

Bio-diversity Research Camp

Research Report

By

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✦ Our Bio-diversity research camp started with an inauguration, at the District Forest Office at Vadasery, Nagercoil on February 14, 2009. The gathering was welcomed by our Organizer Thiru. Mullanchery M. Velaian. Shri. Sundararaju , IFS, District Forest Officer, in his Presidential address gave us information regarding the forest ecosystem. He told us about the formation of coral reefs and their role in the ocean ecosystem. He also told us that these reefs are the dwelling places for fishes and other aquatic life. He showed us the pictures of various species of hornbills and described their significance. We were



felicitated by Thiru. Rajadhurai- Advocate Nagercoil, Tmt. Jane Catherine-Principal, Belfield Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Thiru. Joeprakash- Coordinator, National Green Corps, Thiru. Mangavillai T. Rajendran-All India Radio, Scientists

Shri.S.Ingersol, Shri. P.Murugan and Shri. A. Benzigar Rajan. The foresters Thiru.Chellan and Thiru. Dharmaraj promised us that the varieties of lives and sceneries in the forest would be enjoyable and different one.

🌿 Our journey started from there to Maramalai at 9:50 a.m., by the transport arranged by Smt. Jane Catherine-Principal, Belfield Matriculation Higher Secondary School. We enjoyed the way to the hills and asked doubts to our scientists, convenors and guide teachers, regarding whatever we saw all through the way.

🌿 On the way we saw various trees like forest flames, Eucalyptus, Rubber, Areca nut, Palm, Sarva suganthi, Coconut, Rose wood, etc. We also saw the Nilgiri Langur, monkeys and a different variety of squirrel. We went along the Balamore cloves estate and we came to know that they were in an area of 36 hectares. Near the Keeripaarai area, we saw the rivers of Maasupathy, Paambaaru and Chittaaru.

🌿 We reached Maramalai at 12 pm. We were overwhelmed by the hospitality of the CMS staff.

🌿 Shri. Mangavillai T. Rajendran provided us with an ocean of information regarding the environment of Kanyakumari district, since the ages. They are-

- The 2004 tsunami was very destructive because of the absence of coral reefs. The tsunami on 26 August 1883 that originated from the island of Crocadova was the most powerful one ever in history, but it was not so destructive because people built mud walls in between the sea and the shore, which acted as a fort. The intake of seawater during this tsunami at Kanyakumari beach was beyond the Vivekananda



rock. (During this period, it was just a bare rock with no mandapam on it). The British and the local fisherman at that time found a mandapam with a bronze door near this rock. The fishermen tried to open the door during the gap of intake of water and the British people prevented them from going into the sea realizing the seriousness of the ferocious water.

- In olden days there were seven small countries in Kanyakumari- Kurathaayi naadu, Naanjil naadu, Venadu, Valluva naadu, Padappa naadu, Thenga naadu and Midala naadu, and only Naanjil naadu can be seen now.
- Being blessed with two monsoons, the raising of two crops in a year is easy. Besides, this has made Kanyakumari, the only District in the State, which offers off-season mangoes. This, again, is conducive to general diversification of agriculture.
- In Muthukuzhi vayal, we can see a lot of fresh water mussels and a plant belonging to the variety of the Jaadhikkai family. This plant can hold a lot of water for a long time and then it can be used during the dry season. This Muthukuzhi Vayal is the source of water for Kanyakumari district. It is a perennial river.
- In earlier days, people worshipped Sun as their God, in various names such as Helios, Apollo, etc. In future i.e.- 460 crores years after, the Sun would become a Red giant and would absorb all the planets.
- The Silver Oak tree found in the forests of Maramalai, acts as a natural lightning conductor. The Sarva suganthi tree found in the forest, gives the essence of all the spices. The pine tree is used to make currency notes. The rosewood tree is the most

costly tree in the world. It costs Rs. 52,000/cubic meter.

- A type of leech, which is only about 1cm long, sucks blood out of our body. When it sucks more blood, it gets fatter and it grows to length of 1 inch. The interesting factor in this is that it sucks blood only from the veins and not from the arteries. Hence, it is used in the medicinal field to treat certain types of diseases.
- Foreigners and emperors of other countries invaded India just to plunder our wealth after attracted by the riches and fertility of the soil. One such person was Alexander the Great. Whenever he went to defeat the kings of various countries of the world, no one opposed him. However, when he came to India, the ruler of Rajputh was ready to oppose him. Alexander accepted his failure and returned to his country.
- Once Srilanka and India were joined and was known as the Lemuria Continent. Due to the tsunami in 1883, the countries were separated. We were able say that the Tamilians were the original inhabitants of Srilanka as they are found along the coast.
- A healthy forest is which that is in the shape of a cauliflower.
- A research was done by Dr. Samraj, an Agricultural Scientist regarding the properties of Eucalyptus. He found out that this tree absorbs underground water too much and rarely allows them to evaporate as this tree belongs to the xerophytic conditions. Therefore, he advised the Government to ban the growth of



Eucalyptus trees. Even Rubber and Manchai have the same characteristics.

✦ Another person provided a lot of information regarding the forest area of Maramalai. The points that we learnt are-

- The effluents from the rubber factory of Keeripaarai contain formic acid, which is allowed to mix with the waters of Perunchaani dam.
- Various fishes such as Kendai, Keluthi and Chemmeen were totally abolished due to human activities.
- The trees of Mullumurukku (a tree) and Nallamilagu (a creeper) are very rare nowadays at this place. These two plants undergo symbiotic relationship.
- In Kanyakumari district, there are two teak series- Thadikkarankonam teak series and Kodayar teak series. In these places trees like Mango, Jack, Forest jack, Ayni and Jamun are found. Animals like monkeys, black monkeys, bear, pig, bison, boar, etc. are found here. Nowadays, as these trees are cut down, these animals move towards the countryside.
- Generally, forests comprise of five layers namely Trees, Plants, Climbers, Grass and Herbs. In Maramalai, only three layers (Trees, Grass and Herbs) could be seen.
- The common trees found in Maramalai before a few years were Bamboo, Eethal tree, Pine tree, Manchalkodi, Keridakodi, Kaanchirai tree and Porikaanchirai vidhai. All these have medicinal uses.



■ Manchalkodi can cure cold and cough. The medicinal properties of Keridakodi, makes it a master for curing sinus. The trees of Kaanchirai and Porikaanchirai vidhai can cure Arthritis and Gas trouble respectively. These trees are taken away by the people totally, not even bearing behind the roots. So these have become extinct.

■ If we plant a tree in the forest, we have to maintain it at least for a period of 7 years. This because to protect the tree from wild animals and people.

🌳 We went to Yaanaipallam for a bath. We were told that the elephants of that area used to bath there at evenings and quench their thirst. The water available there contained the essence of many herbs and it was very pure and cool. The fact is -it is hard water. The rocks of that place belong to the category of igneous rocks. Granite rocks are also found there. Different types of ferns are found between those rocks. A very few varieties of fish were also available there. On the way, we saw various species of trees and insects. The sounds produced by the insects were very different when compared to that of the common insects of our areas.

🌳 At the evening, Prof. James Wilson and his family and, Captain Bennet and his family accompanied us. They advised us to use this golden opportunity at the maximum possible. They also told us about the beauty and importance of forest and our role in saving them.

🌳 Later, Shri. Mangavillai T. Rajendran, the forester Thiru. Chellan and the young scientists discussed about the forest wealth of the neighboring hills. Rajendran sir told us that a bison's movement in a neighboring hill could be seen from Maramalai. We were

told by him that the Indian satellite INSAT could be seen from that spot on a clear cloudless night.

- ✿ After the dinner, we had a debate. The young scientists of various teams entertained us with their colorful cultural programmes.
- ✿ Every one of us was asked to write a poem regarding the camp. We used our imagination capacity to write poems. We observed the climate during the camp. We felt very cold at night, but the morning hours were not so cool.
- ✿ Next day morning at about 6 am, we thanked the CMS staff and returned to the District Forest Office. Thus, our camp ended with great enthusiasm and enjoyment.
- ✿ We thank the District Forest Officer, Thiru. Sundararaju, who have arranged for this camp. We also thank Smt. Jane Catherine, who had arranged for the transport in such a rocky area.
- ✿ Mainly, we thank our beloved Organiser, Thiru. Mullanchery M. Velaian for showing us a golden path and for providing us such an excellent opportunity to go through the Forest Areas of Maramalai to learn about the wealth of the forest.

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