

Echoes of Eco



December, 2013

Vivekananda Kendra- **nardep** Newsletter

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Brother Animal and Brother Plant



Consciously or unconsciously, therefore, the whole universe is going towards that goal. The moon is struggling to get out of the sphere of attraction of other bodies, and will come out of it, in the long run. But those who consciously strive to get free hasten the time.

One benefit from this theory we practically see is that the idea of a real universal love is only possible from this point of view. All are our fellow passengers, our fellow travellers — **all life, plants, animals; not only my brother man, but my brother brute, my brother plant;** not only my brother the good, but my brother the evil, my brother the spiritual and my brother the wicked. They are all going to the same goal. All are in the same stream, each is hurrying towards that infinite freedom. We cannot stay the course, none can stay it, none can go back, however he may try; he will be driven forward, and in the end he will attain to freedom. Creation means the struggle to get back to freedom, the centre of our being, whence we have been thrown off, as it were.

The very fact that we are here, shows that we are going towards the centre, and the manifestation of this attraction towards the centre is what we call love.

The question is asked: From what does this universe come, in what does it remain, to what does it go back? And the answer is: From love it comes, in love it remains, back it goes unto love. Thus we are in a position to understand that, whether one likes it or not, there is no going back for anyone. Everyone has to get to the centre, however he may struggle to go back.

...All beings, great or small, are equally manifestations of God; the difference is only in the manifestation. The same eternal message, which has been eternally given, comes to them little by little. The eternal message has been written in the heart of every being; it is there already, and all are struggling to express it. Some, in suitable circumstances, express it a little better than others, but as bearers of the message they are all one.

[An excerpt from Swami Vivekananda's lecture 'Vedanta and Privilege']

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That One



What moves, what flies, what stands quite still, what breathes, what breathes not, blinks the eye-- this, concentrated into a single One, though multiple its forms, sustains the earth.

The infinite extends in many places, the infinite and finite having a common border; the guardian of the firmament alone can trace that line, he who knows what has been and shall be.

-Atharva Veda





When it is said that the same power which is manifesting itself in the flower is welling up in my own consciousness, it is the very same idea which the Vedantist wants to preach, that the reality of the external world and the reality of the internal world are one and the same. – Swami Vivekananda



Rameshwaram: Reviving the Sacred Water Teerthams



As part of the 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Swami Vivekananda, VK-nardep has taken up the renovation of the 16 sacred *teerthams* of Rameshwaram. This is the continuation of the report series of the progress of the project. The *Teertham* renovation project is revealing a greater pattern of embedded eco-veneration in the bio-cultural knowledge system of the island. *Kandhamana Parvatam* is a sacred hillock at the island from where Sri Rama surveyed his way to Lanka according to the tradition. It is a popular pilgrim spot next only to the main temple. On the way to this hillock are two *teerthams* in very ruined conditions. **Arjuna Teertham** and **Bhima Teertham**. Of these *Arjuna Teertham* has almost been lost and even its enclosing structures have become destroyed and corroded to the point of no return with a lot of thorny shrubs.



Arjuna Teertham: Before the renovation work started [Picture taken in October 2013] This teertham was almost lost and even the walls have corroded and have started falling apart. It was identified after a strenuous effort was made by VK-nardep workers.

With the dedicated work of our workers, who toiled under the hot sun, which was least of their problems, the *Arjuna Teertham* is now shaping up slowly. From scarcity of drinking water to the staying place where encountering scorpions and centipedes is a regular feature, everyday life of the workers is an adventure and they are least bothered in facing these problems because as they said in an interview that it is the work for the pilgrims and the holy island. It is this high level of motivation that has made possible the recovering of the *Teertham* from its discovered condition of absolute abandonment to the present condition where a protective wall is coming up. Care has been taken to incorporate the original elements in the previous construction which have been identified. This includes the traditional space to light lamps in the walls which is a regular feature of the *Teertham* enclosure walls.



[On the spot view: Arjuna Teertham now] Work in progress at the teertham. One can see the walls coming up which incorporate the ancient elements which could be salvaged from the abandoned corroded earlier structure. The red circle shows the place to keep traditional lamps.



Nature evolves more and more, until the Absolute manifests Itself. In everyone It exists; in some It is manifested more than in others. The whole universe is really one. In speaking of the soul, to say that one is superior to another has no meaning. In speaking of the soul, to say that man is superior to the animal or the plant, has no meaning; the whole universe is one. – Swami Vivekananda



As the work progressed at *Arjuna Teertham*, the digging revealed water which has been since then used in the construction work of the walls of the *Teertham*. This has also boosted the morale of the workers. Though once considered as lost now the *Teertham* is getting a steady new look. With the holy *teerthams* coming up on the way to the sacred hillock, the pilgrims will also start using the *teerthams* and this will generate enough interest in the adjoining communities to take care of the *Teerthams* as it will also lead to both water security as well as economic development of the adjoining areas. With adjoining *Bhima Teertham* also getting renovated what we see here is also the gradual uncovering of the original '*Teertha Yatra*' nodal points from the main temple to the hillock. The work will also assist in creating a sacred-green map for Rameshwaram island.



[Above] Unveiling the sacred geography: *Arjuna Teertham* getting renovated with *Kandamana Parvat* at the backdrop. [Below] Water oozing out in the *Teertham* site helps in the construction work of the *Teertham* wall. [Below right] *Kalki* magazine reported our work at Rameshwaram.



To know more about Rameshwaram Teertham Project contact: Secretary, VK-nardep, Vivekananda Kendra, Vivekanandapuram, Kanyakumari-629702;
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You and I are little bits, little points, little channels, little expressions, all living inside of that infinite ocean of Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss. The difference between man and man, between angels and man, between man and animals, between animals and plants, between plants and stones is not in kind, because everyone from the highest angel to the lowest particle of matter is but an expression of that one infinite ocean, and the difference is only in degree. – Swami Vivekananda



Happenings this month: **SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE**



Happenings this month: **HOLISTIC & INDIGENOUS MEDICINE**



Happenings this month: **Networking and Media**

Workshops on Azolla this month



Dr. Pillai explaining the backyard cultivation beds of Azolla technology to the Jharkhand farmers.

- Organised by the Department of Animal Husbandry, Govt. of Jharkhand. Training given for two batches at the TRC, Kalluvilai between 3rd to 6th of this month and 10th to 13th of this month. Totally 61 farmers from Jharkhand attended the programme. The resource persons were, Dr. P. Kamalasanan Pillai, Sis. V. Saraswathi and Shri. Rajamony.
- Workshop on Azolla was organized at TRC Kalluvilai on 21st of this month with 6 persons attending and benefitting. The resource person was Dr. Kamalasanan Pillai and team.



Happenings this month: **water management and conservation technologies**

Tested water from 14 wells in Kanyakumari Dist. as a part of the programme of Central Ground Water Board. Chennai.

Green Health Home of VK-nardep functioned for 8 days and treated 159 patients.



Practical demonstration at Siddha Varma workshop conducted at Madurai on Dec-20, 2013



Ayyappa Season: Free medical camp for the pilgrims. (14-Dec-2013)



Final Visha Vaidya Meet at VK-nardep Gramodaya: 14-Dec-2013:



'The Hindu' newspaper covered fixed bio-methanation plant in its report dated 22-Dec-2013

Snekithi a Tamil Magazine from Chennai in its December issue made a good coverage of Bio-methanation plant.



Kalki – Tamil Magazine Chennai on 8th made a good coverage on our work in the field of "Revival and Renovation of Teerthams at Rameswaram"





I am not trying to remedy evils, I only ask you to go forward and to complete the practical realisation of the scheme of human progress that has been laid out in the most perfect order by our ancestors. I only ask you to work to realise more and more the Vedantic ideal of the solidarity of man and his inborn divine nature.- Swami Vivekananda



Happenings this month: Networking and Media



Happenings this month: BIO-METHANATION PLANT & RENEWABLE ENERGY



Happenings this month: BIO-METHANATION PLANT & RENEWABLE ENERGY

PSN National Award for Excellence in Science and Technology

On 14th Dec VK-nardep received the "National award for Excellence in Rural Technology". In recognition for the outstanding contribution in reviving the traditional cost-effective green architectures and brining together the various such architectural pluralism and the engineering as well as ecological knowledge embedded in these technologies for the benefit of common man. 150 persons attended. 'The Hindu' on 15-Dec reported the event.



Networking Activities

Two exposure visits of farmers to Gramodaya were arranged by District Watershed Development Agency, Dindukkal on 3rd and 17th of this month. Totally 200 Farmers learned Biomethanation, Rain water harvesting and Organic farming technologies.



Study Tour

62 students from Sri Ramana Institute of Polytechnic College, Moolaikaraipatti, Tirunelveli Dist visited TRC Kalluvillai on 5th of Dec and learnt Green Construction Technologies as a Project for Academic Studies.

Bio-Methanation Awareness Programmes conducted by Er.Ramakrishnan

- at Anna Vinayagar Industrial Training Institute of Engineering, Ganapathipuram, Kanyakumari dist. on 2nd Dec. 40 students attended
- at Govt. High School, Kuasekharapuram, Kanyakumari dist. On 4th Dec. 41 students attended.
- at Jeeva Industrial Training Center, Chengaramanputhur, Kanyakumari dist. On 13th Dec. 26 students attended.
- at Uppliapuram, Thengamputhur. on 16th. 31 SHG members attended.
- at TRC Kalluvillai on 21st with DST support, 12 persons attended.
- at Sree Vaikundar Polytechnic College, Pillayarapuram, Kanyakumari dist. on 26th Dec. 47 students attended.
- at Krishna Polytechnic College, Kalliancaud, Nagercoil, Kanyakumari dist. on 27th Dec. 57 students attended.



Bio-Methanation Plants Installation this month:

- Fixed 2 cum – 1
- Portable 2 cum – 1

**VK-nardep activities done
with DST core support**



Survey of biogas plants constructed in 2009 & 10

- 46 plants constructed under NABARD scheme in the year 2009 were surveyed. 43 plants working satisfactorily while 3 are not in use because of shifting of houses by the owner. Similarly, 26 plants at Sivasubramaniapuram were surveyed and found that 24 are working satisfactorily while 2 are in dis-use because of construction of new house/shifting of house.

Networking Activities



115 officials from the Tamil Nadu forest training college, Vaigai Dam attended two study tour sessions on 27th and 30th and learnt Herbal medicines, Rain water harvesting and Construction technologies



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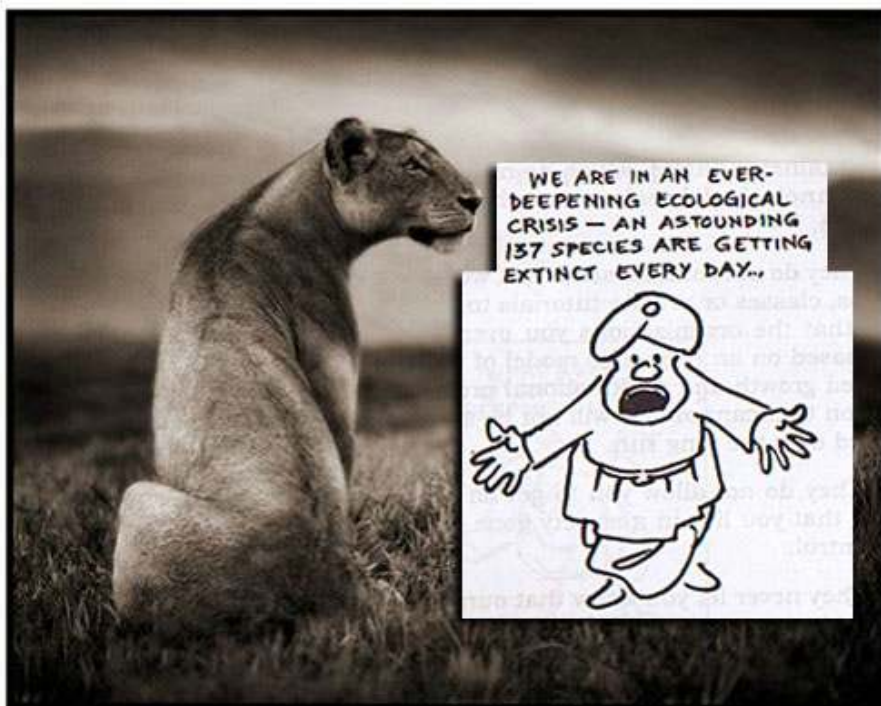
—Swami Vivekananda



From our Publications



This year onwards we provide eco-toons from 'Samagraha Vikas' – Development with a human face. These eco-toons explore various aspects of ecological degradation and the value based reason for the loss of bio-diversity and lowered quality of life. The eco-toons challenge the notion of conventional views of development and propose more than technical solutions. They demand deeper value changes.

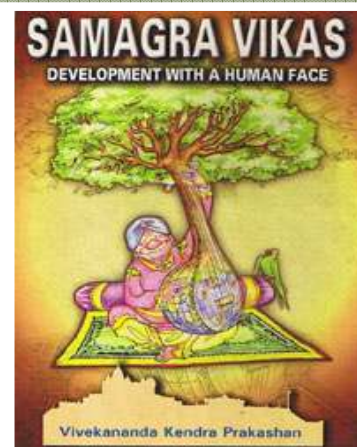


A few would be willing to admit that the acutest social and technical problem facing mankind today comes not from the so-called 'under-development' but from 'over-development'. To remedy this situation the metaphysical knowledge pertaining to nature must be revived and the sacred quality of nature given back to it once again.

-Seyyed Hossein Nasr



DO NOT MISS OUR BOOKS.





... the modern researches of the West have demonstrated through physical means the oneness and the solidarity of the whole universe; ... physically speaking, you and I, the sun, moon, and stars are but little waves or waveless in the midst of an infinite ocean of matter.

—Swami Vivekananda



Love

Love is also the positive resonance at the heart of our enjoyment of the natural world, whose presence, as Wordsworth wrote, “disturbs me with the joy of elevated thoughts.” In the encounter with the multidimensional beauty of this planet, the great being within which our species has evolved, positive emotions like inspiration, gratitude, awe, and love are born in us. Nowadays we can only benefit from every opportunity to embrace the Earth, in every particularity. To become like this is to offer and be offered in reply a recognition so deep that our own faces appear in every detail of the living world. To recognize the Earth in such a way is a deep spiritual practice, one that proceeds wholly beyond the terminal, parasitical relationship toward her into which humanity has fallen. The Metta Sutta of Buddhism recommends that we cherish all living things, “Even as a mother protects with her life her child, her only child.” The nature of the Earth has created our species in every detail, and we are now increasingly creating the nature of the Earth. Should we approach this evolutionary responsibility in the way Frankenstein approached the creation of his monster made of dead things? Or even as a mother protects with her life, her child, her only child?



Give

Ask nothing; want nothing in return. Give what you have to give; it will come back to you — but do not think of that now, it will come back multiplied a thousand fold — but the attention must not be on that. Yet have the power to give: give, and there it ends. Learn that the whole of life is giving, that nature will force you to give. So, give willingly. Sooner or later you will have to give up. You come into life to accumulate. With clenched hands, you want to take. But nature puts a hand on your throat and makes your hands open. Whether you will it or not, you have to give. The moment you say, “I will not”, the blow comes; you are hurt. None is there but will be compelled, in the long run, to give up everything. And the more one struggles against this law, the more miserable one feels. It is because we dare not give, because we are not resigned enough to accede to this grand demand of nature, that we are miserable. ... you take, in order to give. Ask, therefore, nothing in return; but the more you give the more will come to you.... A river is continually emptying itself into the ocean and is continually filling up again. Bar not the exit into the ocean. The moment you do that, death seizes you.



Transform

Nature in its essence is not a machine. Living matter exists only by the order of the transcendent life, the one which is formless, invisible, but knowable through its effect. Nature constitutes a set of self-originating, self-organizing and self-sustaining forms. Life renders matter the binding abilities, interlocking powers, overlapping characters, and a transcendent state. The transcendent order of nature is that (Prakriti) which nurtures nature/biodiversity. The four renewable resources, which sustain all life, grasslands, forests, croplands and oceans, have become non-renewable due to over-exploitation and pollution.... Man of matter is culturally processed (*purushartha*). He is transformed into a moral person (*naitika purusa*). The gross body undergoes through a transcendental superpsychic process of cultivation (*samskara*) and purification (*bhutasuddhi*). Man discovers major points of power in his subtle body that functions as an instrument (*yantra*) for the inner meditative experience. He invokes the spirit or deity to possess his body. In that state of possession, or meditation, the cultural man is transformed into a cosmic person, an archetype of Purusa, the source of everything...



— Susan Murphy
Roshi
Zen Ecologist

—Swami
Vivekananda



Baidyanath
Sawarswathi
Anthropologist