

VIVEKANANDA KENDRA – A RASHTRIYA YAJNA

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Vivekananda Rock Memorial, a unique National monument constructed by the patriotic minded people of India, has become world famous. It has been attracting lakhs of people from India and abroad, giving spiritual light to those who visit the sacred monument. It was Swargiya Eknathji Ranade, who masterminded the construction of Vivekananda Rock Memorial in a record period of six years. He could complete this massive monument with the help of his co-workers from Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Eknathji was chosen by Param Pujaniya Guruji Golwalkar to take up this challenging task. Eknathji with his organisational skill and untiring capacity to do hard work, organised the entire country and not only solved the various problems confronting the construction of the memorial on the sacred spot where Swami Vivekananda meditated for three days and nights and found mission of his life, but also raised funds amounting to Rs.1 crore 30 lakhs by small donations from the common man. He also involved the Central and State governments and also all the leading religious and social luminaries of the country. The Vivekananda Rock Memorial was opened to the public on 2nd September 1970. For Eknathji that was not the end. He conceived of a much bigger monument than the memorial on the rock. To quote his own words, “The Vivekananda Rock Memorial is a memorial to Swamiji in granite stone, but I want a living memorial in flesh and blood to carry Swamiji’s message of selfless service to the nook and corner of the Globe”. As the second phase to the Vivekananda Rock Memorial, Eknathji started the Vivekananda Kendra as a movement to take Swamiji’s message especially to the youth of India.

Vivekananda Kendra is a cadre based organisation where Jeevan Vrati Karyakartas are selected, trained and deployed to take up service activities to the economically backward and tribal areas. Today more than 200 Jeevan Vrati, Vanaprasthi, Shikhsharthi and Sewavrati Karyakartas are rendering service through 209 branch centres situated all over India.

KARYAPADDHATI

Kendra has adopted three Karyapaddhatis to attract people belonging to various strata of society. These are:

1. Samskar Varga
2. Yoga Varga
3. Swadhyay Varga

Kendra Karyakartas are spreading Swamiji’s message of selfless service and love for the country and pride in our culture through these karyapaddhatis. Kendra organizes every year three-stage karyakarta prashikshan shibirs to induct new workers to its cadre. Besides number of camps like Yoga Shibir, Spiritual Retreat, Maitri Shibir, Personality Development Shibir are also organised at different places.

Vivekananda Kendra works to create the awareness for the need of organized work for the regeneration of nation. Such awareness is reflected in its ever-growing activities. Some of these activities are undertaken by the Projects specially created to cater to the needs efficiently. Such Projects are: Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalayas, VK Rural Development Program, VK Natural Resources Development Program, VK Vedic Vision Foundation, VK Arunjyoti, VK Institute of Culture, VK International, VK Medical & Research Foundation.

The activities carried out by all these Projects and the Branch centres are:

- 51 Vidyalayas for tribal and rural children in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Assam, Andamans, Tamilnadu and Karnataka for 21000 approx students. Hostels for Vanavasi children
- 150 Balwadis all over the country
- Running of Non-formal school for preservation of Vedic Vidyas.
- Personality Development Camps for the children and youth.
- Cultural Examinations to increase the awareness in the students about the greatness as well as relevance of Indian culture.
- Non-formal Education through Audio-visuals
- Matru Sammelan and Women Awareness Camps for tribal and rural women to organise women and to motivate them to lead purposeful life.
- Deep Pooja and Shiva pooja
- Vocational Training in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamilnadu
- Amrita Surabhi – Daily offering of handful rice by women, which is collected to feed around 12,000 poor rural children.
- Residential Yoga Shibirs and Spiritual Retreats.
- Promotion of use of natural resources like bio-gas, building materials, herbal medicines.
- Training masons, farmers etc. in appropriate rural technology
- Seminars and lecture series in Vedic Studies and publishing of Vedic literature.
- Seminars, workshops and symposiums to create awareness in ecology
- Seminars and Symposiums on traditions of Vanavasi communities for their protection and promotion.
- Health care camps including Eye, ENT and Teeth check up and operation.
- Inter-civilisational dialogue and understanding in perspective of Hindu civilisation.
- Research and Documentation of traditional Customs, Rituals of Vanavasi communities

KENDRA'S SERVICE PROJECTS

Kendra has also taken up service projects in the field of Education, Rural Development, Natural Resource Development, Medical Centres and Hospitals, Vocational Training Centres and Cultural Institute.

In the field of education, Kendra is running 46 regular schools affiliated to CBSE, out of these 22 are in Arunachal Pradesh, 11 are in Assam, 1 in Nagaland, 9 in Andaman Islands, 2 in Tamil Nadu and 1 in Karnataka. In all these schools, besides other subjects, English, Hindi, Sanskrit and the local language are given prime importance. Regular cultural classes

are conducted in all the schools in order to give value based education to the children. Total number of students studying in Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalayas as on today is approximately 16,000. Kendra has planned to expand its educational activities in the North East region in a big way in the coming years.

Kendra is also running 4 Vocational Training Centres for women, out of which 2 are located in Arunachal Pradesh, 1 in Assam and 1 in Karnataka.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT - GRAM VIKAS

Kendra has adopted 5 Southern district of Tamilnadu namely Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli, Virudhu Nagar, Thoothukudy and Ramanathpuram for the all round development of men, women and children of these economically backward rural areas. As part of these Rural Development Programmes, Kendra runs 75 Balwadies for 2000 children. Its weekly Balasamskar Vargas are held in 200 places attended by 7000 children. Cultural competitions are organised in nearly 1800 schools run by the Government in which nearly 27,000 children have taken part during the last year. Essay competition for college students are organised in which 4766 college students from 101 colleges took part. Deep Poojas are organised in colorful manner in the temple premises, in which 22,230 rural women took part last year. Besides number of Youth Camps and Personality Development Camps were organised as a regular feature for the rural youths.

NATURAL RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (NARDEP)

Under this project, 4 types of activities are undertaken by Kendra:

1. Water shed management
2. Rural Housing
3. Indigenous Medicines
4. Farming .

Technological Resource Centre, an institute for training the workers under these four activities, is set up at Kanyakumari. To supplement these activities further, a **Gramodaya Darshan Park** with live demonstration unit is also established in Vivekanandapuram campus.

ARUNJYOTI

A programme for the multi-dimensional development of the Arunachali society – Arunjyoti is a part of the Rural Development Project organised by the Vivekananda Kendra in Arunachal Pradesh. Through this programme Kendra desires to organize the Arunachali people and awaken their dormant spirit. Programs are organised by different manchs namely - Yuva Manch, Mahila Manch, Swasthya Seva Manch, Sanskritik Manch and Anoupacharik

Shiksha Manch. Rural Development programmes are also organised in the rural areas of Andaman islands, Jharkhand, Assam and Maharashtra. Kendra will be intensifying these activities in these states in coming years.

Vivekananda Kendra Medical Research Foundation is running a hospital in the Numaligarh Refinery Township complex. This 40 bedded well equipped hospital not only caters to the needs of the 4000 members of staff and family of the refinery, but also attends to peoples of 13 surrounding villages.

VIVEKANANDA KENDRA INTERNATIONAL

In order to take Swami Vivekananda's message abroad and also engage in civilisational and religious dialogues, Kendra has set up **Vivekananda Kendra International**. This was inaugurated by the then Prime Minister of India Shri. Atal Behari Vajpayee on 23rd May 2003. A plan to construct a suitable building on a plot allotted by the Government of India at Chanakyapuri has been approved by the NDMC.

VIVEKANANDA KENDRA INSTITUTE OF CULTURE – GUWAHATI, ASSAM

The **Vivekananda Kendra Institute of Culture**, Guwahati, Assam is established with the purpose of discovering the cultural continuity of the North Eastern states with rest of India. The Institute has been successfully organizing number of seminars in all the seven states of North East Region. Some of the seminar papers have been published in the form of book and are available for general public who are interested to know the colorful, cultural life of North East.

KENDRA PUBLICATIONS

As part of the its various activities Kendra has been bringing out number of books and periodicals based on India's cultural ethos. During the year Kendra has published its second edition of the book "**India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture**" which was released by the Vice-President Sri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat on 22nd February 2004. The third edition of the book "**Comprehensive Biography of Swami Vivekananda**" authored by Prof. S. N. Dhar will be coming out very shortly. Kendra has brought out books authored by Mananeeya P Parameswaranji, President Vivekananda Kendra – "**Marx and Swami Vivekananda**", "**Heart Beats of Hindu Nation**", "**Gita and its Social Impact**".

Vivekananda Kendra's periodicals are

1. **Yuva Bharati** – English monthly;
2. **Vivekananda Kendra Patrika** – English thematic half yearly;

3. **Kendra Bharati** – Hindi monthly;
4. **Vivek Vani** – Tamil monthly;
5. **Vivek Vichar** – Marathi four monthly;
6. **Jagriti** – Assamese-English quarterly;
7. **Vivek Sudha** – Gujarati quarterly.

All these periodicals are mainly meant for the general public, particularly for the youth.

Besides the above mentioned service activities, number of regular activities are organised in Vivekananda Kendra campus. There are four exhibition maintained by Kendra:

1. **Arise ! Awake!** – The exhibition depicting the vision, life and message of Swamiji.
2. **Wandering Monk** – Depicts Parivrajaka phase of Swamiji.
3. **Gangotri** – An Exhibition highlighting Manaeeya Eknathji's life and the Kendra work.
4. **Bharat Gramodaya Darshan Park** –The pictorial and live demonstration in ideal management of water, housing, health and herbal medicine

Vivekanandapuram Campus also provides accommodation for one thousand people at a time visiting Kanyakumari at a considerably lower tariff. Visitors can stay here in a “*Home away from home*” atmosphere amidst serene surroundings close to the sea.

VIVEKANANDA KENDRA PRATISHTAN

Kendra's growing number of Jeewanvratīs are being trained and maintained from the generous financial support received from the lakhs of well wishers and donors. Kendra is a National Yajna in which participation from all the patriotic and socially conscious minded people is most welcome.

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