

A Trip to God's Own Country.... by Sch. S. Uday, SJ

I must say that I was very much privileged to be a part of the Tarumitra delegation that went to Kerala for the inauguration of the extended Bio-reserve center of Tarumitra at Attapadi. From the Arctic in the North to the Antarctic in the South, and everywhere in between our planet teems with life and Kerala is one such place. This was my first visit to Kerala, to "God's own Country". It was an exciting journey from north to south with my friends (Ankit, Avinash, Swetha and Margaret didi). A saying goes, "First



impression is the best Impression." So, stepping down in Kerala for the first time has brought a sense of wonder & surprise in me. You may wonder how that is. Let me tell you how it was, after getting down at Coimbatore station as I travelled in a jeep to go to Attapadi, I was taken aback by looking at the beautiful cinerary outside. The wonderful trees, the huge mountains, the criss-cross ways and the greenery all around. It was awesome and marvelous. I enjoyed looking at God's beautiful creation till I reached my destination (Attapadi).



As I was approaching AADI I was thinking of the place where I would be staying for about 11 days. Finally I reached and I was shocked to see the place not being ready in proper condition. I tried along with my friends to make the place ready for the Inauguration as well as for the kambalam festival. In the process I met various people coming from Tamil Background and I was very happy to meet them, talk to them and work with them. The inauguration of a Jesuit house was a dream come true for the Jesuits not only of Kerala but worldwide. The 'Kambalam' celebration and the Tribals of the place reminded me of how important it is to respect our Mother Earth. Looking at all the Tribals, from old to young, gathering together and commemorating Kambalam, I learnt something about unity and togetherness. Moreover, remembering the words of Fr. Robert that many years back there was only one woman of

whom we all were born and we have the same genes, I became aware that I am a part of this universal family. "Today the Tribals are not given much respect, it is because they are not educated", said the chief of Tribals in his speech. I do agree with him. Education is one area which has to be focused on very much in order to empower the Tribals to live with their rights and dignity. Thanks to Frs. James and Antony for stepping to work with Tribals.

After having a day of relaxation, we (the Tarumitra Delegation) conducted the Eco-Seminar, which was focused on Saving Electricity. Many selected students from 13 schools and colleges participated in it and I was very happy to see them very enthusiastically answering our questions, Planting trees along with us as well as joining their hands with us to save electricity. Our campaign did not stop there but we proceeded by visiting 8 schools in the same district and talked to the students and convinced them about Renewable Resources so as to save electricity for the posterity. I was inspired by the positive response from all of them and felt good.

I also had a wonderful opportunity to pay a visit to Silent Valley National Park, which was yet another place where I enjoyed the trekking. Also my meeting with the Green Community members was an enriching experience for me as I came to know more about the good works that this team is doing for the Environment. We are indebted to the Co-coordinator, Mr. Shobheendran and the Convener, Mr. Shoukat Ali. The best part of this visit to National Park was getting a chance to see the flying squirrel. Really God's creation is something superb.

My last few days were spent in Fr. Robert's house. There I was touched by the hospitality of the family members. I did not feel myself as a stranger but a part of the family. I enjoyed speaking with all, the variety of dishes at the table and going around seeing various places. It was such a loving and caring family and I learnt a lot from all its members and I can never forget any one of them. My stay here was a memorable one as I had a mixture of experiences. One such experience was plucking the coffee beans. I am indebted to Fr. Robert and his family members for all the love and care that I received from them.

Also, I had a pleasant experience as I came in contact with some great personalities like Ms. Hushwant Bish, the Arjun Award winner and her friends, Fr. Rappiai, the environmentalist, etc., and seeing them doing something for the Mother Earth I got lots of motivation and inspiration from them. On the other hand it is disheartening to see the Mono-cultivation in Kerala which is making the God's own Country not so fertile. Something has to be done immediately; otherwise, the Mother Earth will be at stake which means we (humankind) will be at risk. We should think something differently and do act in order to survive and for substantial development.

It was scintillating experience that I had and this trip to Kerala was an opportunity for me to learn many new things for my life and enjoy God's nature which is His precious gift to us.

I am grateful to Fr. T. Nishaant, the principal, Fr. Shushil, the vice-principal and Fr. Robert, the director of Tarumitra for giving me this opportunity and allowing me to be a part of this campaign.

**Almighty God,
Your creation is wonderful and marvelous!
Thank You for,
The creation of soil,
The creation of plants,
The creation of species,
The creation of human kind.....**

S.Uday, SJ