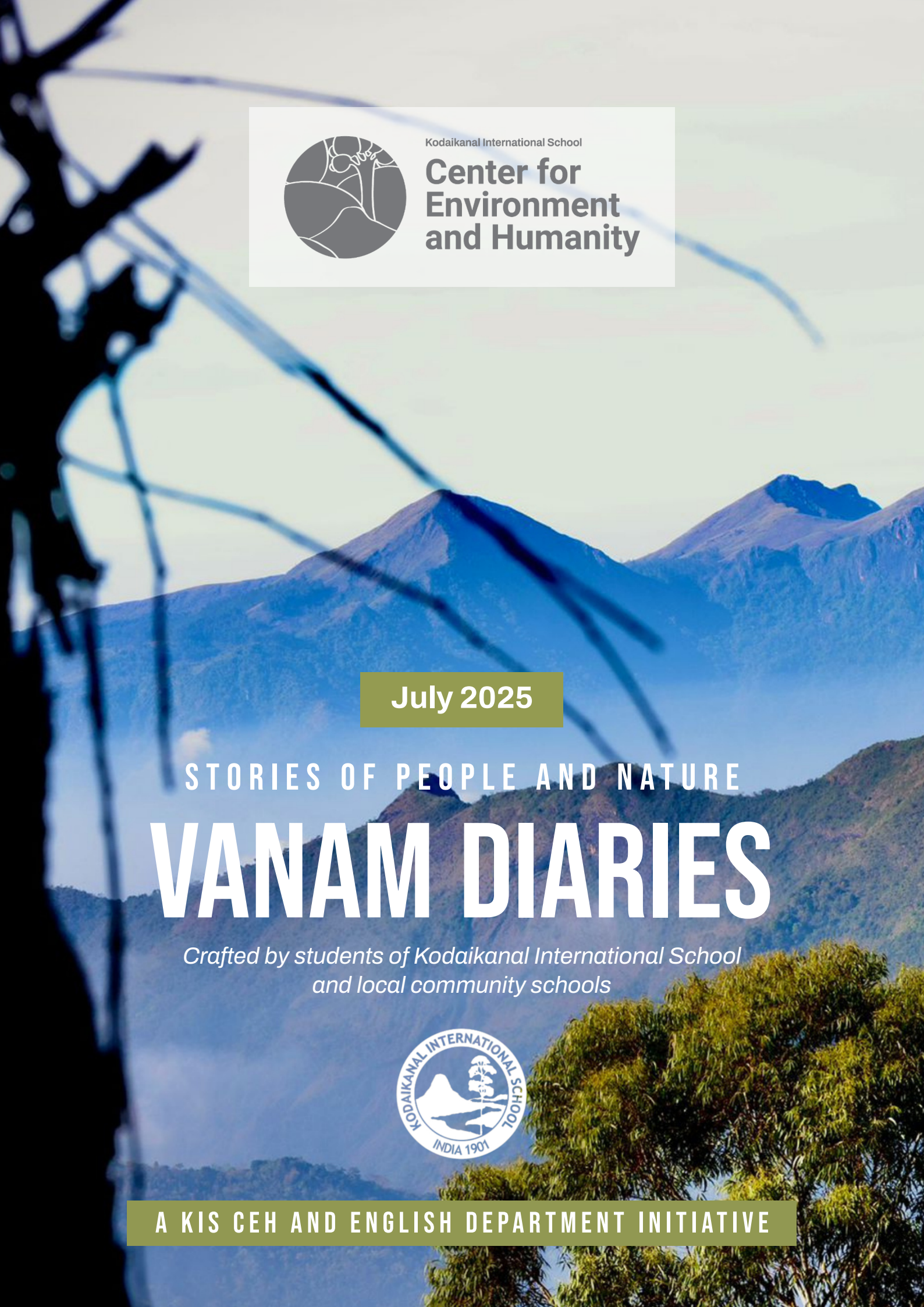


Kodaikanal International School

Center for Environment and Humanity

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STORIES OF PEOPLE AND NATURE

VANAM DIARIES

Crafted by students of Kodaikanal International School and local community schools

KODAIKANAL INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL INDIA 1901

A KIS CEH AND ENGLISH DEPARTMENT INITIATIVE

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Seeds of Change

by Devarakkshithaa Kamalakannan and Hannah Vignesh Kumaran (Grade 11)

In the bright sunny weather stands a tall man named Parmasivam, who has been overlooking the steppy hills of Kodaikanal for 54 years. Over the years, the land has changed through several seasons, and he has changed along with it. The land which once grew fields of millets and rice is now growing rows of vegetables—garlic, carrots, and beans. The millets and rice that once fed families in the past have now disappeared from Pallangi, along with the people who grew them wholeheartedly. Just like many farmers, Parmasivam has witnessed the changes in life and farming that time has brought.

Back then, farming was not just work that gave them money; it was life in itself. The land was home to a variety of millets such as Ragi (finger millet), Thena (foxtail millet), and Kambu (pearl millet), and hill rice grew in middle-elevation regions like Kombai, where flatter grounds and stagnant water allowed rice to grow efficiently. Their diet consisted mainly of food items made from millet and rice. Some of their main staple foods were kuzhu (porridge), ragi puttu, and millet balls. Back then, they grew what they needed to eat along with some means to earn profit.

They woke up early to supervise their farmland from wild animals, feed cows, and use cow dung for fertilizers. However, cattle sizes have decreased drastically, leading to dependence on pesticides. Additionally, due to the lack of transport, people walked or used horses to sell their small produce in the Kodaikanal town. Previously, life was all about living together as one with their family and animals and moving together.

About thirty years ago, Pallangi began to see changes in its life, slowly losing its precious traditional self while blooming into a new era. Water became scarce, and the crops were not able to be fed properly. There were no proper irrigation systems, and only wealthier people were able to afford motors and pump sets to save and utilize water efficiently. Labour reduced drastically: out of ten families that worked, only two continued. Maintaining multiple fields became harder with less labour. Wild animals like boars started destroying crops more often with less supervision, and rice fields were ruined by sparrows during the milk stage (soft-dough stage). Due to

these reasons, farmers had to stay till sunrise and constantly look over their fields to protect them, but still the products from the field were only able to provide for the family and no longer produce any profit.

Slowly, farmers stopped depending on millet and rice and started experimenting with new crops—like carrots and beans in small quantities—which they learned about from their trips to town for the market. Over time, it was observed that these vegetables gave them more benefits and were easier to grow compared to millet and rice. The cultivation of millet and rice slowly drifted into the mist, and vegetables became a popular choice of crop to grow. This marked the new beginning of farmers in Pallangi and also the loss of traditional crops.

Today, Parmasivam's fields are filled with garlic, carrots, beans, kohlrabi, beetroot, and cabbage. The profits are better and the crops are easier to grow, but farming has changed a lot. The weather is no longer the same due to climate change, and there are no proper seasonal rains anymore. The weather patterns are unpredictable and have affected what sort of crop can adapt and grow. For example, flat beans are grown in the middle elevation with warmer temperatures, but they can now be grown in high-altitude land, meaning that the temperature has risen. Furthermore, the change in transportation has opened multiple doors for farmers. Transportation has evolved from riding horses or walking to constructed roads and affordable vehicles, and they can now even sell their produce to cities like Madurai, Trichy, Chennai, and Bangalore. Yet, with all progress, life still remains unfair for farmers.

The people and culture have parallelly changed along with their homeland. Food that was once common, such as ragi puttu and kambu balls, is now seen as rare and sold as special traditional food items. These foods, which were once health boosters, have now slowly disappeared from their tables. Even though the land is able to support millets, people are unable to go back to that time. The younger generation prefers stable jobs, including Parmasivam's own son, who is no longer interested in farming. Most farmers are providing education and steady career opportunities, not the uncertain promises of farming. He states that maybe the cultivation of vegetables might continue, but millet will never come back. The unbreakable bonds between the land and people have now faded due to modernization and globalization. Farming, which was a way of life, has now become a memory that is soon going to disappear from the younger generations, reminding us of the way the land and its people have changed.

Watching the hills shape his life, Parmasivam stands proud amidst his fields. His dedication has made him integrate farming into his life, tying it deep into his heart. This story is relevant in multiple villages across the Palani Hills—the land and the people have transitioned from millet cultivation to vegetable farming together.



Despite the change in the world around him, the rhythm of nature and the roots that have tied people together still remain as a memory in Parmasivam’s life.



From Shola Trees to Snack Bars: The New Reality of Kodaikanal's Monkeys

By Saw Nanda Yu and Priety Battarai (Grade 11)

My mother died when I was 5 years old—she was… Since then, my father has been carrying me in his arms, taking me everywhere. He is sad, but we don't talk about it. The loss of my mother devastated our family. The paws of his hands tremble when I mention her. I have seen it all, felt it all…

The lush hills of Kodaikanal have been our home for years. We thrived in the deep woods, swinging on the vines of the dark-rooted shola trees. Our lives were different; we were different. I was shy, almost scared of humans, and my favourite bonding activity was getting my fur cleaned out by my mother. Now we've stopped—she is no longer here, and I am no longer the same. My father stopped carrying me in his arms when I got older—it was monkey culture for the father to carry the child after the mother's death. I am grateful that this culture didn't change. But I wish nothing else had changed too.

I learnt foraging for fruits from my father. Back then, days used to be short and full of life, picking berries with the sun shining above us. Initially I was scared, shy of humans. I had heard stories about humans, but now I sit on the sides of Silver Cascade. I am not scared—not anymore. I think they are scared of me now. Humans who come to visit Kodi provide us with different varieties of food that I have never even tried in the forests. It's all new to me. Every new tourist gives me chips, maggi, biscuits, and bread. My politeness never works; I always end up chasing them—I just grab and snatch because why should I climb trees when I can snatch food that walks right up to me? As silly as it sounds, I still miss the taste of fresh wild fruits that me and my friends once used to enjoy. The forest is no longer the same. I have lost the habit of climbing trees, so I don't know how to get these fruits. Humans love salty and flavourful fancy snacks. My taste palette does not match at all, yet here I am, eating anything I get—since beggars can't be choosers.

I no longer wake up at the same time; I no longer eat together with my friends. It's all families protecting each other now. Today, I stole fried gobi from a vendor. She tried to hit me with a stick; in return, I messed her egg tray. I know these vendors don't like us, and it makes sense, but my body has adapted—I have adapted. I





have become purely dependent on their food, and now I am covered in injuries. My heart hurts, aching for the forest life, and my body pains from all the salt I have consumed. But I am not the only one—we are all going to die slowly… My father is covered in injuries because he got hit by a truck. That's when I learned the difference between humans. The truck driver drove away, but the vendors we annoyed helped. Our pack helped, and somehow my father is healing. We rely on each other. After all, we are all we have.

Apart from the comfort of food landing on our doorsteps, life near the highways is not as easy as it sounds or as anyone would assume it to be. While crossing the road to reach the shop stalls or the woods, some of us get hit by the big vehicles running at full speed on the highway. For humans, a monkey getting run over might just be an accident; however, for us monkeys, it is equivalent to losing our own family member. Rushing and hustling to get the food when it is thrown away, we end up making a huge mess with torn-open packets and scattered waste everywhere. We are so disappointed and sad that we are the cause of the healthy green forests that used to be our only source of food now looking sabotaged and covered in bits of wrappers and waste.

Somewhere between the dense forest, I can still hear my mother's mournful call between the shola trees, washing a wave of nostalgic golden days over me—those same golden days when we were happy and alive. Now, I am angry. I don't like this lifestyle, but I am angry for not being able to let go of this food, or the dependency. It killed my mother, my father is slowly dying, and it's going to kill the rest of us soon. All I wish for is that humans stop taking this crisis lightly and choose planting more trees, so that my children can climb the forests and eat healthy, and live free of fear like how I once used to live.



Tourist feeding has significantly altered the natural behaviour, diet, and survival patterns of Kodaikanal's monkeys, causing them to move permanently to roadside areas. This shift has resulted in increased aggression, dependency on processed food, health risks, and frequent conflict with humans.

When the Wild Boar Came to the Farm

By Ayra Dasgupta and Angel Anand (Grade 9)

In this edition of *Vanam Diaries*, we explore the life of Mr. Mayil Vahana, a 47-year-old farmer whose journey in agriculture spans over 20 years. Farming, as he shows, is not just planting and harvesting crops—it is a life shaped by challenges, creativity, and dedication. With his family deeply involved in his work, Mr. Vahana's farm is a story of teamwork, resilience, and connection to the land.

Farming is truly a family affair for him. His wife works alongside him, contributing to day-to-day farming activities, while his son, an agriculture graduate, holds a job in a private company but remains involved in the family's agricultural practices. Their cooperation reflects the traditional Indian farming lifestyle, where knowledge, effort, and care are shared across generations. It is clear that for Mr. Vahana, farming is more than a source of income—it is a legacy and a way of life.

On his farm, Mr. Vahana grows a variety of crops including potatoes, garlic, flat beans, butter beans, carrots, nukeal, and cabbage. These crops are sold at the Madurai market, ensuring that fresh produce reaches local consumers. Crop diversity is essential not only to meet market demands but also to maintain soil fertility and reduce the risk of complete loss caused by pests or sudden weather changes.

However, no matter how careful he is, one of his biggest challenges comes from the wild. From June to October, wild boars become a major threat, especially during potato season. These nocturnal visitors dig into the fields to eat tubers, often leaving pits and destruction in their wake. In 2017, for example, a gang of wild boars destroyed an entire one-acre potato field, resulting in a loss of ₹50,000 and ten bags of seed tubers. To make matters worse, this happened around Diwali, when Mr. Vahana had planned to use his earnings to buy gifts and essentials for his children. The sudden loss meant he couldn't provide for his family in the way he wanted that festive season—highlighting just how personal and stressful farming setbacks can be.







His methods of protection are a mix of simple and smart. He strengthens fences, wraps some crops in plastic, sets up solar-powered lights, and organises night watches with the help of neighbouring farmers.

Dogs also play a key role, barking and alerting him when the boars are near. Wild boars usually arrive after 11 p.m., in gangs of 10 to 15, and appear regardless of whether it is a new moon or a full moon. The forest department advises farmers not to harm wildlife, leaving it up to them to protect their crops. This balance between respecting nature and safeguarding livelihoods requires creativity, patience, and teamwork.

Despite repeated encounters with wild boars, Mr. Vahana hasn't allowed these challenges to dictate his farming choices. He continues to grow the same crops, though he recommends planting garlic in some fields, as wild boars tend to avoid it. The cost of protecting crops is another consideration. Fences made from waste cloth cost about ₹2,000 per acre, which is manageable, but solar fencing is extremely expensive—around ₹5 lakhs for two acres—and carries the risk of electric shock.

Life on the farm requires constant supervision and long hours. Farmers in the area work together, taking shifts for night watches to ensure their crops remain safe. This sense of community, where neighbours support one another, is essential for survival in rural farming life. For Mr. Vahana, it is not just about the money—it is about preserving his land, protecting his crops, and maintaining a system that allows both humans and wildlife to coexist.

Even after suffering losses, he does not give up. He accepts setbacks, learns from each incident, and moves forward with determination, always planning for the next season. His resilience reflects a larger truth about farming: it is unpredictable, challenging, and often exhausting, but it can also be deeply rewarding for those who approach it with patience, creativity, and heart.

At this point, Mr. Vahana's story is only halfway through the journey. We have seen his daily challenges with wild boars, the clever ways he protects his crops, and the role his family and community play in keeping the farm running smoothly. Yet there is more to his life than defending his harvest. Beyond the fences, lights, and night watches, he also focuses on nurturing the soil, exploring organic methods, and finding sustainable ways to keep his farm healthy for years to come. That part of the story—his care for the earth itself—marks the second half of this edition of *Vanam Diaries* and shows the balance between struggle and stewardship that defines modern farming life.

Moving on to the second half of this story, even more of Mr. Vahana's life is uncovered. He truly believes in human–wildlife coexistence and ensures that the methods he uses to protect his crops do not harm the balance of nature. For example, he refuses to use solar fencing because it can deliver a dangerously powerful electric shock that could harm both animals and people on the farm. This is his way of giving back to the earth—by honouring the equilibrium between man and nature. Additionally, this technology would be difficult for him to afford and maintain for his two acres of land.

Farming isn't just a job or source of income for Mr. Vahana—it is his identity and livelihood. For him, farming is ancestral. He works on land that has been passed down for generations. He believes deeply in the idea that what he does every day is ancient, meaningful, and valuable because it draws from practices learned from those who came before him. He also says he has no other option aside from farming—it is what he was born into, and he intends to keep it going. At heart, he knows nothing but agriculture, and he believes that this knowledge is a resource in itself. He enjoys his work and wants to see it carried forward.

To see that dream come true, Mr. Vahana—who views family as a form of legacy—involves not just his wife but also his children in his work. He collects grass while his children manage the cattle. The farmer and his family embody the resilience and teamwork required in the agricultural industry. Mr. Vahana encourages villagers to pursue farming and consistently promotes the importance of agriculture. His story and his life do not just showcase a way of living or the hard work required to survive the rigour of agriculture—they remind us that every bit of food on our plates carries with it the hardship and sacrifice of people like him.



Lessons in Sustainability: What Kodaikanal's Children Taught Us

By Deena Medeuoa and Afreen Najeeb Mulla (Grade 11)

Supporting sustainability and being eco-friendly is something most of us are taught from early childhood. We all know littering is wrong, and that waste segregation is important. Signing up for an activity to “preserve” the environment usually felt like joining something we already knew enough about—another item to add to a college application.

So when we first signed up to meet a group of students learning about the environment, we didn’t expect much beyond polite conversation and maybe a few lines about climate change. But what we assumed would be a simple visit soon became a glimpse into what genuine sustainability and care for the environment looks like in practice.

Our first interviewees were two brothers, Thaman and Amresh. They were waiting for us in their modest family shop, surrounded by the fresh smell of crates filled with fruits and vegetables. Both brothers were calm and a little shy — like most children — yet wiser than many adults we knew. They began by explaining how their family sorts waste, composts at home, sells recyclables to scrap dealers, and has completely stopped using plastic bags. While none of this seemed extraordinary at first, the sincerity behind their small steps was truly admirable.

Then the older brother, Thaman, mentioned almost casually how he celebrated his birthday. Instead of distributing chocolates — whose wrappers contribute to plastic waste — he brought sandwiches for his classmates. Ironically, we ourselves had been planning to buy the very same candies for them before the interview, without even recognising the waste it would create.

Amresh then shared how they fed grapes and bananas to the birds without disturbing them. The children carefully placed the food at a respectful distance — a small but powerful sign of how deeply they understood and valued the ecosystem of their hometown.





What struck us most was that these young boys did not expect praise or rewards for their actions. Their sincerity contrasted strongly with the performative environmentalism we often see online — influencers promoting eco-friendly habits for likes, only to return to their regular lifestyle once the camera is off. In contrast, the brothers' motivation came from their genuine love for their birthplace and its habitat.

The second household welcomed us with rows of small pots and saplings lined neatly outside the house. We didn't think much of it at first. Inside, we met two sisters, Abimariya and Evangeline Mariya, who spoke about their interests in singing, dancing, and their love for the Black-and-Orange Flycatcher — a bird found only in Kodaikanal.

Then they explained how the JNAN program had transformed their thinking. Earlier, they didn't consider their father's work—growing saplings—anything significant. But as they learned more, they understood how saplings prevent soil erosion, provide habitats for animals, and even improve water quality by filtering rainwater through their roots.

Suddenly, the rows of saplings outside their home made perfect sense. They carried a special meaning. The sisters shared their goal: to grow and distribute 500 saplings to their fellow JNAN classmates, encouraging hands-on learning about trees and sustainability.

As we walked to the third household, we carried two pots of saplings in our hands. They were gifts, but also gentle reminders — proof that anyone, no matter how young or old, can contribute to protecting the environment.



Producer Responsibility: A Journey in Progress

Written by Aarna Panigrahi
Field work by Aarna Panigrahi and Adrika Sahoo (Grade 12)

Plastic is everywhere, and in our modern world, there is almost no escaping it. Regions all over the world are attempting to cope with the issue through a combination of social awareness and responsibility campaigns. Yet the problem continues to grow, and Kodaikanal is no exception.

Local people are questioning the government for not inhibiting plastic producers and for not banning plastic altogether. They campaign locally, but they are not able to directly influence legislation. The government argues that plastic is a by-product of crude oil, and until the trade of crude oil is stopped, they will not stop the use of plastic. Environmentalists respond by saying that while some plastics are indeed necessary, single-use plastics—which take half a millennium to break down—create unnecessary and excessive pollution. Significant gaps exist between the people, policy-makers, manufacturers, and the infrastructure that is meant to manage the crisis.

Several key parties are involved in this challenge: the local Kodaikanal municipality, the Tamil Nadu government, and the NGOs active in the region. A local shopkeeper summed it up bluntly: *“Idli is being made even when no one wants to eat it.”* Plastic continues to be produced even when communities no longer want it.

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) has recently been outlined by the Indian government to bring responsibility for plastic waste back to the manufacturer. Yet, as with most policies, problems exist with its implementation. Growth is also needed in developing responsible consumers.

Under EPR, individual consumers are supposed to return the plastic packaging of their food items and goods—gift wrap, ribbons, chocolate wrappers, drink packages, and more—to the store from which they bought it. These stores, in turn, are responsible for shipping the waste to their distribution centers. The centers are then responsible for returning the waste to the manufacturers, and the manufacturers are expected to handle the waste they originally created.

However, problems exist at every step of this process. There is not enough incentive for each party to take responsibility. A lack of education, awareness, and action by individuals and local communities creates further hurdles. The system becomes dysfunctional, built on the idea that “someone else will do it… why do I have to?”

Interviews with local shop owners reveal even more. Tourists and residents alike rarely request recyclable products or ask how to dispose of waste properly. Many small shops rely heavily on tourists who buy snacks and drinks—almost always in single-use packaging—to refuel on their trips. Their irresponsibility, combined with the lack of initiative taken by the shops themselves, leads to Kodi’s streets being constantly covered in plastic.

Interviews with local shop owners reveal even more. Tourists and residents alike rarely request recyclable products or ask how to dispose of waste properly. Many small shops rely heavily on tourists who buy snacks and drinks—almost always in single-use packaging—to refuel on their trips. Their irresponsibility, combined with the lack of initiative taken by the shops themselves, leads to Kodi’s streets being constantly covered in plastic.

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Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) *is a policy that makes manufacturers responsible for the plastic waste created by their products. Consumers are expected to return wrappers, bottles, and packaging to the shops they bought them from. These shops then send the collected waste to distribution centres, which finally return it to the manufacturers for proper recycling or disposal. Although the system sounds simple, it struggles in practice due to low awareness, weak incentives, and the assumption that “someone else will handle it.*




Not working fo
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Colgate
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The Hidden Cost of Mudavattukal Killangu

By Tsheden Lekshey Wangyel and Andy Jang
(Grade 12)

As we descended down the Palani Hills, we wondered why every shop had large piles of the same tuber. It wasn't just the big fruit shops — it was the small vendors, the kirana stores, and even the tea stalls. The piles grew bigger, spilling out of baskets and sacks in front of every shop along the road.

We stopped at one of the shops and said to each other, "What's with all these tubers?"
The shopkeeper overheard us and replied, "Five years ago, a big YouTuber's video on these tubers went viral. They said it could cure any joint issues. After that, everyone wanted it."

But then he picked up a handful of rotten tubers and sighed, "Back then, people came running for it. Now, not so much. Demand is falling. But we still keep it in front because people expect it."

At other stalls, we learned that almost half their stock rots before anyone buys it. Still, vendors said they make a profit: "Thirty rupees a kilo," one told us. "It doesn't matter if everything sells. The profit margin is high, and people recognise our shop because of it."

And that was the moment the issue became clear.

The tuber is no longer bought because people want it — it is bought because of what it signals. To shopkeepers, the Mudavattukal Killangu has become a symbol of the trend's peak. Displaying it gives their shop a sense of authenticity, a "mountain product," something tourists expect to see. Even if the market has moved on, the performance continues.

But this illusion of demand keeps pressure on the forest, and the local tribes, such as the Palliyar, are the ones left to suffer. People still dig for the tuber and the shops still buy it, but the tuber itself has lost its purpose. It is now more about the image than the ingredient — a product without its consumers.





This contradiction made us want to understand more. If shops weren't selling much of it, why was the tuber still being harvested? And what did it mean to the people who had lived with these plants long before the internet made them famous? These questions sparked the idea for this article.

After waiting an hour for road construction to clear, we finally reached the Palliyar settlement and met Murugeshwari. She welcomed us warmly. One of the few literate members of her tribe, she spends her free time writing articles to preserve Palliyar traditions.

When we asked her about the tuber, known locally as the Mudavattukal Killangu (Oak Leaf Fern), she admitted, "I've eaten it maybe four or five times in my life. Most of what I know comes from that video," she said. For her, the tuber wasn't central to Palliyar life — it was more a symbol of how quickly outsiders could shift the way people saw tribal culture.

The Palliyar were once forest-dwelling hunter-gatherers. "We only took what we needed," she reflected. "If we collected more, we traded it with other tribes. It was always balanced." They lived sustainably, taking only what they needed and exchanging any surplus. But government conservation laws pushed them out of their native forests and closer to towns. Today, they still collect honey, fruits, and medicinal plants, but it is harder than before. "The forest used to be our home," she said softly. "Now we only enter with difficulty." Modern life has brought new opportunities — but also new challenges.

That is why the tuber trend worries them. While the Palliyar don't rely heavily on this tuber, its sudden popularity has led to overharvesting and even illegal trade. Murugeshwari explained her concern: "If people let this slide, what happens when the next trend targets something vital to us, like honey or fruit?"

Her worry is grounded. Honey is a major source of Palliyar income, tied deeply to their identity. If another influencer decides to label it a miracle product, the consequences could be devastating.

Her words highlight a bigger issue. The Palliyar's tribal status is supposed to protect them, but in reality, they still face marginalization. Their struggle is not just about resources — it is about dignity and identity in a fast-changing world. Murugeshwari's writing is her way of resisting erasure, ensuring her community's voice is heard.

The conservation laws, intended to protect the forest, carry an irony. Instead of safeguarding the environment, they ended up pushing out the very people who knew how to use it responsibly. Now, the growing interests of tourists and traders create pressures the ecosystem cannot absorb.

The craze around the Mudavattukal is built on claims of remarkable health benefits, yet none of these are backed by scientific data or empirical evidence. What began as a single viral video has impacted the forests, the shops, and the daily lives of the Palliyar community. For them, the tuber is not a “miracle plant,” but a reminder of how easily outsiders can influence their livelihoods without understanding the consequences.

What concerns them is not this tuber alone, but what it signals. If a forgotten plant can be pushed into overharvesting, then the resources they genuinely depend on — honey, fruits, medicinal plants — could easily be the next victims. Once that balance is disturbed, the entire ecosystem becomes vulnerable, creating a chain reaction the forest may struggle to recover from.

In the end, the Palani Hills do not need more viral products. They need respect, care, and decisions guided by the people who know the forest best. Trends move fast, but ecosystems and cultures do not. The real challenge is choosing to value what lasts.



இழந்ததைத் தேடி

ர. மானசா
9ஆம் வகுப்பு, பிருந்தாவன் பள்ளி

முன்பொரு காலத்தில் மலையடிவாரத்தில் வாழ்ந்த ஒரு இளைஞன் தன் வாழ்க்கையில் திடீரென ஏற்பட்ட மோசமான மாற்றங்களால் துடித்தான். மழை பொய்த்தது; நீர்நிலைகள் வற்றின; பசி, நோய், வறட்சி அவனை சூழ்ந்தன. வாழ்வாதாரமே இல்லாத நிலை ஏற்பட்டதால், பிழைப்பின் நம்பிக்கையில் அவன் கொடைக்கானலை நோக்கி மலையேறத் தொடங்கினான்.

நீண்ட நடைப் பயணம் அவனை சோர்வடையச் செய்தாலும், கொடைக்கானல் மலைகளின் பனித்துளி நிரம்பிய நீரோடைகள் அவனுக்கு உயிர் ஊட்டின. காட்டில் கிடைத்த பழங்கள், பறவைகளின் முட்டைகள் அவனின் பசியைத் தணித்தன. சோலைகளின் பறவைகளின் குரலும், நீரோடைகளின் ஓசையும் அவன் மன அமைதிக்கான சங்கீதமாக இருந்தன.

பயணத்தின் போது மழை, வெயில், காட்டு விலங்குகள் ஆகியவற்றிலிருந்து தன்னை காக்க அவன் எளிய கற்-குகைகளில் தங்கி வந்தான். உடல் நலக் குறைபாடுகளில் காடுகளில் இருந்த மூலிகைகளைத் தேடி மருந்தாக்கி உபயோகப்படுத்தினான்.

பல நாட்கள் கழித்து இறுதியாக மேல்மலையை அடைந்தான். மனிதர்கள் இல்லாத அந்த அகன்ற புல்வெளிகள் அவனுக்குள் அச்சத்தை விதைத்தன. மனித உறவை நாடி பள்ளத்தாக்குகளுக்கு பயணித்த அவன், அங்கே வாழ்ந்த பழங்குடியின மக்களைச் சந்திக்கிறான். அவர்களுடன் இணைந்து ஒரு சிறிய மூங்கில் குடிலைக் கட்டிக் கொண்டான். அங்கு இருந்த ஒரு முதியவர் காட்டில் கிடைக்கும் தேன், கிழங்கு, பழங்களைத் தேடி உண்வது எப்படி என்பதை அவனுக்கு கற்றுக் கொடுத்தார்.

அந்த முதியவர் ஆற்றோரத்தில் சிறிய விவசாயம் செய்ததைப் பார்த்த இளைஞன், தானும் விவசாயத்தை கற்க விரும்பினான். முதியவரும் மகிழ்ச்சியுடன் மலைப்பகுதி விவசாய ரகசியங்களை அவனுக்கு கற்றுத் தந்தார்.



அங்கு சாலை, மின்சாரம் போன்ற அடிப்படை வசதிகள் எதுவும் இல்லாமல் மக்கள் ஒருவருக்கொருவர் துணையாக இணைந்து வாழ்வதைப் பார்த்த இளைஞன், அந்த மலைப்பிரதேசத்தையே தன் சொந்த ஊராக உணரத் தொடங்கினான்.

விவசாயம் செய்யும் போது, “பிரம்மா உயிர்களை உருவாக்கினார்; நான் உயிர்களை வாழ வைக்கும் உணவை உருவாக்குகிறேன்” என்று அவன் பெருமை கொண்டான்.

காலம் கடந்தது. இளைஞனுக்கு திருமணமும், பிள்ளைகளும் பிறந்தனர். அவர்களும் விவசாயத்தைக் கற்றனர். பயன்படாத அதிக உற்பத்திகளை விற்று வாழ்க்கை முன்னேற, பணம் வந்தது. பணம் வந்தபோது வாழ்க்கை முறையும் மாறியது. அவர்கள் ஆடம்பர வீடுகள் கட்டினர். மேலும் விவசாய நிலம் வேண்டும் என்ற ஆசையில் சோலைமரங்களையும், புல்வெளிகளையும் அழித்து விளை நிலங்களை விரிவுபடுத்தினர்.

விவசாய பொருட்களை எடுத்துச்செல்ல சாலைகள் அமைக்கப்பட்டன; மின்சாரம் வந்தது. அதுடன் வெளியூரிலிருந்து மனிதர்கள் மலைப்பகுதியை ஆக்கிரமிக்கத் தொடங்கினர்.

காலத்தின் ஓட்டத்தில் இளைஞன் முதியவரானார். குடும்பம் பெருகியது. ஆனால் பேரன்–பேத்திகள் விவசாயத்தில் ஆர்வம் காட்டவில்லை. வருமானத்திற்காக அவர்கள் பசுமையான விளைநிலங்களை அழித்து விடுதிகளையும், உல்லாச மாளிகைகளையும் கட்டத் தொடங்கினர்.

பழைய தலைமுறையின் பாரம்பரிய வீடு ‘ரிசப்ஷன்’ ஆனது...
ஆடு மாடு கட்டிய இடம் ‘கார் பார்க்கிங்’ ஆனது...
வீட்டின் கொள்ளை புறத்தில் வளர்த்த பழ மரங்கள் ‘குரோட்டன்ஸ்’ ஆனது...
வீட்டு தோட்டத்திலும், முற்றத்திலும் ஆடி திரிந்த பறவைகள் இன்று கூண்டுகளில் ‘லவ் பேர்ட்ஸ்’ ஆனது...
ஏரியிலும் கிணற்றிலும் துள்ளித் திரிந்த மீன் இனங்கள் என்று உல்லாச விடுதி வண்ண மீன் தொட்டியில் உணவுக்காக காத்திருக்கின்றன!!!

இந்த மாற்றங்கள் அனைத்தும் முதியவரின் மனதை நொறுக்கியது. தன்னை வாழ வைத்த மலைப்பிரதேசத்தை ஒருமுறை சுற்றிப் பார்க்க அவர் விரும்பினார். முதல் முறையாக மலை ஏறிய பாதையில் திரும்பிச் செல்வதற்கு அவர் கிளம்பினார்.

அவர் பயணத்தில் கண்டவை இதயம் கிழிக்கும் உண்மைகள்:

- அவரின் தாகம் தீர்த்த நீரோடைகள் இப்போது சாக்கடைகளாக மாறியிருந்தன.
- சுற்றுலா பயணிகள் வீசி சென்ற குப்பைகள் சாலை ஓரங்களிலும் காடு முழுவதிலும் பரவிக் கிடந்தன.
- பசுமையான சோலைகள் கட்டிடங்களாகவும் விவசாய நிலங்களாகவும் மாறியிருந்தன.
- கனரக வாகனங்களுக்கு இடம் கொடுக்க சாலைகள் அகலப்படுத்தப்பட்டன; மரங்கள் வெட்டப்பட்டதால் காடு சுடுகாடாய் தோன்றியது.
- மின்கம்பிகளை அமைக்க காடுகள் முற்றிலும் அழிக்கப்பட்டிருந்தன.
- சாலையை கடக்க முயன்ற விலங்குகள் வாகனங்களுக்கு பலியாகி வழியோரத்தில் கிடந்தன.
- இயற்கையின் இசையை விழுங்கும் வாகன இரைச்சல் அவரை மன அழுத்தத்திற்கு உள்ளாக்கியது.

இதனை எல்லாம் பார்த்த முதியவர் தன் இளமைக்காலத்தை நினைத்தார்.

“என் சொந்த ஊர் யாரோ ஒருவரின் பிழையால் அழிந்தது. இந்த ஊர் என் பிழையால் அழிந்தது.

பிழைப்பைத் தேடி கொடைக்கானலை நோக்கி நடந்த என் பயணத்தில், எனக்கு உயிர் வாழ உதவிய காட்டு வளங்கள் பற்றியும், கொடைக்கானலை அடைந்தபின் வாழ்வளித்த இயற்கை வளங்கள் பற்றியும் என் சந்ததிகளிடம் பகிர்ந்து கொள்ள நான் தவறி விட்டேன்.

என் வரலாற்றை அறியாத என் சந்ததிகள், அற்புதமான மலை-வாழ் சூழலை சீரழித்து விட்டார்கள்,” என்று வலியுடன் எண்ணினான்.

“வருங்கால தலைமுறைக்கு நிலத்தின் வரலாறைச் சொல்லி வளர்க்க வேண்டும்” என்ற சிந்தனையுடன், உயிர் இருந்தும் பிணமாய் மீண்டும் மலையடிவாரத்தை நோக்கி அவன் நடக்கத் தொடங்கினான்…

கொடைக்கானலில் பிழைப்பு தேடி குடியேறும் மக்கள், தங்களின் வாழ்வாதாரத்தை மேம்படுத்திக் கொள்வதோடு, இங்குள்ள இயற்கை வளங்களையும் பாதுகாக்க வேண்டும் என்ற நோக்கத்துடன் இந்த கதையை மாணவி மானசா அவர்கள் எழுதியுள்ளார்.



In Search of the Lost (English Version)

R. Manasha
9th Standard, Brindavan Public School

In Search of the Lost

Long ago, a young man living at the foothills of the mountains found his life suddenly turned upside down. The rains failed. Water sources dried up. Hunger, sickness, and drought surrounded him. With no hope of survival, he set out toward Kodaikanal, praying that the mountains would give him another chance at life.

The long climb drained his strength, yet the dew-filled streams of the Kodaikanal hills revived him. Wild fruits and bird eggs satisfied his hunger. The calls of shola birds and the murmur of flowing water became a soothing music that calmed his troubled mind.

On his journey, he sheltered himself in small rock caves, protecting himself from the sun, rain, and wild animals. Whenever he fell sick, he treated himself with forest herbs.

After many days, he finally reached the upper hills. The vast, empty grasslands—untouched by human presence—filled him with fear. Hoping to find human companionship, he walked down into the valleys, where he met the Indigenous people of the forest. They welcomed him warmly, and together they built a small bamboo hut. An elderly man taught him how to find honey, tubers, and wild fruits to survive.

Watching the old man cultivate a small patch of land near the river, the young man felt inspired to learn farming. The old man happily taught him the secrets and strategies of mountain agriculture.

There were no roads, no electricity, and no comforts—but people lived together by supporting one another. Slowly, the young man began to feel that these hills were his true home.

As he farmed, he often felt proud and thought, “Brahma may have created life, but I am creating the food that keeps life going.”

TAMIL NADU/SOUTH

THURSDAY, JAN 13, 2022

Telangana Guv claims phone being tapped

Jarkholi regrets 'Hindu' remark in letter

K'taka govt. Benefits for gig workers

G.O. caused unrest among govt staff: Guild

Forest dept uses acoustic d...

...bay in Kovai



Time passed. He married and had children. They learned farming too. As their harvests grew, they sold the extra produce and earned money. With money came change. They built large, comfortable houses. Wanting more land, they cleared shola trees and grasslands to expand their fields.

Roads were built to transport crops. Electricity arrived. Outsiders began settling in the hills.

The young man grew old. His family grew larger. But his grandchildren had no interest in farming. Wanting to earn more, they cleared green fields to build resorts and vacation homes.

The old family house became a reception area.

The cowshed turned into car parking.

The fruit trees behind the house were replaced with ornamental crotons.

The free-flying birds that once wandered through the courtyard now existed only as caged “lovebirds.”

The fish that once darted through ponds and wells now swam in colorful resort aquariums, waiting for food.

These changes broke the old man’s heart.

He wished to walk once again through the land that had given him life. He set out along the same trail he had taken in his youth.

What he saw shattered him:

The mountain streams that once quenched his thirst had become polluted drains.

Litter thrown by tourists covered the roadsides and forest floors.

The lush shola forests had turned into buildings and farms.

Roads were widened for heavy vehicles, and felled trees made the forest look like a graveyard.

Entire patches of forest had been destroyed to lay electric lines.

Animals trying to cross roads lay dead along the edges.

The roar of vehicles drowned the natural symphony of the mountains, leaving him anxious and suffocated.

Seeing all this, the old man remembered his youth.

“My hometown in the foothills was destroyed by someone else’s mistakes.

But this land was destroyed because of my mistakes.

I never taught my children or grandchildren about the forests that protected me, or the natural wealth that gave me a new life in Kodaikanal. Not knowing our history, they have destroyed this precious mountain ecosystem.”

With pain in his heart, he thought, “Future generations must grow up knowing the history of the land they call home.”

With his body still alive but his spirit broken, he slowly began walking back toward the foothills…

This story was written by R. Manasha of Brindavan Public School (Grade 9). She shares it with the hope that those who come to Kodaikanal in search of a livelihood will also learn to protect the natural wealth of this beautiful mountain landscape.

Save Trees (Tamil Version)

மரங்களைப் பாதுகாப்போம்!

எழுதியவர் ஜா. டிவோனா சார்லெட், 6 ஆம் வகுப்பு, செயின்ட் ஜான்ஸ் பெண்கள் உயர்நிலைப் பள்ளி

சில்லென்ற காற்று வந்து, என் மீது படுகிறதே!
சோர்ந்திருந்த உடல் மனமெல்லாம் சொர்க்கம் காண்கிறதே!
நிழல் வேண்டுமா? மரம் வேண்டுமே!
மழை வேண்டுமா? மரம் வேண்டுமே!
குளிர் வேண்டுமா? மரம் வேண்டுமே!
மழை வேண்டுமா? மரம் வேண்டுமே!
உண்கின்ற உணவு எல்லாம்
இம்மரங்கள் தந்ததுவே!
மரங்களை நீ அழிப்பது கண்டு
நெஞ்சம் விம்முதுவே!
(பணம்) கரன்சிகளை மட்டும் உண்டு
உயிர் வாழ முடியாதே!
கான்கிரீட்டில் காடு வளர்த்து
என்செய்வாய் உயிரே!
உயிர் காற்றை சலவை செய்வதுதானே மரங்கள்
இப்பூமியைப் போல இல்லை கிரகங்கள்
உயிர்ச்சங்கிலி உடைத்து உள்ளே புகுந்தாய் நீ
இப்போது நாட்டின் உள்ளே மிருகங்கள்
பழம் வேண்டுமா? மரம் வேண்டுமே!
மழை வேண்டுமா? மரம் வேண்டுமே!
வளம் வேண்டுமா? மரம் வேண்டுமே!
மழை வேண்டுமா? மரம் வேண்டுமே! மனம் வேண்டுமே!
பூமிக்குள் தனது வேர்களை எல்லாம் பரப்பி


RBK
Center for

மண்ணின் அரிப்பைத் தடுக்கிறது!
பூமிக்கு மேலே கிளைகளை எல்லாம் நிரப்பி
காற்றின் மாசைக் குறைக்கிறதே!
உயிர் வேண்டுமா? மரம் வேண்டுமே!
மழை வேண்டுமா? மரம் வேண்டுமே!
நதி வேண்டுமா? மரம் வேண்டுமே!
மழை வேண்டுமா? மரம் வேண்டுமே!
மரமின்றி வாழும் உலகில் உயிரினங்கள் கிடையாதே!
மரமிங்கு இல்லாவிட்டால் உலகம் கிடையாது!
அழகான அன்னை பூமி அழிந்தே தான் அழிந்தே தான் போகிறதே!
ஊர்கூடி மரங்கள் வளர்ப்போம்! ஒன்றாய் வாருங்களேன்!



Save Trees (English Version)

J. Tivona Charlet (Grade 6)
St. John's Girls Hr. Sec. School

A cool, gentle breeze
Touches my face,
Takes away my tiredness,
Makes the world feel like heaven.

Do you want shade?
You need trees.
Do you want rain?
You need trees.

Do you want clean, cool air?
You need trees.
This nature alone provides all the food we eat
Cutting these trees makes my heart shed blood
We cannot live by eating currencies
What do you do by growing concrete forests?
Plant purifies the air which we breathe
There is no alternate for earth
You broke the life chain to intrude
And see animals in your residence now!

Do you want fruits?
You need trees.
Do you want rain?
You need trees.
Do you want wealth?
Real wealth?
You need trees.
Do you want rain?
You need trees

Trees hold the soil in place
with their deep roots.
Trees clean the sky
with their wide branches.

Do you want to live?
You need trees.
Do you want rivers to flow?
You need trees.
Do you want the world to survive?
You need trees.

No species can live without trees
Without trees, nothing can exist
Oh this beautiful mother earth is getting destroyed without trees.
Come let us all join hands together to grow more trees.



பசியில்லா கொடைக்கானலுக்கான ஒரு மாணவியின் பயணம்

செ. தனுஷ்கா, 9 ஆம் வகுப்பு, புனித சூசையப்பர்உயர்நிலைப்பள்ளி பெருமாள்மலை

செ. தாரணி, 11 ஆம் வகுப்பு, புனித சேவியர் மேல்நிலைப்பள்ளி, செண்பகனூர்

வணக்கம். எனது பெயர் தனுஷ்கா. நான் பெருமாள்மலை கிராமத்தில் வசித்து வருகிறேன். எங்கள் கிராமத்திற்கு அருகில் உள்ள புனித சூசையப்பர் உயர்நிலைப் பள்ளியில் ஒன்பதாம் வகுப்பு படித்து வருகிறேன். எனது பெற்றோரின் பெயர் திரு செந்தில் முருகன், திருமதி காஞ்சனா. எனது பெற்றோர் இருவரும் விவசாயி. மலை பிரதேச காய்கறிகளையும் பழங்களையும் விளைவிப்பதில் என் பெற்றோர்கள் திறமையானவர்கள். எங்கள் காட்டில் உருளைக்கிழங்கு, சௌசௌ, அவரை, பீட்ரூட், முள்ளங்கி, கேரட், பீன்ஸ், கத்தரிக்காய், கொத்தமல்லி போன்ற காய்கறிகளையும், வாழைப்பழம், ஆரஞ்சு, அவகாடோ, பிச்சிஸ், ப்ளம்ஸ் போன்ற பழ வகைகளையும் விளைவிக்கின்றனர்.

எனது குழந்தை பருவத்தில் என்னை சுமந்து கொண்டு, என் அம்மா விவசாய நிலத்திற்கு சென்று அங்குள்ள பணிகளை கவனிப்பார். எனக்கு இரண்டு வயது இருக்கும் பொழுது எங்களது விவசாய நிலத்தில் மண்ணில் புரண்டு விளையாடியதாக என் அம்மா கூறுவார். நான் சற்று பெரியவளான பிறகு, அம்மாவிற்கு உதவியாக களை எடுப்பது, விதைப்பது, உரம் இடுவது, தண்ணீர் பாய்ச்சுவது, அறுவடை செய்வது என அனைத்து விவசாய பணிகளிலும் ஈடுபட தொடங்கினேன்.

நான் பள்ளியில் படிப்பதால், வார இறுதி நாட்களில் சனி ஞாயிறு தினங்களில் மட்டுமே வீட்டில் இருப்பேன். வீட்டில் இருக்கும் பொழுது டிவி பார்க்கவும், நண்பர்களுடன் விளையாடவும், கோவில் திருவிழாக்களில் பங்கு கொள்ள ஆசைப்படுவேன்.

ஆனால், என் பெற்றோரோ தவிர்க்க முடியாத விவசாய பணிகளுக்காக எங்களை காட்டிற்கு அழைத்துச் சென்று சிறு சிறு வேலைகளை செய்ய செய்யுமாறு கேட்டுக் கொள்வார்கள். அந்த தருணங்களில் விவசாயத்தின் மீது எங்களுக்கு சிறிது கோபம் ஏற்படும்.

இருந்த போதிலும், வீட்டிலிருந்து காட்டிற்கு செல்லும் வரை தான் எங்களின் கோபம் இருக்கும். காட்டினை அடைந்தவுடன் பேரின்பம் எங்களை தொற்றிக் கொள்ளும். காட்டிற்கு சென்றவுடன் அங்குள்ள பழங்களைப் பறித்து உண்ணுவதும், குளத்தில் உள்ள மீன்களை பார்த்தவாறு விளையாடுவதும், பேரி மரங்களில் ஏறி விளையாடுவதுமாக எங்கள் பொழுது கழியும்.

விவசாயம் எனக்கு பிடிக்கும். ஆனால் விவசாயம் எனக்கு ரொம்ப ரொம்ப பிடிக்க காரணம் எனது அக்கா. எனது அக்காவின் பெயர் தாரணி. அவர் சென்பகனூர், புனித சேவியர் மேல்நிலைப் பள்ளியில் 11ஆம் வகுப்பு படித்து வருகிறார். என் அக்கா வேளாண் துறையில் பட்டப்படிப்பு படிக்க வேண்டும் என்று ஆசைப்படுகிறாள். என் அக்கா மட்டுமல்ல என் பெற்றோரின் ஆசையும் அதுதான்.

என் அக்காவின் ஆசையை ஊக்குவிக்கும் வகையில் கொடைக்கானல் சர்வதேச பள்ளி ஏற்பாடு செய்திருந்த 'இளம் இயற்கை செயல்பாட்டாளர்கள்' வகுப்பில் என் அக்கா விவசாயம் பற்றி மேலும் நல்ல தகவல்களை கற்றுக் கொண்டார். JNAN வகுப்பில், கொடைக்கானலில் உள்ள பல்வேறு விவசாய நிலங்களுக்கு என் அக்காவை அழைத்துச் சென்றனர். கொடைக்கானலில் விளையும் பயிர்கள் குறித்தும், விவசாயிகள் குறித்தும் செய்முறை விளக்கங்களை ஆசிரியர்கள் அளித்தனர். பெருமாள்மலை பகுதியில் விளையும் காய்கறிகள் பற்றி மட்டுமே அறிந்திருந்த எனது அக்காவிற்கு பூம்பாறை, மன்னவனூர், பூண்டி, ஊத்து, பண்ணைக்காடு ,தாண்டிக்குடி, பெருங்காடு பகுதிகளுக்கும் அழைத்துச் சென்று அங்குள்ள விவசாய முறைகள் பற்றி அறிய ஒரு நல்ல வாய்ப்பாக JNAN வகுப்பு அமைந்தது.

தொடர்ந்து இரண்டு வருடங்கள் இந்த வகுப்பில் பங்கு பெற்ற எனது அக்கா, எதிர்காலத்தில் வேளாண் துறை பட்டப்படிப்பு படிப்பதற்கான ஆரம்ப அறிவினை வளர்த்துக் கொண்டாள்.

என் அக்கா கூறும் அனுபவங்களை கேட்டு வளர்ந்த எனக்கும் JNAN வகுப்பில் இணைய வேண்டும் என்ற ஆர்வம் உண்டாகியது. நானும் JNAN வகுப்பில் இணைந்து கடந்த இரண்டு ஆண்டுகளாக வேளாண்மை பற்றி விரிவாக கற்று வருகிறேன்.

JNAN வகுப்பில் நான் கற்றுக் கொண்டவைகளையும், என் பெற்றோர்கள் எனக்கு கற்றுக் கொடுத்தவைகளையும் பயன்படுத்தி என் வீட்டில், மாடியில் சிறிய மாடித்தோட்டம் ஒன்றை உருவாக்கினேன். அதில் மக்காச்சோளம், கொத்தமல்லி, கீரைகளை வளர்த்து வருகிறேன்.

ஒரு நாள், JNAN வகுப்பில் குப்பைகள் பற்றி பாடம் எடுத்த ஆசிரியர் கிராமங்களில் அதிக அளவில் தெருவோரங்களில் கொட்டிக் கிடக்கும் குப்பை புகைப்படத்தை எங்களிடம் காண்பித்தார். எங்கள் ஊரும் அதே போன்று குப்பை கூலமாக இருப்பதை எண்ணி வருந்தினேன். வகுப்பில் ஆசிரியரிடம் குப்பையில்லாத கிராமங்களை உருவாக்க என்ன செய்யலாம் என்று ஆலோசனை கேட்டேன். ஆசிரியர் மற்றவர்களை திருத்துவதற்கு முன் நாம் நம்மை திருத்திக் கொள்வது முக்கியம் என்றார். விவசாய குடும்பத்தில் இருந்து வருவதால் என்னிடம் எங்கள் வீட்டில் உருவாகும் உணவுக் கழிவுகளை பற்றி கேட்டறிந்தார். அம்மா சமையல் செய்யும் போது உருவாகும் காய்கறி கழிவுகளை உரமாக மாற்றுவது குறித்து செய்முறை விளக்கம் அளித்தார். எஞ்சிய உணவு கழிவுகள், அதாவது நம் தட்டில் சாப்பிட முடியாமல் தூக்கி எரியும் கழிவுகளை தவிர்க்கவோ, குறைக்கவோ பழகிக் கொள்ளுமாறு கேட்டுக் கொண்டார். அதாவது சமைத்த உணவு பண்டங்களை வீணாக்க கூடாது என்றார்.

உணவுக் கழிவுகளை பற்றி ஆசிரியர் கூறும் பொழுது என் நினைவிற்கு விவசாய நிலங்களில் வீணாகும் காய்கறிகள் தான் நினைவிற்கு வந்தன. என் பெற்றோர் விளைவிக்கும் காய்கறிகளையும் பழங்களையும் பெரு வியாபாரிகள் எங்கள் நிலத்திற்கே வந்து வாங்கி செல்வார்கள். அவர்கள் சொத்தை-அடித்த காய்கறிகளையும், அழுகிய காய்கறிகளையும், வெட்டுப்பட்ட காய்கறிகளையும், முறையான வடிவமற்ற காய்கறிகளையும் விலைக்கு வாங்க மாட்டார்கள். ஆனால் இந்த காய்கறிகளை எங்கள் வீட்டிற்கு கொண்டு வந்து சமைத்து உண்ணுவோம். உன்ன தகுந்த, இந்த காய்கறிகள் மிக அதிகமாக விளைநிலங்களில் வியாபாரிகளால் ஒதுக்கப்படும் போது என் பெற்றோர்கள் அந்த காய்கறிகளை நிலத்திலேயே விட்டு விடுவார்கள்.

இதை என் ஆசிரியரிடம் கூறிய பொழுது, என் தந்தை வேர்வை சிந்தி விளைவித்த காய்கறிகள் வீணாவதை கண்டு ஆசிரியரும் நானும் வருந்தினோம். மேலும் இந்த காய்கறிகளை விளைவிக்க இயற்கை வளங்களை பயன்படுத்தி இருப்போம். தண்ணீர், உரம், மின்சாரம் போன்ற இயற்கை வளங்கள் வீணடிக்கப்படுவதை எண்ணி வருந்தினேன்.



வகுப்பு முடிந்தவுடன் வீட்டிற்குச் சென்று என் பெற்றோரிடம் காய்கறிகள் வீணாகாமல் எவ்வாறு தடுக்கலாம் என்று ஆலோசனை கேட்டேன். உடனடியாக என் அம்மா சிரித்துக்கொண்டே, நம் நிலத்தில் காய்கறிகள் வீணாவதில்லை என்றார். வெட்டுப்பட்ட, சொத்தை அடித்த அல்லது சிறிது அழுகிய காய்கறிகளை வீட்டிற்கு கொண்டு வந்து, நம் அண்டை வீட்டாரிடம் அன்பளிப்பாக கொடுப்பதை என் அம்மா வாடிக்கையாக வைத்திருந்தார். இதைக் கேட்டவுடன் மிகவும் மகிழ்ச்சி அடைந்தேன்.

பள்ளிக்குச் சென்று, என் நண்பர்களிடம் உங்கள் விளைநிலங்களில் வீணடிக்கப்படும் காய்கறிகளை என்ன செய்வீர்கள் என்று கேட்டேன்? பெரும்பாலான மாணவர்கள் எங்கள் நிலத்திலேயே அவற்றை விட்டு விடுவோம் என்றனர்... என் அம்மா கூறிய ஆலோசனையை என் நண்பர்களிடம் பகிர்ந்து கொண்டேன். ஆனால் அவர்களுக்கு இது பெரிய காரியமாக தெரியவில்லை. காய்கறிகளை சேகரித்து மக்களுக்கு கொடுக்க எங்களுக்கு நேரமில்லை என்று கேலி பேசினர்.

அன்று மாலை வீட்டிற்கு சென்றவுடன், என் பெற்றோரிடம் இந்த வார விடுமுறையில் எங்களின் நிலத்திற்கு வந்து அங்கு சொத்தை அடித்த அல்லது முற்றிய காய்கறிகளை பறித்து என் நண்பர்களிடம் கொடுக்க ஆர்வமாக உள்ளதை பகிர்ந்து கொண்டேன். என் பெற்றோர்களும் அதற்கு சம்மதம் தெரிவித்தனர். அன்று முதல் ஒவ்வொரு வாரமும் என் காட்டிற்கு சென்று அங்கு விலை போகாத, ஆனால் உண்ணக்கூடிய காய்கறிகளை சேகரித்து என் பள்ளி நண்பர்களிடமும், JNAN வகுப்பு தோழர்களிடமும் பகிர்ந்து கொண்டேன்.

எங்கள் தோட்டத்தில் விலை போகாத காய்கறிகள் இல்லாவிட்டால், பக்கத்து தோட்டத்திலிருந்து காய்கறிகளை தேடத் தொடங்கினேன். வீட்டின் கொள்ளைபுறத்தில் விளையும் வாழைப்பழங்களை குடும்ப தேவைக்காக வைத்துக் கொள்வோம். திடீரென பழுக்கும் அனைத்து பழங்களையும் உண்ண முடியாமல், அழுகிப்போன நிலையில் அவற்றை குப்பையில் கொட்டுவோம். இனி முதல், என் வீட்டில் விளையும் வாழைப்பழங்களை எங்கள் குடும்பத்திற்கு போக மீதமுள்ளவற்றை பக்கத்து வீட்டில் உள்ளவர்களுடன் பகிர்ந்து கொள்ள ஆசைப்படுகிறேன்.

கொடைக்கானல் ஒரு விவசாய பூமி. இங்கு பல விவசாய குடும்பங்கள் உள்ளன. ஒவ்வொரு குடும்பத்திலும் பள்ளி, கல்லூரி செல்லும் மாணவர்கள் உள்ளனர். விவசாயிகளால் விளைநிலங்களில் வீணாகும் காய்கறிகளை பயனாளர்களுக்கு கொண்டு செல்வது மிகவும் கடினம்.

ஆனால், விவசாய குடும்பங்களில் என்னைப் போன்று உள்ள மாணவர்கள் தங்கள் நிலங்களில் வீணாகும் உண்ணக்கூடிய காய்கறிகளை பசித்தவர்களுக்கு அன்பளிப்பாக கொடுக்கலாம். இதன் மூலம் பசியில்லா கொடைக்கானலை உருவாக்க முடியும்.
இயற்கை வளங்களை பயன்படுத்தி விளைவிக்கப்படும் விவசாய பொருட்கள் வீணாகாமல் தடுக்கலாம். இதையெல்லாம் விட, என் அப்பாவும் அம்மாவும் அக்காவும் வேர்வை சிந்தி உழைத்து உருவாக்கிய காய்கறிகளையும் பழங்களையும் குப்பையில் கொட்டாமல், மனிதர்களுக்கு வழங்குவது எனக்கு பெரும் மகிழ்ச்சியை அளிக்கிறது.
நீங்கள் கொடைக்கானலில் உள்ளவராக இருந்து, உங்கள் குடும்பம் விவசாய தொழில் செய்தால், நீங்களும் உங்கள் பெற்றோரின் உதவியுடன் என்னைப் போலவே, உண்ணக்கூடிய காய்கறிகளை பசித்தவர்களுக்கு அன்பளிப்பாக கொடுங்கள். என்னுடன் இணையுங்கள் நன்றி.


HILSA FIELD GUIDES
Birds of the Indian Subcontinent

A Student’s Journey Toward a Hunger-Free Kodaikanal (English Version)

S. Dhanushka, St. Joseph's High School, Perumalmalai (Grade 9) and
S. Dharani, St. Xavier’s Higher Secondary School, Shenbaganur (Grade 11)

Hello, my name is Dhanushka. I live in Perumalmalai village, and I am studying in Class 9 at St. Xavier’s Higher Secondary School. My parents, Senthil Murugan and Kanchana, are farmers skilled in growing mountain vegetables and fruits. We cultivate potatoes, chayote, broad beans, beetroot, radish, carrots, beans, eggplant, coriander, and many other vegetables. We also grow fruits such as bananas, oranges, avocados, peaches, and plums.

When I was a baby, my mother would carry me on her hip while working in the fields. She often tells me that when I was two years old, I would roll and play in the soil. As I grew older, I began helping her with weeding, sowing, fertilizing, watering, and harvesting.

Since I attend school, I am at home only on weekends. On Saturdays and Sundays, I would usually want to watch TV, play with my friends, or join temple festivals. But my parents would take us to the fields to help with whatever work needed to be done. At those moments, we felt annoyed with farming.

But our irritation lasted only until we reached the fields. Once we arrived, we would be overjoyed to pick fruits to eat, watch the fish in the ponds, and climb the pear trees.

I like farming, and the main reason I love it is my sister. Her name is Dharani, and she is in Class 11 at St. Xavier’s Higher Secondary School in Shenbaganur. She dreams of studying agriculture in college, and that is my parents’ wish as well.

To support her interest, she joined the Junior Naturalists (JNAN) program run by Kodaikanal International School. Through JNAN, she learned many interesting things about farming. Her teachers took her to different farming areas across Kodaikanal and gave practical explanations about the crops grown and the lives of farmers. Before this, my sister knew only about the crops grown in Perumalmalai. But through field visits to Poombarai, Mannavanur, Poondi, Oothu, Pannaikadu,



Thandikudi, and Perungadu, she learned about the unique farming methods of each place.

After attending the JNAN program for two years, she gained the foundational knowledge she needs to pursue agriculture in the future.

Listening to her experiences inspired me to join the program too. I have now completed two years in JNAN, learning about farming in depth. Using what I learned in class and what my parents taught me, I created a small terrace garden where I grow corn, coriander, and leafy greens.

One day in class, our teacher showed us photos of garbage piled up along village roadsides. It reminded me of my own village, and I felt sad. I asked her what we could do to prevent this. She told us that before correcting others, we must first correct our own habits. She asked how we handle food waste at home, since many of us come from farming families. She also showed us how vegetable scraps from cooking can be composted and encouraged us to reduce the food wasted on our plates.

When she spoke about food waste, I immediately thought about the vegetables wasted in our own fields. Big traders come directly to our farm to buy produce, but they refuse anything bruised, oddly shaped, or slightly spoiled. We take some of these vegetables home and cook them, but when there are large quantities, my parents leave the rest in the soil.

When I shared this with my teacher, I felt sad that my father’s hard-earned produce was being wasted. I also felt bad thinking about the natural resources—water, fertilizers, electricity—used to grow them.

After class, I went home and asked my parents how we could prevent such waste. My mother smiled and said, “Nothing goes to waste in our field.” She explained that she brings home the bruised or odd-shaped vegetables and gives them to our neighbors. I felt very happy hearing this.

At school, I asked my friends what they do with their rejected vegetables. Most said they simply leave them in the field. I shared my mother’s idea, but my friends did not take it seriously. They joked that they did not have time to collect vegetables and give them to others.

That evening, I told my parents that I wanted to collect the rejected vegetables myself and give them to my friends the following weekend. They agreed. From that week onwards, I began going to our fields every weekend, picking the edible but unsellable vegetables, and sharing them with my classmates and JNAN friends.

If our own field did not have any surplus vegetables, I would check our neighbours' fields. At home, we also have banana trees. We keep what we need, but the rest often ripen all at once and end up getting thrown away. From now on, I plan to share those bananas too instead of wasting them.

Kodaikanal is an agricultural region with many farming families. Most of these families have school- or college-going children. Farmers find it difficult to carry rejected vegetables to people who need them. But students like me, who come from farming families, can easily collect edible surplus and share it with those who are hungry. If we do this, we can build a hunger-free Kodaikanal.

We can prevent the waste of produce grown using precious natural resources. Most importantly, it brings me joy to share the vegetables and fruits that my parents and sister grow with their hard work, instead of letting them rot.

If you live in Kodaikanal and come from a farming family, you too can do what I am doing—collect edible vegetables and share them with people who need them. Join me.

Thank you.



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