

Echoes of Eco



September, 2019

Vivekananda Kendra- nardep Newsletter

Vol:11 No: 7

Green warrior – Vilasrao B Salunke



Gram Gaurav Pratishthan Pani Panchayat

Everything is picture perfect in Mahur village, about 75 km from Pune in Maharashtra. Acres of marigold and lilies in full bloom, teak trees and a variety of crops conceal its unpleasant past. This huge tract in the Western Ghats was, till the mid 1970's, barren and untended. Even vast expanses of tended lands did not guarantee a harvest worth talking about. Then Vilasrao B Salunke, then a young engineer who owned a factory manufacturing precision instruments in Pune, stepped in.



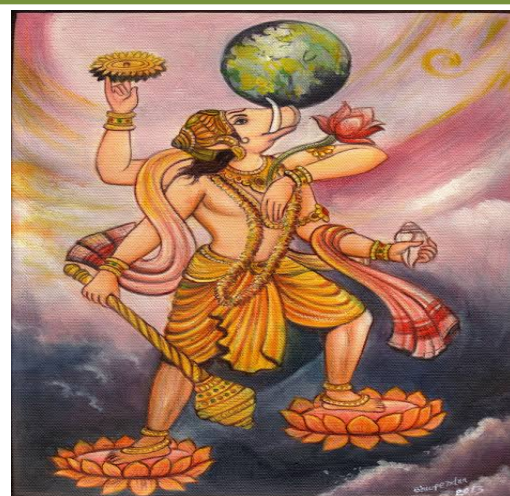
Vilasrao Salunkhe
'Pani Baba'
1937 ~ 2002

With the help of the villagers, Salunke not only brought water to the parched lands, but also instilled confidence and the will to survive among the people. He set up Gram Gaurav Pratishthan (GGP), a voluntary organization, to prove a simple fact: success can be achieved with very little resources.

The Genesis: A severe drought hit Maharashtra in 1972. In Purandhar taluka (Block), thousands of people had migrated to the cities, where survival was no less an ordeal. The govt. as an alternative, employed thousands of people as stone-cutters.

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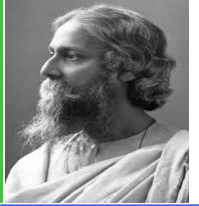


Varaha - The Boar

All glories to you, O Lord of the universe, who took the form of a boar. When the earth fell into the ocean at the bottom of the universe you caught her on your tusk, where she looked beautiful like a spot on the moon.



"The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence"
- Rabindranath Tagore



Curiosity led the young engineer to the drought prone areas. "I saw people breaking stones under the harsh rays of the sun, but I could not understand the connection between the drought and stone breaking", he says. Salunke went to the Commissioner of Pune with the query. The Commissioner failed to provide any answer. The same question was put to the stone cutters. He was met with blank stares.

Salunke then asked the villagers what they really needed. "The reply was 'water in the fields'", he says. The villagers said if rain water is conserved, all problems would be solved. "They had the solution, but without resources, they said they were handicapped", says Salunke.

Salunke understood the whole problem. "There was land in plenty , but no water", says Salunke adding "I realized that if water conservation, distribution and usage is done wisely, every family here can be given water security - an essential ingredient for food security".

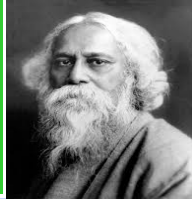
Salunke started with Naigaon village in Purandhar. He met the villagers and explained his conservation plan. The villagers agreed to give 16 hectares (ha) of land, which belonged to the village temple, on a trial basis. In the first year, Salunke managed to get some 500 villagers to work on constructing check dams to conserve rain water. To Prevent erosion, trees were grown in this patch of land. He also acquired an additional 80 ha of land from the villagers.

Soon, the results began to show up. The first monsoon through scanty, completely irrigated the 16 ha land but only half the area was used for cultivation of food grains. The crop yield increased 10 fold.

The Five Principles: With the first experiment bearing fruit, the next task was to hand over the rain water harvesting project to the people themselves. "But, water being as scare commodity, there was a problem in its distribution", says Salunke. To ensure that the project does not die, he formed water councils in the villages and made everybody a shareholder and formulated the following five principles to help people retain what they developed:



"You can't cross the sea merely by standing and staring at the water"
- Rabindranath Tagore

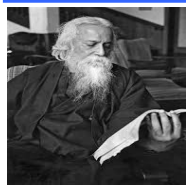


- i. Water distribution would not be done in terms of landholdings.
- ii. There would be per capita distribution of water.
- iii. In times of scarcity, water would be given for the area that can be cultivated by the family members themselves without any outside help.
- iv. Crops which require less water would be cultivated with the reserved water.
- v. The people realized that landless villagers were also entitled to water. So to put their quota to best use, land owners, who had excess land gave it to them for cultivation.

Water rights were made non-transferable, that even if the owner decides to sell his land, he is not permitted to sell the water rights. Salunke asked the villagers to contribute 20 per cent of the cost of the project, the rest being paid by the government, to make them realise that it was their own resources they were conserving.

After the immense success of the first experiment, the movement spread to other villages. Shri. Salunke was never a one man, one institution show. He supported the initiatives to those who came in touch with him. He also provided guidance to the state on issues related to water. Vilasrao was like a light house, giving hope and direction to the countless water warriors.





"I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy"

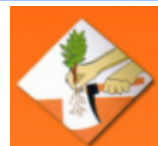
- Rabindranath Tagore



Happenings this month:
Sustainable Agriculture



Happenings this month:



Happenings this month:
Sustainable Agriculture

Training programme on "Azolla technology" was held at Technology Resource Center on 28th September. 02 participants attended the training. Shri.S.Rajamony was the resource person.



Farmer participants standing near Azolla unit

District Mission Committee meeting was organized by Dept. of Horticulture at Collectorate, Nagercoil on 26th September. Shri.S.Rajamony attended the meeting.



Peace amidst adversity and diversity amidst turbulence

Mrs.B.Bavithra,
W/o.N.Manikandaraja,
Ammanakanvillai, Leepuram Post,
Kanyakumari District
Mobile no 9159290175



I am Mrs.B.Bavithra. My husband is a mason by profession. Unfortunately, he is having health problems and so unable to go for a work. I am having a son of two years old, however, I have to work as an agricultural labourer to take care of my family. I attended the Kitchen Garden Training organized by Vivekananda Kendra-NARDEP last year in the month of October (4.10.2018). Afterwards I established the Kitchen Garden in my back yard. The growth of the plants boosted my confidence. Vegetables from backyard is helping me to reduce the kitchen expenses. Now I am expanding my plantation to other vacant places. In addition, she says that gardening gives her calmness to her mind and helps in reducing the stress.



"I have become my own version of an optimist. If I can't make it through one door, I'll go through another door - or I'll make a door. Something terrific will come no matter how dark the present"

- Rabindranath Tagore



**Happenings this month:
Water Management**



Happenings this month



**Happenings this month:
Holistic Health**

Awareness programme on "Water Management" conducted at Gramodaya Park, Vivekanandapuram on 19th September. 38 SHG members attended the training. Shri.V.Ramakrishnan was the resource person.



Shri.C.Vijayarahavan interacting with the participants

Awareness programme on "Water Management" conducted at Gramodaya Park, Vivekanandapuram on 21st September. 24 members attended the training. Shri.V.Ramakrishnan was the resource person.



Shri.V.Ramakrishnan talking about "Water Management"

Green health home worked for 4 days and treated 209 patients.

"Seminar on "Muppu, Rasavatham & Traditional Siddha Varma therapy" was held at Gramodaya Park, Vivekanandapuram on 14th and 15th September. 131 members attended the seminar. Dr.V.Ganapathy and his team acted as resource persons.



Inaugural session is on

Workshop on "Traditional Siddha Varma Bone Setting Practices" was held at Technology Resource Center on 23rd and 24th September. 25 Vaidyas, Students attended the training. Dr.V.Ganapathy and his team acted as resource persons.

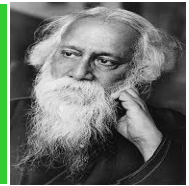


Dr.V.Ganapathi interacting with the participants



"Let us not pray to be sheltered from dangers but to be fearless when facing them"

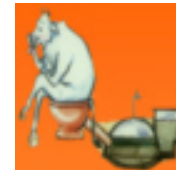
- Rabindranath Tagore



Happenings this month:
Renewable Energy
Sources



Happenings this month:



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Regular cleaning of Renovated Water bodies is taken care by the workers along with "Teertha Mitras". In addition, every month one or two Mass cleaning programmes are organized with the help of local stakeholders such as hoteliers, sangams, students etc.



Training programme on "Cowdung and Biomass based portable Bio-methanation technology" was held at Technology Resource Center on 20th September. 25 participants attended the training. Shri.V.Ramakrishnan was the resource person. The programme was sponsored by NABARD, Chennai.



Participants are eager to know the technology - Bio-methanation

Training programme on "Cowdung and Biomass based portable Bio-methanation technology" was held at Technology Resource Center on 24th September. 19 participants attended the training. Shri.V.Ramakrishnan was the resource person. The programme was sponsored by NABARD, Chennai.



Shri.V.Ramakrishnan explaining the function of Biomethanation plant

Training programme on "Cowdung and Biomass based portable Bio-methanation technology" was held at Technology Resource Center on 28th September. 03 participants attended the training. Shri.Periyaswami was the resource person. The programme was sponsored by NABARD, Chennai.

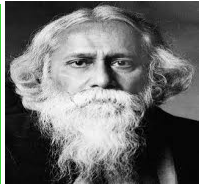


Practical demonstration on 'Bio-methanation technology'



"A mind all logic is like a knife all blade; it makes the hand bleed that uses it"

- Rabindranath Tagore



**Happenings this month:
Renewable Energy
Sources**



Happenings this month:



**Happenings this
month:
Sustainable
Agriculture**

"Waste Water treatment training programme" was held at Namakkal on 23rd September. 60 panchayat Secretaries, Govt. officials attended the training. Shri.V.Ramakrishnan was the resource person.



Shri.V.Ramakrishnan explaining on 'Phyto remediation for Grey Water treatment'

Construction of 3 cum Biogas Plant after a long long gap at Aavadi, Chennai as the party is having 9 - 10 cattle. The plant is constructed under the supervision of Shri.V.Muneeswaran.



NABARD, Chennai have sanctioned a project on "Vermi wash units" in Kanyakumari and Ramanathapuram districts. We have started constructing the units in both the districts.

The technology is unique having multiple benefits such as (i) Conversion of farm waste to good quality vermi compost (ii) Liquid Bio-fertiliser and growth promoter in the form of Vermi wash for daily use (iii) Very good quality earthworms after six months which can be used for multiplying the units or for selling in the market or introducing in the field.

The entire technology is from 'Waste to Wealth' although it requires more labour initially.

*Shri.P.C.Sundaram
Panivillai, Colachal Post
Kanyakumari Dist.*



*Shri.Meenakshi
Sundaram
Erumbukadu,
Rajakamangalam Post
Kanyakumari Dist.*



"Love is an endless mystery, for it has nothing else to explain it"
- Rabindranath Tagore

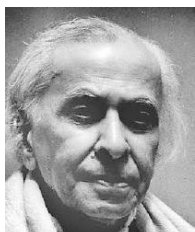


Visions of Wisdom



India's Quest

"India is not a country (desa), it is a perspective (darsana)". The word darsana is important because it is the Indian word for philosophy; it means seeing, experience, vision, perspective, insight and outlook. And what darsana does India embody? Absolute, non-dual consciousness according to Raja Rao. Even if there was no India in a physical, material sense, India as an idea would always exist. As Raja Rao puts it, "India has no enemies. She only has adversaries" and she "has to turn defeat into victory". Thus, if I were to summarise India's quest in one sentence, I would say that it is the quest for Truth - for moksha, nirvana, mukti, Ultimate Reality, God, Siva, parabrahman, kaivalya, Allah, Om, or its equivalent.



Shri. Raja Rao
An Eminent Novelist,
deeply rooted in
Metaphysics



Sewa Vs Service

The English translation of sewa as service does not convey the depth of its meaning. For example, one can be paid for a service but sewa is offered as a gift. Sewa implies devotion and a long term commitment. Sewa is good in itself, irrespective of results, outcomes and achievements. The person performing sewa does not try to change the world but to serve the world.

The person engaged in serving the world accepts his or her limits and offers himself or herself for the wellbeing of the others, believing that the Other is none other than the Self and that the Self is none other than the Other.



Satish Kumar
Editor of the
famous
Resurgence
Magazine



Relationship with the Natural World

It is to this debate about restraint, and the nature of the cosmic order that the spiritual and religious traditions have a great deal to contribute. Whether founded on the belief that the world belongs to the creator, or on a vision of human beings as an integral part of all creation, the teaching of all faith communities is that we have the responsibility to respect and take care not only of each other but also of the earth.

The sense of awe and magnificence of the universe, which is found in all spiritual traditions, from Taoist to the utterances of indigenous spiritual guides must surely act as a guide to how we should relate to the natural world.



Wendy R. Tyndale
was Coordinator for
the World Faiths
Development Dialogue