

Echoes of Eco



May, 2013

Vivekananda Kendra- **nardep** Newsletter

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The Nature and Mind: One Continuum



The external and internal natures are not two different things; they are really one. Nature is the sum total of all phenomena. "Nature" means all that is, all that moves. We make a tremendous distinction between matter and mind; we think that the mind is entirely different from matter. Actually, they are but one nature, half of which is continually acting on the other half. Matter is pressing upon the mind in the form of various sensations. These sensations are nothing but force. The force from the outside evokes the force within.

From the will to respond to or get away from the outer force, the inner force becomes what we call thought. Both matter and mind are really nothing but forces; and if you analyse them far enough, you will find that at root they are one. The very fact that the external force can somehow evoke the internal force shows that somewhere they join each other — they must be continuous and, therefore, basically the same force. When you get to the root of things, they become simple and general.

Since the same force appears in one form as matter and in another form as mind, there is no reason to think matter and mind are different.

Mind is changed into matter, matter is changed into mind. Thought force becomes nerve force, muscular force; muscular and nerve force become thought force. Nature is all this force, whether expressed as matter or mind.

The difference between the subtlest mind and the grossest matter is only one of degree. Therefore the whole universe may be called either mind or matter, it does not matter which. You may call the mind refined matter, or the body concretised mind; it makes little difference by which name you call. All the troubles arising from the conflict between materialism and spirituality are due to wrong thinking. Actually, there is no difference between the two. I and the lowest pig differ only in degree. It is less manifested, I am more. Sometimes I am worse, the pig is better.

[Excerpt from the lecture of Swami Vivekananda]

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Meditating on Food



Your flavors, O Food, are spread throughout space, high like the breezes they are scattered. Those who share your sweetness with others are truly your friends. Those who keep your fine taste to themselves are stiff-necked wretches! ... From waters and plants we imbibe the choicest portion. Therefore, O Body, thrive; attain full stature.
-Rig Veda I-187:4,5,7



Service to humanity is the highest form of worship – Swami Vivekananda



We must have friendship for all; we must be merciful toward those that are in misery; when people are happy, we ought to be happy; and to the wicked we must be indifferent. These attitudes will make the mind peaceful. -Swami Vivekananda



● Rameshwaram: Reviving ● the Sacred Water Teerthams

Third Teertham : Sahadeva Teertham

Swami Vivekananda's 150th birth anniversary celebrations are making ecological footprints in the sands of Rameshwaram. Even as the work on Hanuman Teertham and Draupadi Teertham are progressing wonderfully, the work at Sahadeva Teertham has been taken up by Kendra. This is the third teertham that is getting renovated



Hanuman Teertham Now: From pollution to Purity

The teertham is named after Sahadeva the famous Pandava prince. There is a staunch belief of desires getting fulfilled and hurdles removed by visiting here. This makes the teertham, when renovated, becoming an important place of eco-pilgrimage to the local as well as visiting populations. The teertham is located 4 kilometers from the temple.

As the renovation work commenced and the Kendra workers entered the Sahadeva Teertham, they found that as with the previous two teerthams this too was strongly polluted. The water was putrid and stagnant. Layers of pollution accumulated for decades covered the sacredness of the teertham. Further it was full of thorny shrubs and bushes. The wall surrounding the teertham was so dilapidated that it was no more able to prevent any pollution entering the teertham and was crumbling slowly. The teertham was in a state worse than forgotten. There is a crematorium nearby. And the only reason this teertham has not completely collapsed is because some ritual water is taken from this polluted waters during the last rites of passage. In other words the ritual use of this polluted water continued without taking care of maintaining the teertham.

The holistic purpose of the ritual has been thus forgotten. Hence the need for renovating the teertham becomes an important work for reviving the water body and making the local ritual as well as over all pilgrimage an experience more meaningful and pleasant.

The thorny bushes were removed. All the outgrowths were cut off and thus the teertham started becoming visible. Then the laborious process of desilting started. The water which has become stagnant and completely polluted was removed mechanically. As the renovation work started it could be seen that water was oozing in like bore water. The existing wall which has been crumbling under the heavy bush growth has been raised by 2' to avoid pollution in the future. An ancient well which has been dug inside the teertham is now visible. And now pillars have been constructed for gates. The whole teertham structure has been white washed. Now pure water starts to fill in the teertham.

Sahadeva Teertham- The Work Begins!

Neglected ruined structures
Polluted waters - decades of neglect:

Days and days of dedicated work in conditions of extreme pollution. Fresh water oozing out of the ancient inlets once again...

The structure gets a facelift...
The waters begin to smile with sparkles... but miles to go still...

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For more information about the project and how you can contribute, contact: Secretary, VK-nardep, Vivekanandapuram, Kanyakumari-629702



Come out into the universe of Light. Everything in the universe is yours, stretch out your arms and embrace it with love. If you every felt you wanted to do that, you have felt God. This is no world. It is God Himself.
-Swami Vivekananda



This Month ...



Workshop on Training programme on "Azolla Cultivation Technology" as broad spectrum feed was held at Vivekananda Kendra – NARDEP, TRC, Kalluvilai on 18th and Smt. Premalatha was the resource person. 8 persons received intensive training.

Networking: This month



Exposure visit of 200 farmers was arranged by District Watershed Development Agency, Virudhunagar. They visited Gramodaya Park on 30th and learnt Bio-methanation, Rain water harvesting and Organic farming technologies.

Two camps 'to create scientific temper in the minds of school children' were held at TRC-Kalluvilai on 3rd to 7th and 12th to 16th of this month. The programme was under the auspices of DST, New Delhi. Dr.Usha Raja Nandini, Sri.V.Ramakrishnan, Sis.V.Saraswathi and others served as resource persons. Totally 141 children attended both the camps

Next Page: Summer is here and so are the camps!

Side by side, in the child, should be developed the power of concentration and detachment.

-Swami Vivekananda



This Month ...



Water: Paper Presentation

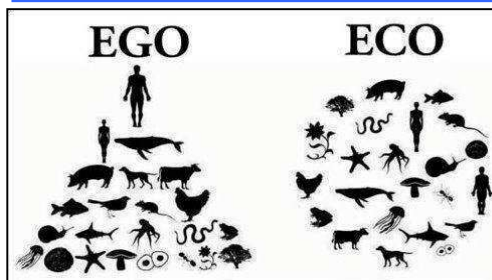
Water was tested from 14 wells in Kanyakumari Dist – programme of Central Ground Water Board, Chennai.

Holistic Health



Green Health Home in 7 days treated 105 patients and offered them indigenous health solutions.

VK-nardep organized workshop on "Awareness and Documentation of Ethno-Medical Science" (Nadi Chiksha) on 10th of this month at Technology Resource Centre Kalluvilai. 69 persons attended and Dr.Ganapathy was the resource person.



In a seminar on 'Water Conservation in Tamilnadu, Engagement with Corporates & Civil Society Organisations' organised by Unicef, Chennai at the Unicef Office, on 7th of this month a paper on Renovation of Rameshwaram Teerthams was presented by Shri.G.Vasudeo. 15 delegates attended the programme.



Renewable Energy This Month

Done with DST core support

One day Workshop on "Kitchen Waste based Bio-Methanation Plant (Shakti Surabhi) was conducted at TRC, Kalluvilai on 18th. Shri.V.Ramakrishnan was the main resource person. 6 persons attended the workshop.

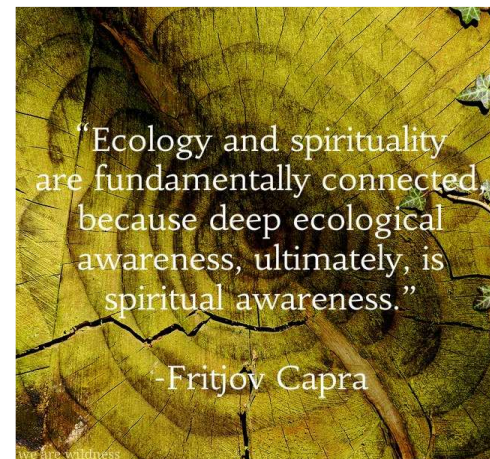
Biogas Plants Installed:

- Shakti Surabhi 4 cum: 1
 - Shakti Surabhi 1 cum: 1
 - Shakti Surabhi 2 cum: 1
- [Fixed Model]

Networking: Refresher camp for family members



Refresher camp for Family Members was held at the TRC of VK-nardep at, Kalluvilai, from 28th April to 1st May. 73 family members attended the camp and enjoyed various activities. The resource persons were Sri.V.Ramakrishnan, Sister. V. Saraswathi, Dr.Umaiyoor Bhagan and others.





*Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested all your life.
We must have life-building, man-making, character-making, assimilation of ideas.
-Swami Vivekananda*



Different sessions at the Family camp at VK-nardep. The camp increases the family bonds. Camp activities cater to the physical, emotional, vital, intellectual and inner well being. Students are engaging themselves in various indoor and outdoor activities, learning science, feeling nature and studying life first hand. Two camps on inculcating scientific spirit in children were conducted at VK-nardep TRC.





Do not pity anyone. Look upon all as your own Self, as your equal. Cleanse yourself of the primal sin of inequality. We are all equal and one must not think 'I am good and you are bad, so let me reclaim you.' Equality is the sign of the free.

Swami Vivekananda



From our Publications

Integrated Rural Systems:

India has through a long period of history has evolved a rural system which is a very interconnected system. However the excessive urbanization and degradation of agriculture and natural environment are destroying it. Can we save the system and revive it back to healthy vibrant life? This is an excerpt from our publication: 'Akshaya Vikas –Sustainable Development'



INTEGRATED RURAL SYSTEMS



The scientific challenge can be faced only through accelerated efforts in the blending of traditional wisdom and modern technologies



Indian villages are highly integrated systems of Ecology. What happens to one component affects others. However this system finely tuned as it is can be split apart. If too many trees are cut, or population pressures reduce the area of forests and grazing lands, there would be shortage of firewood. This would force people to burn cowdung, leaving little manure to fertilize crop lands. As fodder sources decline, animals will starve and will not produce enough cowdung. All these add up to reduction in the production of biomass. The land area is converted into a pseudo desert.

India has 129.78 million hectares (mha) of wasteland of which 35.92 mha is degraded forest land and 93.86 mha of degraded nonforest land. We should try earnestly to increase the productivity of all components of the village ecosystem, and in a sustainable manner.

We must sustain the world if it is to sustain us...



Real existence, real knowledge and real love are eternally connected with one another, the three in one: where one of them is the other also must be there: they are the three aspects of the One without the second –the Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. When the Existence becomes relative we see it as the world.
-Swami Vivekananda



Feeling the Mother Universe

The clear, unbounded life-energy of the Mother Universe is present in all material forms as well as in seemingly empty space. The Mother Universe is not separate from us, nor is it other than the "ordinary" reality that is continuously present around us. The Mother Universe is also not limited to containing only our universe; there likely are a vast number of other universes growing in other dimensions of her unimaginable spaciousness. The Mother Universe is a living presence out of which all things emerge, but it is not itself filled or limited by these things. Not only are all things in it; it is in all things. There is mutual interpenetration without obstruction. The Mother Universe allows all things to be exactly what they are without interference. We have immense freedom to create either suffering or joy. The power and reach of the Mother Universe is so vast that it cannot be grasped by our thinking mind. As the source of our existence, the Mother Universe is forever beyond the ability of our limited mental faculties to capture conceptually. Boundless compassion is its essence. To experience the subtle and refined resonance of the Mother Universe is to experience unconditional love.



-Duane Elgine
Educationist



Practicing Eco-Spiritual Discipline

In Trivandrum when Amma was serving dinner as Prasadam a disciple Brahmachari came to Amma with a plastic plate. Seeing this Amma asked him where his personal food vessel was. When he said he had not brought it, Amma asked him to remove the shirt and said that she would serve the dinner in that. Many laughed even as the Brahmachari stood embarrassed. After a few moments Amma said that there were empty coconut shells behind the hall. Amma told the Brahmachari to bring one of them. When he returned with a coconut shell Amma served him Prasad dinner in that shell. Thus Amma communicated the strict 'green' discipline not only to the Brahmachari but also to those who were watching the encounter as well.

On a similar note during the dinner stop en route to Kanyakumari Amma asked how many in the tour group had used paper plates or cups at least once during the tour. Quite a few hands went up. Seeing this she sternly asked every one to take a vow to stop using such products. For Amma practicing green way of living and living in earth awareness is integral to the Sadhana of inner harmony.



Amritanandamayi
Spiritual Master



Prayer to Future Beings

You live inside us, beings of the future. In the spiral ribbons of our cells, you are here. In our rage for the burning forests, the poisoned fields, the oil-drowned seals, you are here. You beat in our hearts through late-night meetings. You accompany us to clear-cuts and toxic dumps and the halls of the lawmakers. It is you who drive our dogged labors to save what is left. O You who will walk this Earth when we are gone, stir us awake. Behold through our eyes the beauty of this world. Let us feel your breath in our lungs, your cry in our throat. Let us see you in the poor, the homeless, the sick. Haunt us with your hunger; hound us with your claims, that we may honour the life that links us. You have as yet no faces we can see, no names we can say. But we need only hold you in our mind, and you teach us patience. You attune us to measures of time where healing can happen, where soil and souls can mend. You reveal courage within us we had not suspected, love we had not owned. O You who come after, help us remember: we are your ancestors. Fill us with gladness for the work that must be done.



Joanna Macy
Buddhist Philosopher