation at Royal College Union Skill Centre on 31st March 2013. Noolaham foundation has made required facilities to view the digitalized publication in its official website, www.noolaham.org.

Tamil Documentation Conference-2013:

Noolaham Foundation held its Tamil Documentation Conference - 2013 along with its celebration to mark the 8th Anniversary in 2013. This conference with the theme of 'Documentation and preservation in the Sri Lankan Tamil Milieu' was held on April 27th and 28th. This conference is unique in the sense that it is the first ever conference on documentation in Sri Lanka. 48 research articles were read under specialized professors chaired the eight different Forums at the conference. The book of collection of all the research articles will be published in the annual celebrations held on 4th January 2014. This conference remains as the initiatives taken to our future plan of promoting researches into the platform of documentation.

9th Year Annual Celebrations & Integrated Cultural Event:

Noolaham Foundation is in the process of organizing its 9th Year Annual Celebrations along with the Integrated Cultural Programmes on 4th January 2014. It is going to publish its annual magazine for the year 2013 at this occasion. Unique performance of traditional displays, 'Then thuruva salankai' by artists from 'Nrithakshetra School of Indian Classical Dance' (Australia) and the 'Raavanesan vadamodi naadagam' by the students from 'Batticaloa Theatre lab' will be presented at the celebration. The initiatives of launching moodle learning platform will take part in this occasion. Noolaham Foundation sincerely expresses its gratitude to the media personalities who have been participating in today's press meeting and in advance, for publishing news regarding Noolaham foundation's mission, services, targets and about this historical event. Your contribution will be a valuable offer to the present and future Tamil speaking students' community and shall be a remarkable marketing offer to Noolaham Foundation to attain its targets of increasing and ensuring the existence of Tamil documents of Tamil community throughout the world for ever and adding value to the cultural and social stability.

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