Velliangiri Hills Conservation Campaign

The sacred Seven Hills of the Velliangiri Mountains, known as the Kailash of the South, in the outskirts of Coimbatore has been a popular pilgrimage spot in this part of the country. Spiritual lore has it that many siddhas and bodiless beings have lived and graced these mountains with their energies. Lakhs of people undertake this arduous 8km trek during the period between Mahashivarathri and Chitra Pournami every year. Full and new moon nights are considered especially auspicious for the pilgrimage. The rare medicinal herbs found on these mountains, the exotic flora and fauna of these mountains adds to the mystical color of the pilgrimage.

However, in the recent years with the sharp increase in the number of pilgrims and the usage of polythene packing materials have led to littering of the mountains, contaminating the water sources and threatening the serenity and sanctity of these Mountains.

An exemplary effort to preserve the cultural heritage and the environment has been undertaken during this year, which is being observed as the International Year of the Mountains. The volunteers of Vanashree Eco Center and Isha Yoga Center situated in the foothills of these Mountains in association with the Forest Department and the Temple Authorities have undertaken to conserve the ecology of these Mountains.

In a comprehensive campaign launched by Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, founder of Isha Foundation, Thavathiru Shanthalinga Adigalar, head of Perur Mutt, Shri S.R. Balasubramaniam, MLA, Thondamuthur constituency on the 27th of May 2002, over 250 volunteers including 30 school children from various part of Tamil Nadu trekked up the trail on weekends during June and July and cleared the litter left behind by the pilgrims. At the end of the cleaning about 125 bags of these wastes have been gathered at the base at the Velliangiri Andavar Temple to be handed over for recycling or scientific disposal of the same.

Subsequent to cleaning of Mountains, Vanashree Eco Center will conduct regular treks to the Velliangiri peak on second Saturday and Sundays of each month. Starting from the Yoga Center in the wee hours of the morning the trekkers will assess the situation and undertake projects to provide proper drinking water, waste disposal and sanitation facilities for the pilgrims during the coming season. These programs are being planned and implemented by the volunteers who frequent Isha Yoga Center from all part of the state. By involving school children and public in the process of conservation, it is intended to strengthen the hands of the authorities and in the process and spread the massage of conservation in the society.

Efforts are underway to provide cloth bags to the pilgrims in order to avoid usage of plastic carry bags. These bags could be taken home and reused thus promoting the concept of reuse of resources and the use of biodegradable substitutes to plastic materials. The Eco Center will also engage a large team volunteers to educate the pilgrims about the hazards of plastic wastes. It is also proposed to involve the pilgrims in the afforestation of the denuded areas of these sacred mountains, which were once logged by the British Government, thus bringing about the much-needed synthesis of religious and environmental concerns.

Details of the campaign can be had from Vanashree Eco Center and Isha Yoga Center, Velliangiri foothills, Coimbatore - 641 114. Tel: (651298, 651141).