

SIRUTHULI – A Small Drop to Heal the World!

The great Noyyal Valley civilization flourished on the banks of Coimbatore and even had trade links with Romans. The Noyyal River consists of a system of canals, channels, anicuts and lakes, which was constructed during the reign of Chola Kings. The establishment of industries clubbed with population growth and urbanization, resulted in depletion of ground water beyond economical pumping state. The UNDP studies in 1980s, declared Coimbatore drought-prone, with the fastest depletion of ground water level in the whole world. The year 2003 witnessed Coimbatore in its worst, with static ground water table levels gone below 150 feet and the green cover of Mother Nature getting removed massively. Even drinking water became a most demanded commodity. People were reminded of the warning – a third world war for water?! Citizens' conscious rose; their needs roped them in to do something for their city and thus was born Siruthuli to address the water and environmental problems of this region. “Siruthuli”, meaning 'a tiny drop' was formed as a Trust by a few conscientious corporate business houses of Coimbatore - Bannari Amman Group of Companies, Pricol Ltd., LMW Group of Companies, ELGI Group of Companies and Sri Sankara Eye Society in the month of June 2003. These Corporates united to solve the common water and environmental problems in this region, in addition to their respective CSR activities. Siruthuli has accomplished a lot in a short span of 7 years through its core objectives of

1. Water Resources Management
2. Afforestation
3. Waste Management
4. Awareness Programmes

We could realize a handful of activities within the past seven years of services, thus helping to increase the recharge potential of this region. The most remarkable accomplishments are as below:

Water Resources Management

- Desilted and strengthened 7, out of the 9 tanks in the city of Coimbatore that form a part of the system tanks of River Noyyal.
- Desilting and strengthening of Chithirai Chavadi Anicut that diverts and supplies water to all the 7 system tanks which are located in the city.
- As a part of restoration of Noyyal River, encroachments have been removed and boundary stones were laid for a distance of 33 kilometers from its origin.
- Creation of a new water body – Nandangarai checkdam, in the foothills of Western Ghats with a water holding capacity of 150 million liters and thus serves as a water hole for wild animals. Farming community of 1600 hectare area could reap the benefit of this perennial water body.
- Construction of a culvert to ensure free flow of surplus water from Periyakulam to Valankulam, the two major tanks in the heart of the city. The hume pipes between these two tanks were chocked and prevented water flow to Valankulam. The new culvert, constructed with the financial assistance of District Rural Development Agency, Coimbatore is assuring copious water inflow to Valankulam – the pearl of Coimbatore.

- A Micro-level Watershed Development project has been undertaken under the financial assistance of National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) to bring about substantial positive changes in the soil and water conservation to benefit farming community and landless labors covering 1300 hectares in the first phase, which will be replicated throughout the Noyyal River Basin at macro-levels. This project is being executed by the members of the beneficiary group and is a standing example of public-private participation in developing natural resources.
- Further to the request of Hindustan Coca-Cola Pvt Ltd., Siruthuli undertook the task of rejuvenating Nemam Tank with an area of 1000 acres. This project is being executed with the financial support of Hindustan Coca-Cola Pvt Ltd and District Rural Development Agency, Tiruvallur under *Namakku Naame* Scheme.
- Artificial recharge through construction of rainwater harvesting structures by Siruthuli is being carried out in various stages. In the first stage 154 structures were constructed and seeing the efficacy of the project in preventing water logging and facilitating better recharge of ground water, the Govt of India has appointed Siruthuli to implement 215 more structures in the city of Coimbatore and the work is in progress.

(A report on this novel project is attached as separate attachment)

Afforestation

- Afforestation programme is named “Pasumai Payanam” (means Journey into the Green) and was flagged off by the then President of India His Excellency Dr APJ Abdul Kalam in 2005.
- The project aims to plant 1.5 million saplings in the city of Coimbatore whose population is 1.5 million, thus restoring the green cover back to the region thereby increasing the lung spaces.
- “Viduthalai Pasumai Payanam” is a green endeavor involving the inmates of Central Prison, Coimbatore wherein they raise saplings to be planted through out the city. This venture looks forward to produce 10% of the total sapling required to switch this region to a rich fertile green belt.
- “Kaakkum Pasumai Payanam” is the green endeavor in which the Coimbatore City Police joins hands to raise one lakh saplings in their campus, to be planted in various places within their jurisdiction.
- Afforestation drives are being held regularly and so far 3 lakhs saplings have been planted and are being maintained by Siruthuli in various parts of the city.
- “Pasum Pulari” is the current green venture of Siruthuli in line with the International Year of Forests (2011), aiming to plant 1 lakh saplings in 2011, roping in eco-conscious public from various walks of life. Cine Actors T. Sivakumar and Chiyan Vikram lend their supporting hands to ensure the public participation for planting trees.
- School students, volunteers, environmentalists and philanthropists throughout the city, join hands with Siruthuli in restoring the green splendor of the Noyyal River Basin.

Awareness Programmes

Siruthuli, that started its journey through the hands of a few Corporate Houses in Coimbatore, is now undoubtedly a people's movement. The broad involvement of public and children in the programmes organized by Siruthuli is single enough to explain how this small movement is accepted by the public. The activities of Siruthuli would not have been a success without the participation of the public. In order to ensure maximum participation from the citizens of Coimbatore and also to make them aware of the importance of preserving nature, avoiding pollution, maintaining eco-balance and need for rainwater harvesting many programmes have been planned and executed by the Siruthuli team such as:

- Noyyal Yathra held in 2005, witnessed the participation of 1,00,000 people marching with us through the banks of River Noyyal, showing their support to Siruthuli and calling for the restoration of the river
- Namadhu Valankulam, (Our Valankulam) was in 2006, in which thousands of people turned up for a signature campaign to save the Valankulam Tank, which is located in the heart of the city.
- Nadhikkarai Nagareekam (River Valley Civilizations) intended to make people, aware of the various environmental bounties our ancestors enjoyed which can still be revived and used. Students came out with working models and cultural galas to educate the general public, after much research and explorations.
- World Water Day (March 22nd), World Environment Day (June 5th) and Siruthuli's Annual Day (June 11th) are celebrated every year so as to bring in awareness among the public regarding the need for protecting and conserving the precious resources we have.
- Summer Camps for school students are being held every year during April-May with the goal of spreading environmental consciousness among the future inhabitants of this Earth and thus to bring into being a new generation that is environmentally responsible.
- Noyyalukku Nooru was an awareness-cum-fund raising programme in which Cine Actor Surya joined hands with Siruthuli, appealing the public to join the cause and to contribute Rs 100/- each for the restoration of River Noyyal.
- "Siruthuli Peruvellam... andrum indrum" was a two day exposition inaugurated by Dr . APJ Abdul Kalam to trace the history of water conservation techniques since ages. More than 1000 students participated and had received wide appreciation from the citizens.

Siruthuli's small initiatives could bring about a drastic change in the quantity and quality of ground water status of Coimbatore. The water table level which was beyond 150 feet depth in the year 2003 is now available at 20-40 feet depth. All the water bodies could be brought back to its pristine glory and now serves as a source for recharging ground water. Restoration of River Noyyal is no longer a distant dream, but a distinct reality – for which Siruthuli solicits involvement of people, public support, government assistance and experts' guidance with internal and external funding sources. As the saying goes - its little drops that make a mighty ocean. We, at Siruthuli, are committed and determined to restore nature's bounty to this region. Let us be the drop that can heal the world and can make this world a better place for our future generations to thrive in.