

## NIZHAL

### ANNUAL REPORT 2015 - 16

In this, our 11th year of service to trees and Nature, Nizhal has taken remarkable steps in many new areas. Our work has been possible entirely due to the dedication of our team of volunteers and support of well-wishers. We wish to remember with gratitude and fondness the guiding spirit of our Chief Advisor the Late Mr. G Dattatri and our Advisor Mr. SekarRaghavan. This year we have also had the enthusiastic support of our YuVa (youth) member team and Junior YuVa (children's) team!

This year's landmark has been-

#### **CHITLAPAKKAM NEER VANAM (CNV) - Eco restoration around Lakes, Rivers and Water Bodies**

Nizhal, has embarked on a community driven program of eco restoration around waterbodies across Chennai, once known as 'Neernilai Maanagaram', the 'City of Water bodies'! The **Chitlapakkam Lake on 3<sup>rd</sup> Main Road, Chitlapakkam**, is the beginning.

#### **Significance of NeerVanam**

- Creation of green corridor around the water bodies as a bio-shield to strengthen bunds/banks.
- By planting dwindling indigenous tree species, the local biodiversity is restored for a healthy habitat.
- Helps in conserving aquatic ecosystem and facilitate better water management system.
- Acts as a protective barrier that prevents access to heavy vehicles that drain pollutants into the water.

This project was initiated in 2010 and first phase completed on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2016 and the second phase on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2016.

The initiative has drawn a tremendous response and more than 80 members are involved in the social media group monitoring the activities. Every alternate day, a committed volunteer group waters the 200 tree saplings! On weekends, there are more volunteers. The success of this model lies in synergy of **Government, Corporates and Community as a Public Private Partnership (PPP)** and can be replicated around water bodies in Kancheepuram, Chennai and Tiruvallur Districts.

### **KOTTURPURAM TREE PARK (KTP)**

Initiated in 2008 as a joint project of PWD, Nizhal, and Citizens Committee, to commemorate 150<sup>th</sup> year of the PWD. 5-acre rubbish dump has become a biodiversity hotspot of indigenous flora and fauna! **KTP** has become the hub of inspiration and information for students for learning, and a living model for citizens who want to green their neighbourhoods. It is also becoming a repository of seeds of rare indigenous trees.

The heavy rains in November caused heavy flooding at KTP. A team of around 100 volunteers pitched in to bring back the Park to its old glory. The community worked in tandem with Nizhal to protect the trees and restore KTP to its original glory.

Park Day continues to be celebrated with enthusiasm along with the community, to celebrate the Friends of KTP!

### **Happeningat KTP**

- Weekend Shramdaans for corporate volunteers and students.
- A detailed GPS mapping of the trees of KTP
- Seed collection and sapling nurturing
- Mooligai Vanam – our Herb Garden.

KTP is truly a living laboratory for green communities and a model for public-government cooperation. In the Madhavaram, Chitlapakkam and Velachery Tree Parks, regular Shramdaan sessions continue, and inspire visitors to start similar green hubs in their neighborhoods.

### **ASOKA VANAM**

The Asoka tree, which has deep rooted cultural significance and medicinal value, is unfortunately on the IUCN Red list of endangered trees. In an effort to revive the species, a campaign is being conducted, with the setting up of Asoka Vanam.

### **GREENING PROJECTS across the City**

Slum tenements across the city, have been identified for greening with permission from the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board .Kasimedu and Thiruvottriyur are the pilot regions and 26 saplings have been planted in phase-I. This project has all the potential to develop on the lines of our Green Prisons Program!



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In an effort to to revive culturally and historically significant species, the Punnai was chosen for the Mada Streets of Mylapore. 30 saplings have been planted in cement pots and are being nurtured by the local vendors.

In campuses of the Police Department/ housing quarters too!

### **GREEN PRISONS PROGRAM**

Initiated in November 2009 in Puzhal Central Prison, Chennai and now spread across Tamil Nadu - Cuddalore, Trichy, Pudukottai, Vellore, Salem, Madurai, Coimbatore and Palayamkottai Central Prisons.

In collaboration with local experts, initiated organic farming. Now vegetable, fruit, millets, “panchakavyam”, “amirthakaraisal” and compost are all sold under a brand name called 'Freedom Bazaar.'The prisoners in Tamil Nadu generate the highest income among all prisons in India. National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data shows that in 2014, Tamil Nadu prisons generated Rs.36.97 crore in gross earnings – this was the highest in India among all prisons.

Presentations from Nizhal have been shared with Kerala and Maharashtra Prisons Departments, who have been motivated to implement a similar program across their states. The latter have issued a guidelines circular in Marathi citing Nizhal’s pioneering concepts in the Tamil Nadu prisons.

### **YUVA AND JUNIOR YUVA PROGRAMS**

YuVa, Youth Leadership program grooms young leaders to work for the environment and fosters communication skills in the youth through action/ awareness programs. The youth brigade conducts FTCs (Free the Tree Campaigns) and Shramdaan sessions.

Junior YuVa for school children - inspiring green thinking through nature orientation activities. This year, for the first time, we had a structured Junior YuVa program, with monthly modules and sessions .A huge success, this program culminated in the very first tree walk led by children, during the Madras Week! They were also the youngest stall coordinators at the Science City Festival 2016 conducted in QMC College by the Department of Higher Education, Tamil Nadu.

### **TREE WALKS**

Nizhal’s hugely popular Tree Walks spread the message of sensitive greening. Many schools visit KTP for tree walks and are inspired to continue the work in their neighborhoods. Al Qamar Academy has taken up a mapping of trees in their locality!

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The Tree walk by the Junior YuVa team as part of the Madras Week, Wheel chair walks for the differently abled, students from the St Louis School for the Deaf and the Blind...some of the unique tree walks held this year. We also collaborated with The Hindu Young World, to celebrate their anniversary – a simultaneous 4 walks in key locations across the city on Oct 2<sup>nd</sup>.

### **LANDMARK TREE BOARDS...proclaiming Tree Veterans as Heritage!**

In May 2015, Nizhal came out with a bilingual book 'Living Landmarks of Chennai'. In a first, trees and tree species across the city were identified as green heritage and a few in public spaces have been provided with informative boards, recognizing them as landmark trees of Chennai.

This will go a long way in protection of large trees, and kindling an interest in these species. We thank the Corporation of Chennai for requisite permissions.

### **PALLIYIL NIZHAL...working with young minds!**

Nizhal facilitates organic kitchen / herb gardens in Corporation schools and helps improve tree cover in their premises. Resource persons from our Team involve in periodic interactions with students over one year in order to sustain interest and involvement.

Last year, government schools in Damodarapuram, Thiruvottiyur and Perungudi have been taken up.

Also, Knowledge Transfer sessions were held for the teachers of Corporation school, Kottur, on Mugam Maarum Marangal (documenting visible seasonal changes in trees around) - in a Train the Trainers session.

### **INTERNSHIPS**

Foundation for Liberal and Management Education –FLAME, Pune

The School, KFI

Jayagopal Garodia School, Choolaimedu

### **FORGING NEW RELATIONSHIPS.... WITH GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS**

Nizhal, this year, was a member on the Heritage Conservation Committee constituted by the High Court of Madras to find a solution to the issue of their heritage lighthouse structure potentially being damaged by trees.

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We also work with

- Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board
- Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board
- Horticulture Department
- Forest Department
- Police Department
- Prisons Department
- Tamil Nadu Agricultural University
- Corporation of Chennai
- National Green Tribunal
- TANUVAS
- AAVIN
- State Planning Commission

### **OUTREACH**

Nizhal has been invited by various Educational institutions, Residents' Associations to spread message of sensitive and sustained greening.

These include

R A Puram Residents Association

Harrington Road Residents' Association

Gandhi Nagar Residents Association

Mahalingapuram Residents Association

Equals Forum for the Differently abled.

MASH Mixer... *a community of technologically-enabled social change makers!*

We participated in The Hindu - Friends of Chennai Campaign, for a sustained 8 weekend campaign with various communities in Mylapore.

Our Founder Trustee, Ms. Shobha Menon, made presentations to many community groups in Germany, on the healing potential of our landmark work in Community Gardens and Prisons.

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### **Educational Institutions**

Elathur Government School, Tenkasi

Madras Medical College

Al Quamar Academy

The Indian Public School, Perungudi

HLC International, Karanai

NPS International, Perumbakkam

Manthan Vidyashram, Kottivakkam

Madras School of Economics, Kotturpuram

Veerasamy Chettiar Group of Institutions, Puliyangudi

Institute of Advanced Study in Education, Saidapet

TI school, Ambattur

Anna University

Bala Vidya Mandir

Kids Central

Jaigopal Garodia Hindu Vidyalaya MHSS, West Mambalam.

Abacus Elementary School

St.Louis School for the Deaf and the Blind

JRK Matriculation School, Kattankulathur

Pudhupakkam Government School

Chennai High School, Kottur

SRM School of Environment Architecture and Design(SEAD)

Arasu Engineering College, Kumbakonam

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Chevalier T Thomas Elizabeth for Women, Sembium

### **Corporates / Others**

IndusInd Bank

Infosys

Servion

Young Men's Indian Association

Chennai Trekking Club

Lady Bird Consulting

Ten Miles

Tech Mahindra

Rotary International

Cognizant Technology Solutions

Urjanet

Beroe

HCL

DELL

Madras Photographic Society

Weekend Artists

Kalakshetra Foundation

Rotary Club - Bay City

Rotary Club - Chennai Upscale

Rotary Club - Madras Temple City

Rotary Club - Madras East

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Thanni,NGO

MMA - Madras Management Association

Bala Mandhir, T.Nagar

The Hindu - Young World

The Hindu - Friends of Chennai Campaign

Kri Foundation

Explore Differently

Sunnyvale Apartments, Ayanavaram

### **NIZHAL on PUBLIC MINDS!**

We continuously receive calls from people all over the State, for advice on Tree Species selection, on how to save Trees from abuse, to voice/act against cutting of trees, and other information related to Trees. Our website and Facebook page are sought out by tree lovers and saviors. With more and more consensus on Tree Protection increasing, Nizhal is on its journey of “GREENING MINDS, GREENING CITIES”!

### **RECOGNISING EXCEPTIONAL VOLUNTEERS**

#### **T.Krishnarajan Memorial Award**

The award for 2016 for Exceptional Volunteer/s who have helped Nizhal selflessly in a committed and sustained way goes to A. Vinoth Kumar!

The Nizhal Team is grateful to all the members of our large extended family. Together we can make great change happen!