

Echoes of Eco



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All is One Being

In this issue:

- All is One Being
- Rameshwaram Project : Hanuman Teertham
- The Happenings – I
- The Happenings-II
- Our Publication: Eco-Dharma
- Visions of Wisdom



In the whole of this universe there is but One Existence; and that One Existence when seen through the senses is called the world, the world of matter. When It is seen through the mind, It is called the world of thoughts and ideas; and when It is seen as it is, then It is the One Infinite Being. You must bear this in mind; it is not that there is a soul in man, although I had to take that for granted in order to explain it at first, but that there is only One Existence, and that one the Atman, the Self; and when this is perceived through the senses, through sense-imagery, It is called the body.

When It is perceived through thought, It is called the mind. When It is perceived in Its own nature, It is the Atman, the One Only Existence. So it is not that there are three things in one, the body and the mind and the Self, although that was a convenient way of putting it in the course of explanation; but all is that Atman, and that one Being is sometimes called the body, sometimes the mind, and sometimes the Self, according to different vision. There is but one Being which the ignorant call the world.

When a man goes higher in knowledge, he calls the very same Being the world of thought. Again, when knowledge itself comes, all illusions vanish, and man finds it is all nothing but Atman. I am that One Existence. This is the last conclusion. There are neither three nor two in the universe; it is all One.

When you look at that unchanging Existence from the outside, you call it God; and when you look at it from the inside, you call it yourself. It is but one. There is no God separate from you, no God higher than you, the real "you". All the gods are little beings to you, all the ideas of God and Father in heaven are but your own reflection. God Himself is your image. "God created man after His own image." That is wrong. Man creates God after his own image. That is right. Throughout the universe we are creating gods after our own image. We create the god and fall down at his feet and worship him; and when this dream comes, we love it! This is a good point to understand — that the sum and substance of this lecture is that there is but One Existence...

[Excerpt from the lecture of Swami Vivekananda]

God-Quest: a hymn



*The moon's soft light, the stars so bright,
The glorious orb of day,
He shines in them; His beauty -
might -
Reflected lights are they.
The majestic morn, the melting eve,
The boundless billowing sea,
In nature's beauty, songs of birds,
I see through them - it is He.
'Thou art, ' Thou art'
the Soul of souls
In the rushing stream of life.
'Om tat sat om.'
Thou art my God,
My love, I am thine, I am thine.*

-Swami Vivekananda



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



All is the Self or Brahman. The saint, the sinner, the lamb, the tiger, even the murderer, as far as they have any reality, can be nothing else, because there is nothing else
-Swami Vivekananda



Rameshwaram: Reviving the Sacred Water Teerthams

First Teertham : Hanuman Teertham

After deciding to work on the selected Teerthams it was at Hanuman Teertham that the renovation work of VK-nardep started. It started auspiciously with Puja and then the cleaning process began.



The teertham has an outer and inner pond along with two lateral wells and one central well. Of these one lateral well has been lost forever. The steps to the teertham are shrouded by the growth of thorny shrubs which have grown and occupied the entire footsteps and have also encroached upon the walls surrounding the teertham.

The teertham serves as both rain-water collector as well as ground water recharger. It has a perennial sustained water supplying orifices. However it was found that some septic tank leakages have been linked to the traditional inlets called 'madais' which bring in the rainwater run-off to the teertham. The result has been that for decades the stagnant and increasingly polluted water has become a real health hazard and removing this putrid water is in itself has become a task fit for the Bhagirathas from VK-nardep.



The abandoned Teertham has been used by anti-social elements to indulge in unwanted activities the result of which was that the place has been abandoned and abused by people. The scar of all these activities became visible as the team started removing the polluted stagnant water from the teertham. The thorny bushes were cut and removed and then the putrid water was pumped out without hindrance to the public. It is not an easy task as we have to repeatedly explain to the public the nature of the work and sensitize them as equal stake-holders in the endeavor,



As the thorny bushes are removed and laboriously the water is also pumped out, the public slowly become interested as a new sacred water space unfold before their eyes. They start realizing that this is also their own asset. Such an awareness is also essential for the successful completion of renovation as for example this awareness makes people volunteer for a space to let out the bad water sucked out of the pond. A nearby resident did volunteer his ground for moving the bad water which is very important as otherwise that would have created a problem in itself.



Removal of thorny encroachments and then pumping out of the putrid stagnant water thus providing a clean space for the fresh water in the Teertham and providing access to the public to own and maintain the Teertham are the crucial steps in the renovation process. The process threw up some interesting challenges as the project progressed.



Those that want to help mankind must take their own pleasure and pain, name and fame, and all sorts of interests, and make a bundle of them and throw them into the sea, and then come to the Lord. That is what all the masters said and did.

-Swami Vivekananda



First Teertham : Hanuman Teertham [contd.]

Now the volunteers and workers got into the field of the Teertham. The dirty water was slowly ebbing out as it was getting removed. The one lateral well came into focus and as the hands moved into clean the water body, we could discover the utter disrespect with which the water body has been treated by anti-social cultural illiterates. Yes... a large number of liquor bottles were recovered from the Teertham and it is almost a miracle that the bottles and the strong glass pieces littered did not pierce the hands of the workers –even with gloves.



Depressing this sight is, the positive aspect is that people started volunteering their service to the people who were cleaning up the mess of decades. For example, a retired military person made arrangement for tea for the workers. Such small mercies show that the nation is still living and living strong.



Now the inner-pond has become visible. Along with that the inner central well has also become visible. Now the work of cleaning the lateral well began. Meanwhile the team encountered another small curious event. A goat was found dead in the waters and when the body was removed there arose a suspicion that the goat might have been killed by a serpent.

Of course the local customs and traditions do speak about Serpent guardians of water bodies and ‘Naga dosha’ related to polluting or abusing a water body – well implanted cultural control to develop an ecological ethic. So the goat’s death was associated with serpents prevalent in the water bodies, which was not exactly an incentive for people working in the waters. People working in the waters also reported a serpentine like creatures moving by their sides. As serpents do not ‘live’ in waters, perhaps what they encountered or believed was most probably eels or fishes with serpentine like bodies. Thus it was reasoned and the work continued. Soon the people discovered from the lateral well a stone peetham or ceremonial base and very soon they also discovered the Deity installed in that peetham – a Siva Linga under a serpent in stone.



Real serpents too were encountered but all that did not inhibit the pace of the work any more. Decades long pollution has been successfully battled. The steps were restored and water has begun to flow fresh. The encroachments and pollution effluents which have

been flowing through the inlets have been removed with the help of the surrounding community. Now Hanuman Teertham is getting renovated and revived with the dedicated work of VK-nardep



Cleaning and de-silting is only the first step and many other works are to be carried out in the coming months.



Be not afraid, for all great power throughout the history of humanity has been with the people. From out of their ranks have come all the greatest geniuses of the world, and history can only repeat itself. Be not afraid of anything. You will do marvelous work
Swami Vivekananda



This Month ...



This Month ...



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



Networking Activities

Holistic Health



Green Health Home in 7 days treated 109 patients and offered them indigenous health solutions.

VK-nardep organized workshop on “Ethno-Medical Science” on 5th and 6th of this month at Technology Resource Centre Kalluvillai. 72 persons attended and Dr.Ganapathy was the resource person.



A demonstration by the traditional physicians to the participants: A session in progress at the workshop on ethnic medicine. These workshops serve to share and conserve traditional medical knowledge of southern Tamil Nadu.

VK-nardep and Ayyappa College for Women, Chunkankadai organized a National seminar on “Environmental Security for Sustainable Development” at the college auditorium on 15th and 16th March. 250 students and staff attended the seminar.



Ayyappa College Students purchasing herbal products from our SHG members.

400 farmers from Virudunagar Dist visited Gramodaya Park on 7th and 19th. The programme was organised by District Watershed Development Agency, Virudhunagar. 110 from Trichy visited Gramodaya Park on 12th as part of their Exposure Visit.



Farmers at Gramodaya Park: listening to the lecture during their exposure visit.

Farmers Awareness Programme and Buyer – Seller meet

- It was organized by National Institute of Agricultural Marketing, Jaipur, Rajasthan and was held at Technology Resource Centre, Kalluvillai on 13th and 14th of this month.
- 71 farmers attended the programme and benefitted. The resource persons included: Dr.P.Kamalasanan Pillai, Shri.Sankar, Asst.General Manager, NABARD, Shri.Elango, Dy.Director, Seed Certification, Tirunelveli

Training programme on “Azolla Cultivation Technology as broad spectrum feed” was held at Vivekananda Kendra – NARDEP, TRC, Kalluvilai for 2 participants on 23rd and Dr.P.Kamalasanan Pillai was the resource person.



Dr.Kamalasanan Pillai taking an interactive session at Buyers and Sellers Meet.



Participants learning hands-on the cost-effective construction technologies.

Cost-effective Construction



Training programme for “Engineers and Supervisors” were held at Rural Building Center, TRC Kalluvillai for 33 professionals on 28th and 29th of this month. The event was organized by BMTPC, New Delhi. The Resource Person was Er.V.Ramakrishnan.



By doing well the duty which is nearest to us, the duty which is in our hands now, we make ourselves stronger; and improving our strength in this manner step by step, we may reach a state in which it shall be our privilege to do the most coveted and honored duties in life and in society.
Swami Vivekananda



Happenings: This month



Happenings: This month



Participants of Bio-Methanation plant training programme listening during a hands-on session.

One day Workshop on “Kitchen Waste based Bio-Methanation Plant (Shakti Surabhi) was conducted at TRC, Kalluvillai on 23rd. The programme was supported by DST Core support. 16 persons attended the programme and Shri.V.Ramakrishnan was the main resource person. Participants showed a lot of interest; many wanted to install the plant while there were others interested in green entrepreneurship. All were unanimous that green technology of this kind needs more awareness and should become a people’s movement across the state.

On the first of this month a workshop on “Green Energy and Protection against Nuclear Hazards” was held at SASTRA University, Thanjavur. 1000 people attended this workshop. Er.V.Ramakrishnan presented a paper and presentation on Shakthi Surabi Bio-methanation plant.



Er.Ramakrishnan giving Shakti Surabhi Presentation at SASTRA University.

Training programme on “Bio-methanation Technology” was conducted on 9th of this month for 50 persons which was organized by Tamilnadu Senior Agro-technologists Forum, Tirunelveli, at TANSAF, Tirunelveli. Resource Person was Er.V.Ramakrishnan. The programme was sponsored by Petroleum conservation Research Association (PCRA), Chennai.



Happenings: This month



An exposure visit of 25 farmers was organized by ATMA, Sankarankovil, Dept. of Agriculture, Govt. of Tamilnadu on 30th to Gramodaya Park & TRC at Kanyakumari. They learned Biomethanation technology, rain-water harvesting and Organic farming technologies.



Er.V.Ramakrishnan delivering a lecture on Bio-methanation plant at Senior-Agro-technologists Forum.



ATMA farmers getting exposure to Azolla technology and other farming techniques at TRC Kalluvillai.



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. Delusion will vanish as the light becomes more and more effulgent, load after load of ignorance will vanish, and then will come a time when all else has disappeared and the sun alone shines. – Swami Vivekananda



From our Publications

Principles of Eco-Dharma

Dharma is ever eternal and ever dynamic. It is all possibilities of growth and expansion. Eco-Dharma is Dharma principles for the sustainable future for not only all humanity but for all existence in the web of life. These principles of eco-dharma are given by Henryk Skolimowski from his 'Ecology and Dharma in the Third Millenium'. This is an excerpt from our publication: 'Akshaya Vikas –Sustainable Development'



ECO DHARMA



1. Live simply so that others may simply live.
2. Practise frugality. Frugality is grace without waste.
3. Vote judiciously. We vote most eloquently with our lifestyles.
4. Eat simple food which is grown locally and which (preferably) is vegetarian.
5. Keep your confidence, keep believing in yourself, keep believing in the future.
6. As we are, so we think, so we behave - so we create the environment around ourselves. Purify yourself, keep clean within, create inner peace - then you will be capable of creating right environments. The inner temple and the outer temple are aspects of each other.
7. Our Dharma has many aspects, many layers, many depths. In our times Dharma has been extended to include our care for Mother Earth. Eco-Dharma is a new blossoming of Dharma. Keep Eco-Dharma in your mind and heart all the time. Inspire others with this Dharma.
8. Your harmony with nature and other beings is a prerequisite for living sanely. Maintain this harmony. Develop right consciousness, which is holistic and ecological, based on compassion, cooperation, peace.
9. Walk in beauty. Embrace the universe reverentially. This will lead you to a spiritual path. Following this path will lead you to genuine happiness.
10. The main aim of Eco-Dharma is to make ourselves sacred while taking all creation with us.



A failure to uphold these ideals encourages mindless consumerism based on greed and unfair competition leading to total eco-destruction and along with that destruction of human species .



They alone live whose lives are in the whole universe, and the more we concentrate our lives on limited things, the faster we go towards death. Those moments alone we live when our lives are in the universe, in others; and living this little life is death, simply death, and that is why the fear of death comes.

-Swami Vivekananda



The Way

Now, when you actually dispose of these problems, you are moving in the other direction. Instead of multiplying problems, you are multiplying solutions. If you actually move people into small communities, you are solving a host of problems. You are providing a vast number of occupations of all sorts for people.

Not only are you cutting down on energy consumption, you are solving the problem of acid rain. You are cutting down your dependence on resources which have to be provided from elsewhere – on oil in the Middle East. There is a catalogue of problems that you solve, just by moving in the right direction.

So we have no alternative, really, but to return to the Way. Having said that, we cannot re-constitute the past. Quite clearly, we have been marked indelibly by the experience of the last few hundred years. So all we can do is return in that direction and move in a direction, and create a society, which will have a lot to do with, and which will have a lot in common with the societies of the past, and which can, and must obviously be inspired by their experience, but which will not be the exactly same. The new society will be clearly influenced by what we've done in the last 150 years, for better or for worse.



The Change

Even today the world is a pure divine thing. When it passes through our mind by "My terms and my experiences", we poison it with our own false thinking, false ideas and false values. Think, all living organisms are responding and reacting to the world around us. This is called Life. There is not a single moment when you are not responding and reacting to the world. These responses and reactions at the body level in the world are called "work" or "action". We are all active, dynamic people because we are alive. But your actions are totally different from another individual even when the conditions are the same. Under the same circumstances, threats or joys, the environment remains the same and each individual responds differently. Why? Responses to the world are ordered by, determined by, guided by my thoughts. It is subjective. All actions are expressions of our minds. If we smile, that is your thought. If you growl, it is your thought. If you punch his nose flat, that is a thought. Good, bad or indifferent, all actions are expressions of our minds, our thoughts. We have to move into a process of reaching out to that greater state of consciousness. Or call it God-state consciousness. A broader shoulder to take the responsibility of the sorrows of the world upon your own shoulder. "I am the cause for the sorrows of the world". You change and the world will change.



The Connection

The vast space-time continuum of the internal spiritual life of the individual corresponds to the outer universe of the phenomenal world. It pulsates with limitless energy manifest in many different forms-- compassion, love, wisdom, reason, emotion, desire, and impulse and so on. Each instant, this energy bursts forth to interact with the external universe, creating a new self and a new world. When the inner universe exists in dynamic harmony, life energy is transformed creatively into compassion, love, wisdom and reason.

But when the inner universe has lost its essential rhythm, that energy takes negative, aggressive, domineering forms like greed and destructive impulses, which convert the inner life into a desolate wasteland....since the ecological system of the planet, human social relations and the individual inner life are all mutually connected, the harmonizing powers of compassion and wisdom can effect a transformation that becomes a basis for solving the complex of global problems. Humanity and nature, human society and the inner universe are all intimately interrelated, and the life force of human beings is always the main axis of reform for all three.



-Edward Goldsmith
Environmentalist



-Swami
Chinmayananda
Vedantic Monk



-Daisaku Ikeda
Buddhist educationist