

Echoes of Eco



September, 2012

Vivekananda Kendra- **nardep** Newsletter

Vol:4 No:7

Designing a course in Ecology



The course in ecology and the teacher's life need to be grounded in awe and empowerment, not doom and gloom. I needed to say "yes" to life. In redesigning the course, I thought of the tens of thousands of college students who take general ecology/environment-type courses each year, as well as the many upper-level high school students who are offered courses in the realm of environmental studies. And I asked myself, "What do these students—indeed, what do all of us—need to know to become more environmentally literate and ecologically conscious?" As I pondered this question, the word, "awaken" kept popping into my head. So, I rephrased the question, "What do we need to AWAKEN to?" The answers came quickly: first, to the awe and wonder of the living Earth; second, to the dreadful beating we are inflicting on Earth and each other; and, third, to our collective capacity to reverse present trends and create a lifesustaining and just world.

After completing the first draft of this book, it was clear to me that something important was missing. In fact, I was ready to scrap the whole project because it seemed to lack vitality. Feeling frustrated, I went on a retreat.

I spent my days in sitting and walking meditation. One evening, as I was reflecting on the role of meditation practices in cultivating awareness, I realised that the book was only half written. The book's foundations were, indeed, ecological teachings which engaged the intellect, but to be fully absorbed—fully embodied—these teachings needed to be accompanied by practices which awakened the heart. After the retreat, I went back to work with renewed energy, determined to invite heart into the book by offering "practices" alongside each of the book's thirty foundations. In developing the practices for each individual foundation, I asked myself, "What could someone actually do, as a regular practice, to explore, fully and deeply, the essence of the ecological teaching contained within the foundation?" Collectively, the practices are invitations to experience the full spectrum of what it means to be alive.

Prof. Christopher Uhl is the author of the book 'Developing Ecological Consciousness: Paths to a Sustainable Future'. This is an excerpt from the Preface to his book. Here he explains how meditatively he drafted the book and course on ecology for his students at Penn State University.

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The Warp and Woof of All Existence



***Thou art the fire,
Thou art the sun,
Thou art the air,
Thou art the moon,
Thou art the starry firmament,
Thou art Brahman Supreme,
Thou art the water – Thou
The creator of all!...
Filled with Brahman are the things
we see;
Filled with Brahman floweth all
that is;
From Brahman all – yet is he still
the same
- Svetasvatara Upanishad.***



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



The internal universe, the real is infinitely greater than the external, which is only a shadow projection of the true one. This world is neither true nor untrue, it is the shadow of the truth.

- Swami Vivekananda



Andhra Newspaper featuring VK-nardep Bio-methanation plant.



Water and Sanitation

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

This month... Media



Popular vernacular newspaper from Andhra Pradesh made a newspaper feature on Bio-methanation technology on 20th of this month.

Puthiya Thalaimurai TV - a popular private Tamil channel from Chennai made a story on cost-effective backyard Azolla technology with Azolla as broad-spectrum bio-feed. It was telecast on 30th of this month. The program featured Dr.Kamalasannan Pillai, senior scientist of VK-nardep.



Workshop on “Green technologies for Sustainable Agriculture” was held at Gargaon, Wada, Dist.Thane from 1st of September to 3rd. It was organized by Eklavya Swavalamban Trust, Mumbai. 34 participants attended and benefitted from the camp. The resource person was Dr.P.Kamalasanan Pillai the senior scientist at VK-nardep.

Workshop on Azolla cultivation was conducted at VK-nardep on 22nd for 2 farmers and the resource person was Smt.S.Premalatha

Workshop on Sustainable Agriculture was conducted at VK-nardep campus, organised by Vidyal Trust, Vilathikulam, Thoothukkudi Dist. on 28th and 42 persons attended and benefitted from the camp. The resource persons were Sis. V.Saraswathi, Smt.S.Premalatha and Shri.S.Rajamony.



Sri.Muneeswaran explaining the intricacies of Shakthi-Surabhi Bio-Methanation plant to the training camp participants.



Azolla Goes on Air: Highly Popular Tamil TV channel does a special programme on Azolla in its green technology show.



We are aware that our children and the future generations have a right to a world which will also need energy, should be free of pollution, should be rich with biological diversity and should have a climate which will sustain all forms of life.
–Wangari Maathai



Polytechnic students learning Renewable energy technologies.



This month... Networking

63 Students of VV College of Engineering, Tisaiyanvilai, Tirunelveli Dist. visited Gramodaya Park, Vivekanandapuram on 8th and learned “Bio-methanation technology”

60 Students of Rotary Club Matriculation Hr.Sec. School, Mayiladuthurai visited Gramodaya Park, Vivekanandapuram on 21st as part of their study tour and learned different “Sustainable technologies”.

Seminar on “Environmental Rules and technologies available for recycling Industrial Waste” was organized by Industrial Waste Management Association; Chennai at Hotel Green Park, Chennai on 22nd and 250 persons attended it. Shri.G.Vasudeo presented a paper on “Waste to Wealth”.

Dist. Watershed Development Agency, Dindigul arranged study tours of SHG members in two batches on 25th and 27th to Gramodaya Park, Vivekanandapuram. In each batch 100 SHG members learned Bio-formulation technologies.

95 Students of Kerala Agricultural University Students, Vellayani visited Gramodaya Park, Vivekanandapuram on 30th as part of the study tour. Dr.Kamalasanan Pillai explained about Sustainable Agricultural technologies.



Workshop events: practical and multi-faceted – Workshop on ‘Traditional Medical Practices – Nadi Chikitsa’.



Happenings: This month for Holistic Medicine

Green Health Home of VK-nardep functioned at Vivekanandapuram for 6 days and treated 137 patients.

Workshop for the documentation on “Traditional Medical Practices – Nadi Chikitsa” was organised by VK-nardep and was conducted at Vivekanandapuram on 28th Sept. 69 Vaidyas and interested persons attended the workshop and benefitted from it.

Dr.V.Ganapathy and his team served as the resource persons for the event.



SHG members learning the different green technologies in an open-air session at VK-nardep Gramodaya Park. Totally 200 SHG members attended and benefitted from the study tours.



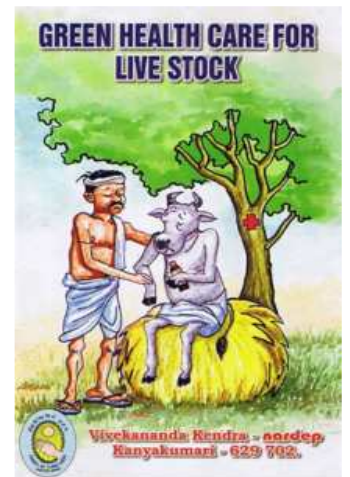
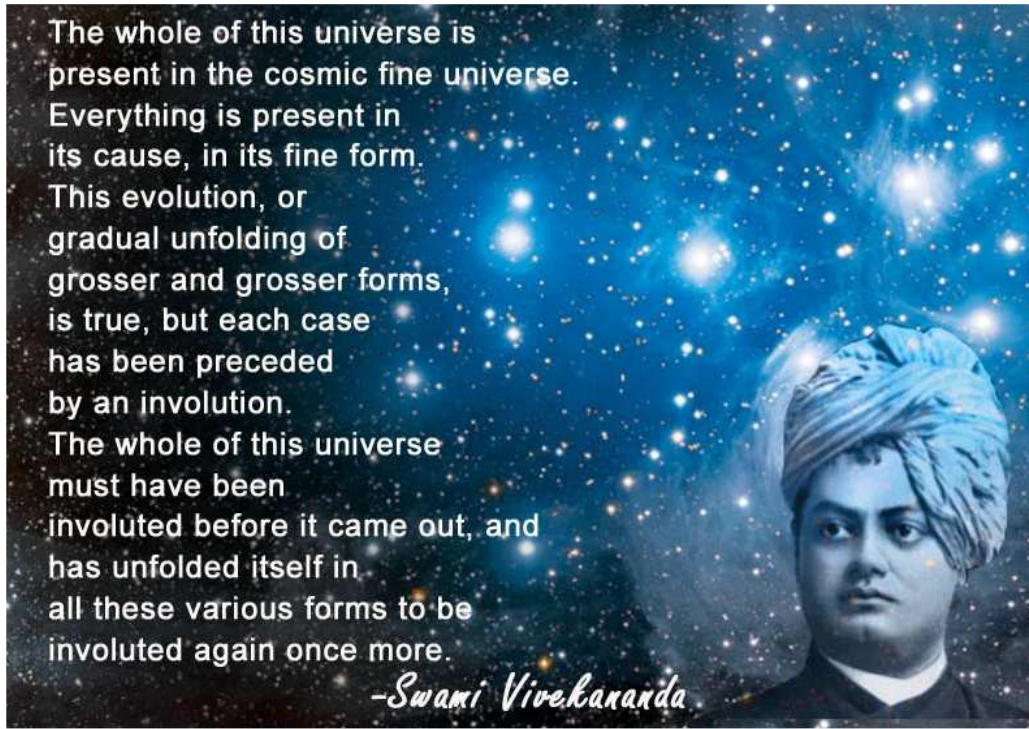


There is an indefinable mysterious Power that pervades everything. I feel it, though I do not see it. It is the unseen Power which makes itself felt and yet defies all proof, because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. It transcends the senses.
-Mahatma Gandhi



Swami Vivekananda on Nature, Universe and Humanity: Swami Vivekananda 150 years (1863 - 2013)

Read our Books to Live Green and Clean



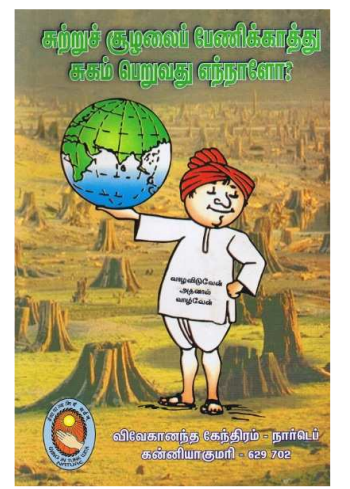
**How to feed the future humanity?
How to make development sustainable?
Some of the best publications on the subject for layman and professionals alike are from VK-nardep.
Contact: The Secretary, Vivekananda Kendra-NARDEP
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This month... Shakthi Surabhi

This month training programme on Bio-methanation plant (supported by DST, New Delhi) was conducted at TRC, Kalluvilai on 22nd. Er. Ramakrishnan was the resource person. 13persons attended.

Workshop on "Non-conventional energy resources" was held at Extension Centre, Kolancode on 26th of this month and 55 students attended the workshop. Shri.V.Ramakrishnan was the resource person and the function was organized by Govt. Polytechnic College, Konnam, Nagercoil.

21 numbers 1 cum portable Shakthi Surabhi Bio-methanation plants have been sent to Goa.

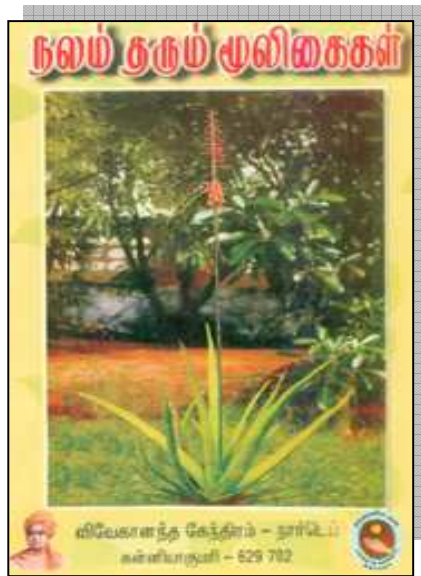




How can we draw a line of demarcation, and say, here the physical ends, and there the physiological begins? Such absolute barriers do not exist...They who see but one, in all the changing, manifoldness of this Universe, unto them belongs Eternal Truth – unto none else, unto none else. – Jagadish Chandra Bose



From Our Publications



'Beneficial Herbs' (Nalam Tharum Muligaikal –Tamil) is one of the books by VK-nardep that is always in demand and hence undergoes frequent reprints.

This book is a hand-held exhibition of medicinal plants. For each plant this book provides the identification, a very good color photo, the botanical name, vernacular name, nature of the plant, the medicinal use of the specific parts of the plant and the general places of availability of the plant.

With common ailments plaguing the society with changing life style, presence of simple but effective and green remedies in one's own backyard can very easily cut into the medical expenditures of every household and that is the significance of this book.



The language is simple and easy to understand. The format is uniform throughout thus making the reading and usage of the book very reader-friendly.

The plants that are detailed in this book are commonly available local plants widespread in South India. So anyone –from a primary school student to a medical professional- can make use of this book and collect the plants and use them

The book narrates totally 50 common medicinal plants including Hibiscus, Aloe-vera, Vitex, Indian gooseberry, lotus, Cynodon dactylon (Arukam grass) and many others. For every plant a detailed description is given and the color plate makes the reader easily identify the plant. Some of these plants have religious significance and all of them have medicinal and ecological importance. Author of the book is the noted botanist Dr.V.Chella durai.

Title: Nallam Tharum Muligaikal (Tamil)
Pages: 87
First Edition: 1999 Fourth reprint:2012
Price Rs 70/-

First Year Tribute to a woman visionary [Sep-26-2011]



Do not underestimate what each one of you will do wherever you find yourself. I want to tell you that when things become very difficult, which they will do, no matter how dark or how clouded, if you look very deeply and finely, you will always find a silver lining. Sometimes the silver lining is extremely thin, but just look and you will definitely find it. Hold onto that. That's your hope.



Wangari Maathai, the Kenyan environmentalist began a movement to reforest her country by paying poor women a few shillings to plant trees. She was the first African woman to win a Nobel Peace Prize. She died on Sep-26-2011. We remember her on her first death anniversary.



Nature sings her most exquisite songs to those who love her. She does not unfold her secrets to those who come only to gratify their desire of analysis, to gather facts, but to those who see in her manifold phenomena suggestions of lofty, delicate sentiment.
-Helen Keller



Conscious Planet

At last scientists are acknowledging that many traits of an organism, ranging from behavior to survivorship, are dependent upon, setting upon relationship, upon connectedness to other organisms in the web of life. The strands have become as interesting as the nodes, and as a result the scientific study of modeling these connections has also become a burgeoning field of study. In the 1979 classic, Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth, James Lovelock took one step beyond ecology. He presented the idea that an all-encompassing web of connections exists between the earth and all things on the earth, and that this vast net could be considered a single organism: One is in All and Many is in One. He called this super-organism Gaia.

Although the Gaia Hypothesis was first presented and discussed in scientific circles, where it remains controversial to this day, the vast collection of essays Scientists Debate Gaia: The Next Century shows that in no time at all Gaia was being celebrated in music, art, literature, and religion. It was as if we knew all along that everything was interrelated and at last the contemporary culture had a name for our oneness: Gaia.



Joan Maloof
Ecologist



Conscious Evolution

The change into another species is by the filling in of nature. Patanjali has advanced the proposition that these powers come by birth, sometimes by chemical means, or through mortification. He also admits that this body can be kept for any length of time. Now he goes on to state, what is the cause of the change of the body into another species. He says this is done by the filling in of nature... The great ancient evolutionist, Patanjali, declares that the true secret of evolution is the manifestation of the perfection which is already in every being; that this perfection has been barred and the infinite tide behind is struggling to express itself. These struggles and competitions are but the results of our ignorance, because we do not know the proper way to unlock the gate and let the water in. This infinite tide behind must express itself; it is the cause of all manifestation....Therefore there is no reason to believe that competition is necessary to progress. In the animal the man was suppressed, but as soon as the door was opened, out rushed man. So in man there is the potential God, kept in by the locks and bars of ignorance. When knowledge breaks these bars, the God becomes manifest.



Swami Vivekananda



Conscious Nature

Nature is a conscious force which knows what it wants, does it in its own way, knowing where it is going and its roads: it itself chooses them...

Nature has a plan, it has a conscious will, it is altogether a conscious-entity - it can't be called a being, for it is not in the same proportion. When we speak of a being with our human consciousness, we immediately imagine a human being, perhaps a little larger or much larger, but still functioning always in the same way. That is why I don't call it a being, but it is a conscious entity, a conscious will doing things consciously, deliberately, and having formidable forces at its disposal. It is also said that the forces of Nature are blind and violent. But it is not at all that! It is man in his relative proportion with Nature who judges like that. When there is an earthquake, many islands are engulfed and millions of people killed. People say: "This Nature is monstrous."

From the human point of view this Nature is monstrous. What has it done? It has wrought a cataclysm. But just think how in jumping or running or doing something or other, you get a good knock and turn black and blue. It is the same thing for our cells as an earthquake; you destroy a huge number of cells! It is a question of proportion.



- The Mother