

A BRIEF REPORT ABOUT THE ACTIVITIES OF DR G NAMMALVAR

The last one year happened to be year of events. The world faced serious calamities like flood drought Earthquake, Tsunami, Cloudbursts and Wars. Nation is facing a crisis in the farm sector due to wrong planning and corrupt practices. As a result, millions of people especially women and children are suffering due to starvation hunger and mal-nutrition. They are deprived of nutrition, health, shelter, education and water to drink.

Part of the above said calamities are natural and part of them is man made. Those socio-economic political issues demand the time and effort of social activists. At the same time the grass root activities also claims much of our attention.

Our farm "ASHA GARDEN" was used as a practical demonstration for the trainees who come from nook and corner of the state. We have made a history by converting a degraded land into an ecological show piece within a short span of one year. It is visible that our team members are also growing along the growth of the farm. As the soil is improving we become curious to see the earthworm working inside the raised beds. The bio-diversity that has been developed serves to meet the needs of soil health, animal fodder, and food need seasonally. Starting a few months back a plant nursery is established to meet out the needs of the farming community. Recently we joined hands with the local higher elementary school (at Kadavur) in making the school campus green. We hope to create homestead gardens through the children.

We increased our poultry goat, sheep and cattle numbers and we faced a fodder scarcity during the dry period of April to August and we were forced to reduce the number.

In the other part of the farm, the plant wild Indigo, a self sown green manure crop started growing and taking charge of the soil fertility building. Our friends have given twenty four acres of land to be used for trial, experiments and training. Vanagam could buy thirty five acres of land. We have five acres of land on lease. So the team members were fully engaged in fencing, planning, designing and planting.

Friends in the public works department came to help by digging three rain water collection ponds.

We had to work hard during summer months to device rain water harvesting mechanisms. If I tell in short our farm campus is emerging as a full fledged centre of learning and healing.

In the first week of June 2010 we celebrated a five day festival covering nature cure, herbal cure, acupressure, farming and environment. At the end of the festival three persons of our team attended training in healing through acupressure. I am pleased to put it an record that our project coordinator supported by Asha Scholarship for the last two years has become a healer and curing more and more number of patience who suffer due to chronic disease.

I was invited by Rotary Clubs, Lion Clubs, Colleges, Schools and NGO's to give talk on bio-diversity, climate change, food safety and security

and ecological farming.

Isha yoga centre has chosen Vanagam campus for exposure campus for their school children. Gurudevar matriculation higher secondary school combining with Bharathidhasan University, Tiruchirappalli is starting a Diploma course in organic farming for which our book forms the curriculum.

Two voluntary groups' vision 2020 and Development Promotion Group brought their farmers and underwent three day training on integrated organic agriculture and our messages are being carried to far of places.

Every month my articles were published in five monthlies. Friends in the media circles supported us in taking our views to a large section of the society whom I could not reach by person.

We could publish two books in 2010. the first one, Vayirrukku Choridal Vendum", (We need to feed the stomachs) was published with Asha Fund. "Thanal" an NGO has come with an offer to publish English version of the book. The book deals with the history of rice cultivation, manipulation of modern scientists and scope for future prosperity.

The second book "Thai Mon" (Mother Earth), (Vanagam Publication), is a compilation of all the subjects to be covered in a one year training course. Already a eco-school has started a course in April 2010, a school near kumbakonam keep in this book "Thai Mon" as the curriculum. Organic Farming Association of India has come forward

to publish the English version of the book and our friend Jesuit Father John Kennedy who is academician-cum-environmental activist is doing the translation.

Anantha Vikatan published a book "Uzhavukkum Undu Varalaru" (A Compilation of my articles published in "Pasumai Vikatan") which serves as an eye opener for persons entering organic farming. The book has been sold as a hot cake.

Our booklet "Organic Farming Basics" serves as a hand book for reference for the farmers of a wide range.

We are using our video camera and documenting the events and developments. I will arrange to send an edited copy of the CD soon.

Our friend, Bennet Benjamin as member of Churches of South Indian provided an opportunity to have organic farming workshops in Nagercoil (Tamilnadu), Vadakkancheri (Kerala), Hyderabad (Andhra Pradesh) and Thalavadi (Karnataka). The CSI has vast hand area kept follow and the church is having lot of farmers in their fold. Therefore, this campaign plays an important role.

700 farmers have joined together to form poison free food producers association. Dividing the district into five regions they are conducting training for farmers and gardeners and they issue certificates. Rural uplift centre, headed by Mr Maria James, plays the pivotal role in these developments. At present, the district collector, Rajendra Rathnoo takes special effort in taking forward organic agriculture throughout the district.

Green shops are functioning in Trivandrum, Nagercoil, Madurai, Thanjavur, Kumbakonam, Erode, Coimbatore, Tiruppur and Chennai.

Vanagam and Newgen the internationally known foundation headed by Mr Prabhakar Ram have initiated the action on carbon print in the second half of 2010, I foresee a leap forward in this direction as the agro-forestry alone can be the solution for many problems faced by Indian agriculture through mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

Millet network and South Action on Genetic Engineering network provide platform for our involvement.

At present Vanagam has generated and conserved its own vegetable seeds. In the coming year we will be having our own seeds for all millet, pulses and oil seeds crops.

CREATE the NGO closely related to us is able to conserve and multiply forty nine traditional varieties and the seeds have been distributed among one thousand five hundred farmers of the state.

The district collector Namakkal, Mr Sahayam motivated the farmers and conducted two seminar and one exhibition on organic farming. All the departments connected with farming like Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandary, forest were instructed to come together to publish a magazine and conduct the seminar. Our farmer Mr Muthusamy received the award for successful organic farmer. Nammalvar was asked to present the key note address.

The district collector, of Thiruvarur is fully convinced about organic farming, Thiruvarur district. Rice bowl of Tamilnadu, suffer inundation of water during rainy season. So the conventional rice varieties which are dwarf get submerged under water resulting in loss of produce and as such income. Now, our campaigns for traditional rice varieties are cultivated by farmers with great success with the support of the district collector.

Organic farming association of India has recognized Vanagam as the facilitator of certification of organic farms under PGS (Participatory Guarantee System). Our friendly NGO, TEDE Trust conducted a series of training for their women farmers. And at the end of one year joining hands with farmers of Nagapattinam district TEDE Trust has opened a market or organic products at Palaiyur. Part of its farm is being converted into fish ponds (No water scarcity). Indigenous breeding bulls maintained in the farm. Serves as a centre for cattle upgrading.

Vanagam as part of the organic movement is working on creation of organic farming policy in the state of Kerala. Our involvement supported by "Thanal" NGO Kerala and the bio-diversity board have trained the farmers (67 families) cultivating 400 acres in organic farming and proved that organic farming alone can protect land, water, animals, humans and wild bio-diversity.

Mullakara Ratnakaran Minister of Agriculture, Kerala after getting convinced has ordered training of officials from agricultural department on organic farming.

We were requested to impart training for farmers in Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh also.

Initiative on Women in Development is planning to have women owned collective farms in organic way in nine states of India. It conducted two workshops in New Delhi and Tamilnadu. IWID brought farming women to Vanagam to get an in depth knowledge about organic farming. IWID expects Vanagam to provide consultancy service in establishing model farms in different states.

As such 2009-2010 was a very busy year for "VANAGAM". Of course, we have our own weakness also.

- ▲ There is a need to improve our infra structure (Buildings). Essential sector like office, library, residence, health centre, cultural centre, play ground, bio-gas plant, other alternative energy sources etc., we may need one Crore rupees to have our centre full fledged.
- ▲ Just now we have erected one bore well for which we expect very soon to have electric connection. With the above said deficiencies we have to improve our documentation capability.

Even though Kadavur is part of Karur district. Our centre is located in a place that has close access to Dindugal and Trichy districts. All the three are drought prone districts occupied by resource poor farmers. These are the districts where in farmer's produce and consumer nutrient rich millet crops. Goat and sheep rearing plays a major role

in supporting the family income. Vast area still remain fallow because of low and scanty rainfall patterns. So, there is a scope of expanding our activities on carbon print.

If we could access some funding sources we will be able to carryout aforestation activity that will support the local community and benefit the donors.

Yours Sincerely,

G Nammalvar
Managing Trustee, Vanagam.