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15 October 2011

Dear Friends of Geography and India,

We are writing to ask your support for an innovative and far-reaching geography initiative in India--The Indian Institute of Geographical Studies (TIIGS). TIIGS operates under the aegis of the Dharani Trust, an India-based not-for-profit that Dr. Chandra Shekhar Balachandran (Kent State University, 1993) inaugurated in 1999 along with its sister organization, Dharani USA, Inc. The aim of TIIGS is to:

1. demonstrate to Indian students and community members the relevance of geography to their lives;
2. build capacities of K-12 geography teachers; and
3. inspire K-12 students to continue their geography studies at the university level.

Towards these ends, TIIGS started implementing student-centered, activity-based education programs in and around the Bangalore area where the Dharani Trust is based. Since 2008, it has held over 40 workshops in English and Kannada (the language of Karnataka state) on geography topics ranging from latitude and longitude to monsoons to space and social justice. To date, we have reached over 200 teachers and 1,800 students. Its success can be seen in the fact that many attendees have requested additional workshops on a broader range of topics.

To help centralize and expand its mission, TIIGS launched the **GeoVidyaa Geography Centre of Excellence** in October 2010 in partnership with Bangalore's Army Public School (APS), located on APS's spacious campus. It also began partnering with local governments and NGOs that serve the under-privileged and, in August 2011, it started partnering with the Government of Karnataka to improve the state's geography education resources. Accordingly, it is assisting in designing a geography resource centre in northern Karnataka; developing programs to increase the geographical literacy of lecturers in colleges offering a Diploma in Education; and consulting on the implementation of the federally mandated National Curriculum Framework for geography education.

TIIGS has likewise begun developing international partnerships. In 2011, it started working with the Association of American Geographers to host a 2012 National Science Foundation-sponsored workshop in Bangalore, bringing together K-12 geography educators from South Asia and the USA.

Through such initiatives, TIIGS is reaching towards its long-term goal of making geography education a dynamic option not only for students in grades K-12, but in higher education, too.

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Established: 1999  
A registered  
non-governmental,  
non-profit,  
apolitical  
charitable trust  
in Bangalore, India

**Reg. No.:**  
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*Dharani* is a Sanskrit  
word for *Earth*

*dhr* -- to bear, support

*dharani* -- she who  
bears, supports; Earth

In what follows, we outline recent and future activities at GeoVidyaa that we hope you will sponsor.

**For teachers** – Nine (9) teacher workshops involving 15 teachers each, in 2011-12. The costs for teaching, supplies, and pedagogical materials are \$100/ participant/ workshop.

**For students** – Approximately forty (40) geography workshops for 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade students in 2011-12. The workshops are held in English and/or Kannada, with students coming from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Students are taught to appreciate geography's relevance to everyday social issues, in part through fieldwork, mapping exercises. Beginning 2012, an introduction to GIS and GPS is envisaged if we can obtain the necessary hardware.

**IT-enabled geography laboratory** – The GeoVidyaa Center needs 25 computers, a weather station, and a number of hand-held GPS units to develop student and teacher practicums.

**Community awareness-raising** – To raise public awareness about geography, TIIGS will sponsor public lectures, guest speakers, documentary screenings, geography festivals and contests, and special events at the APS.

TIIGS has grown and continues to grow in ways that require greater community support.

With your support, we plan to raise enough funds to cover expenses for TIIGS many important activities and to move towards greater institutional self-reliance. In helping TIIGS make a difference to Indian geography education, you are helping to make the discipline relevant to the youth who are India's future.

Please consider giving generously. Dharani USA, Inc. is a 501-3c charity and US contributions are tax-deductible (EID #: 62-1817940). Please make checks payable to **Dharani USA, Inc.** and send to:

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or

You may pay online using PayPal, online at <http://tiigs.org>

You can also contact Dr. Nast (Managing Trustee) at [hnast@depaul.edu](mailto:hnast@depaul.edu) or

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For more details about these and other initiatives, please visit us online at <http://tiigs.org>

*A flyer with more details about TIIGS is attached!*

*Please join us.*