

Heartfelt Homage



Mr Albert Joseph's body is kept for the homage



Dr Antony Kariyil places the wreath on behalf of FVTRS



Dr Antony Kariyil gives message during funeral ceremony



The body of Mr Albert Joseph is laid to rest

“Cowards die many times before their deaths; The valiant never taste of death but once.” - *William Shakespeare*

Mr Albert Joseph, the valiant, tasted death on 30 December, 2013. Yet his memories live long in our minds. He joined FVTRS as the Executive Director on 1 September, 2005. He was a man of vision and this enabled him to steer FVTRS in the right direction. Let us recall certain milestones in his life.

Through his untiring efforts FVTRS obtained FCRA number in 2008. He knew that FVTRS could grow only with the support of various stakeholders. He created strong linkages and networks at various levels such as State, Regional, National and International. As a result, FVTRS gets continuous funding support from Misereor, Germany. He succeeded in getting two 3-year projects from the European Union (2007-2009 and 2010-2012). He mobilised the services of Senior Experten Services (SES), Germany for capacity building programmes.

He ensured that FVTRS entered into collaborative ventures with International Labour Organisation (ILO) for training of EDP trainers, National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) for vocational and academic certification, and Global Education Network of Young Europeans (GLEN) for internship. He also created linkages with the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE), Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), National Skill Development Agency (NSDA), National Skill Development Council (NSDC), National Institute of Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD), Directorate General of

Employment and Training (DGET), Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD), Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Indo-German Chamber of Commerce (IGCC), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Houston Community College, USA.

It was the initiative of Mr Albert Joseph to organise the annual events such as National Skill Conference (From 2007) and Founder Memorial Lecture (From 2009). A classic example of his vision for FVTRS is that he desired to organise the NSC as the Indian National Skill Congress with the support of the two ministries - i.e. Ministry of Labour and Employment and Ministry of Rural Development from 2014.

Another example of his far-sightedness is that he mobilised the support of the Board members and resources to purchase a piece of land in Bangalore to construct the office building for FVTRS. The construction work began in October 2013. A few days before his death he visited the building site to observe its progress. It is indeed a great achievement during his career. The credit goes to him for his tireless efforts towards this work.

George Eliot said “Our dead are never dead to us until we have forgotten them”. FVTRS family will never forget the good deeds of Mr Albert Joseph. May he continue to live in our hearts, inspire and guide all those who have made commitment to promote skills training!

From the President

Though the year 2013 had a happy beginning, it had a sad ending. We have lost our beloved Albert Joseph. Due to prolonged illness he did endure lot of physical suffering. Yet, the illness could never defeat his 'will power' till he breathed his last on 30th December, 2013. We all know that he had a clear vision for FVTRS and in order to make his dream come true he toiled till the end of his life. All those who worked with him closely, especially the staff and board members, have witnessed his unending and ever-burning zeal to serve the needy, marginalised and the underprivileged communities, specially the school dropout and illiterate youth.

We all agree that he did set FVTRS on the 'Forward Mode'. His far-sightedness formed a base for this achievement. During his tenure as the Executive Director he succeeded in accomplishing major tasks like, resource mobilisation, advocacy-lobbying, networking with various stakeholders, entering into collaborative ventures and construction of a permanent office building for FVTRS etc. There was also perceptible positive change as regards the coverage of the target youth group. We are sure that his guiding spirit will help us to take FVTRS forward in order to achieve its objectives. In one voice of solidarity let us invoke "O Lord! Grant him eternal rest!"

During the quarter the major event has been the 7th National Skill Conference held in Hyderabad from 27-29 November, 2013. The participation of Shri Kodikunnil Suresh, Hon'ble Minister of State for Labour and Employment, Govt. of India; Shri JD Seelam, Hon'ble Minister of State (Revenue), Ministry of Finance, Govt. of India; Dr Santhosh Mathew, Jt. Secretary and Director, National Rural Livelihoods Mission, Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India and various high profile government officials has been a real boost for FVTRS and its partners. FVTRS has initiated a follow-up with MoLE for MES scheme and MoRD for NRLM scheme. The issues such as Community Colleges, skill training initiatives under Corporate Social Responsibility, skill opportunities in Agro Industries, Entrepreneurship Development and Government Schemes etc. need to be discussed further and appropriate actions initiated in our operational areas so that the lives of the underprivileged youth may be illumined. I wish you all the best in this New Year-2014.

Dr Antony Kariyil

CONDOLENCE MESSAGES

"With profound grief we learned about the death of Albert Joseph. We would like to convey our sentiments of deep sympathy to his whole family and relatives. Misereor joins you in mourning a great loss which the family as well as the staff of FVTRS is suffering. We would like to express our heartfelt appreciation of Albert's dedicated work. His relation to Misereor was always fruitful and inspiring. We admired his intelligent and goal-oriented way to deal with international government agencies. Please accept our sincere condolences."

- Dr Anselm Meyer Antz and team, Misereor, Germany

With great shock and sadness I have learned that Albert Joseph suddenly died. I hereby express my deepest condolence. I know him as a dedicated and qualified Director who has contributed immensely to the success of FVTRS and actively cooperated with me when I was working for MISEREOR. It was always a pleasure to partner with him and with his team. My prayers are with him and his family. I pray to the Almighty to give you, the staff and his family the fortitude to bear the irreparable loss.

- Steffen Ulrich, Former technical officer of MISEREOR, Germany

"We are sad to hear about the passing away of Mr Albert Joseph. He has been the moving spirit behind FVTRS-ILO partnership on the ILO's Start and Improve Your Business programme in India. We have always admired Mr Joseph's sincerity of purpose, devotion to work, eye for detail and forward-looking vision for youth. Please accept the ILO's condolences on this loss. We convey our sympathies to Mr Joseph's family."

- Tine Staermose, Director, ILO-Delhi

"Words seem inadequate to express the sadness we feel about the death of Mr Albert Joseph. We at NIOS are here to support you in your grieving process. We understand that words are not enough to heal this great loss. We express our sincere sympathy to FVTRS family and Albert Joseph's aggrieved family members. All the officers and employees of NIOS pray to God for giving strength to bear this loss and peace to the departed soul. We are with you at this moment of sorrow."

- Dr SS Jena, Chairman, NIOS, Delhi

I share with you the very painful feeling of loss. Mr Joseph was a wonderful person. His exemplary deep compassion for the underprivileged and his untiring very successful efforts to help those in need have set very high standards. I shall always remember him as a very credible role model.

- Manfred Maurer, SES BONN, Germany

I am reading your message deeply shocked. Albert has been such an extra-ordinary man in his fight for the poor and the marginalised in India. I will always remember his great enthusiasm and his energy invested in developing FVTRS as a strong voice and a viable force for promoting vocational skills development. I do remember his humour and his great skill working with people. Please pass our sincere condolences to his family and closest friends. Our deep thoughts are with you.

- Ralf Lange, FAKT Consult for Management, Training und Technologies GmbH, Germany

My sincere condolences! May his soul rest in peace!

- JP Rai, Director General, National Skill Development Agency, Delhi

I am deeply saddened at the passing away of Mr Albert Joseph. May his soul rest in peace! My condolences for his bereaved family and all those closely associated with him through FVTRS.

- Archbishop William SJ, Patna

I am shocked at the news of the demise of Mr Albert. My heartiest condolences and assurance of prayers! May his soul rest in peace! He has been a champion of vocational education in the country and leaves a void. He had big dreams for skill development in India and was one of those who pioneered the cause. We shall surely miss him and his leadership.

- Fr VM Thomas, Provincial, Don Bosco, Guwahati

My heartfelt condolences and deep sorrow over the sudden demise of Mr Albert Joseph! His association with SKIP and me personally is memorable and I miss him a lot. May his soul rest in peace!

- Bro. Thomas C.A., Chairman, SKIP, Bangalore

CONDOLENCE MESSAGES / HOMAGE

We are very much shocked by this sad news. We pray that God may give peace to his soul. His contributions and concern for the cause of poor people, including tribals and downtrodden of Odisha, will be remembered forever. He was a man with a mission. May God give courage to his family members and relatives to bear this great loss and his absence!

- Seba Jagat family members, Odisha

This is truly shocking news. On behalf of Bethany Society we share our sorrow and condolences with his family and all at FVTRS. He was a visionary who contributed so greatly to the skill enhancement in the non-formal sector particularly for the marginalised. His presence will be deeply missed, but his contribution and vision will continue. May his soul rest in peace! -

Director, staff and students of Bethany Society, Meghalaya

Truly this news comes as a complete shock. Mr Albert has been one of the key reasons why many of us, working on the skills domain, have come together on several occasions. I will remember numerous thought-provoking conversations with him on skilling the unreached, way forward for FVRTS etc. It is very rare to find someone so open to share, willing to learn, and optimistic...even at his age. My sincere regards to his family. It is our collective loss. -

Poornima Dore, Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, Mumbai

I am very sad on hearing this news. He was such a dynamic person and had taken FVTRS to dizzy heights. May God Almighty give his family the strength to get over this and may his soul rest in peace! -

Raju Teron, Ex-FVTRS Staff, Guwahati

Homage Meeting at Daringbadi



A condolence meeting was jointly organised at Daringbadi in Odisha on 10th January 2014, by Jagruti and Phulbani Action Group. The meeting was attended by over 1000 people from Women groups, Farmers' clubs, elected PRIs and friends.

The meeting was presided over by Dr PSN Rao, Chairman, Jagruti. Mr Sailendra Jena, OAS, BDO, Daringbadi, Mr Susanta Kumar Pradhan, Chairman, Panchayat Samiti, Daringbadi, representatives from different non-profit organisations of the district such as Sarapancha, Badabanga, Partamaha, Daringbadi, Danekbadi, Budaguda, Sraniketa and Subala Pradhan, ZP member and others paid homage to the departed soul.

The speakers remembered the good works done by Mr Albert Joseph, especially, 72 school buildings constructed, introduction of vegetable cultivation, Khali movement and his compassion for the poor. The speakers mentioned how he mobilised Government resources- Rs 500 crores- to take up skill training for school dropout and illiterate youth.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE QUARTER

Visitor from Misereor

Dr Anselm Meyer Antz, Officer for Vocational Training and MEP from Misereor, Germany visited FVTRS on 24 October. FVTRS staff presented highlights of 2012-13 and progress report of FVTRS up-to-date. He discussed on various project grants with the Programme and Finance staff.

Meeting with Minister

As a follow-up of the National Skill Conference Ms Koely Roy and Mr Felix D'Souza met Shri Suresh Kodikunnil, Hon'ble Minister of State for Labour and Employment on 5 December, 2013 at his office and discussed about the possible collaboration between the Ministry and FVTRS and its Partners together to implement the MES and other schemes. They requested the Ministry to depute its concerned officials to the regional meetings planned by FVTRS in Bangalore, Lucknow and Guwahati and share with the partners about the process of registering themselves with the Ministry and also availing its schemes.

Australian students' visit

BREADS-Orissa had requested FVTRS to facilitate for study tour visit of their guest-students from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Australia. Accordingly on 11th November five students along the staff of BREADS-Orissa visited FVTRS. Mr Felix D'Souza facilitated their visit.

Monitoring Visits - 10
Pre-assessment visits - 07
New proposals received - 35
Fund released - 5,58,1235 (for 30 projects)

Visit to MoRD

Ms Koely Roy and Mr Felix D'Souza met Dr Santhosh Mathew, Jt. Secretary and Director of National Rural Livelihoods Mission under the Ministry of Rural Development on 5 December, 2013. As a consequence of this meeting FVTRS decided to send a project proposal to NRLM. The process of online registration is in progress.

FCRA programme

FVTRS received an invitation from the Ministry of Home Affairs to attend the 1-day programme on 8 October in Bangalore on the amendments in the FCRA Act 2010. Mr Felix D'Souza and Ms Noyala Sheela attended the same.

HRM programme

FVTRS organised a 3-day Human Resource Management programme for the Diocesan Directors of Kerala and Karnataka in collaboration with Kerala Social Service Forum and Karnataka Regional Organisation for Social Service (KROSS) from 22-24 October in Bangalore. Dr Cherian Joseph was the resource person who facilitated the programme. 12 Directors from various organisations attended.

Forthcoming

- Workshop on Community Colleges at Chennai
15 February, 2014
- Board Meeting - 25 February, 2014
- New Partners' Meet - March, 2014

FVTRS wishes all the readers
a Happy, Prosperous and Challenging
New Year 2014

National Partners' Meeting



National Partners' meet is inaugurated by Board Members

The meet was held on 27 November, 2013 in Hyderabad. The eminent speakers were Dr Ricardo J Solis, Executive Director, Foreign Relations, Houston Community College, USA and Ms Sheila Eapen, Executive Director, Health and Rehabilitation, USA. Dr Ricardo mentioned in his presentation different types of Community Colleges - i.e. independent institutions, tribal, public and government. The funding comes from local, state, federal grants, foundations and industry. Courses range from 3 months to 2 years on Science and Arts. Community Colleges are located in every city and are accessible, affordable, adaptable and accountable. The credits can also be used to upgrade to higher education. Key motivators are counselling and mentoring students from the stage of joining to placement.

Ms Sheila Eapen spoke about the human aspect of Community Colleges excluding the technical aspect. She highlighted some positive aspects based on her personal and family experiences on Community College.

Three partners- Ms Shabana Begum from Shilpsree Mahila Seva Samiti, Lucknow; Mr Swamy Naik, HELP, Karnataka and Mr Francis Antony, ISRD, Bhopal participated in the sharing session on NIOS scheme.

A session was conducted by FVTRS staff, Mr Felix D'Souza, Ms Divya, and Mr Nicholas on projects related matters which included the following:

- Partners achievement report card
- 90 per cent partners implemented project without deviation
- EDP and HIV/AIDS awareness organised
- 97 per cent have submitted accounts on time
- Areas for improvement

90 partners from across the country, FVTRS staff and board members Dr Antony Kariyil, Ms Koely Roy, Mr Jagadananda, Dr Ghandi Doss, Dr Hubby Mathew and Mr GS Sethi were present.

7th National Skill Conference

Day -1:

The NSC was inaugurated on 28 November, 2013 by Shri Suresh Kodikunnil, Hon'ble Minister of State for Labour and Employment, Govt. of India. In his inaugural address the Hon'ble Minister emphasised on the need for developing huge skilled manpower to the extent of as high as 500 million by the year 2022. This target is not only sky-high but also is complicated because of nearly 85 per cent working population being in the unorganised sector. Government of India at the highest level is seized of this problem and in consideration of this enormous challenge formulated a National Policy on Skill Development in 2009.



Hon'ble minister Suresh Kodikunnil addressing the participants

In order to put the objectives of this policy in implementation mode, a Directorate General of Employment and Training under the Ministry of Labour and Employment has set in motion a number of schemes including the skill development initiatives schemes which provides for short-term modular training. Appreciating the work being done by FVTRS he offered to tie-up with FVTRS through appropriate mechanism and invited proposals from FVTRS. Already having collaboration with ILO and NIOS, FVTRS has now another golden opportunity to tie-up with the Ministry of Labour and Employment. Earlier Ms Koely Roy, Vice-President welcomed the dignitaries and participants. Dr J Alexander delivered the keynote address. Dr Ricardo J Solis spoke on Community Colleges in USA. Dr Ghandi Doss proposed the vote of thanks. Dr Antony Kariyil, presided over the inaugural session. In the next session Mr ML Satyan, Programme Manager made a brief presentation on FVTRS. Followed by this, Ms Sachi Kumari, Mr Satyanaran Pattanayak and Fr Corlis Gonsalves shared the best practices that are implemented in their skill training programmes.

Special Address: "This country needs a corporate world that would champion the cause of skill development and quality training. Our training should relate to a positive development oriented strategy" said Prof KC Reddy, Chairman, REEMAP, Government of Andhra Pradesh, in his address. He mentioned that REECAP was started in 2011 to train 10 lakh youth in 3 years. This programme is driven by MIS to track attendance and participation, involves quality training by industry partner, focuses on innovative training and placement and the outcome is measured by placement. He emphasised very much on skill training and said that there is a need to bridge the gap between market and skills provided. According to him skill development should not be in isolation but should be overall development.



Prof. KC Reddy delivers the Special Address

Two thematic sessions on "New opportunities - skills for livelihood" and "From skills, jobs to entrepreneurship" were held during which presentations were made by resource persons Mr Devendra Chowdary, Bro Francis, Mr Vamsi Krisshna, Dr C Rani, Ms Anjana Chellani and Ms Rama Devi. In the evening a group of University students performed cultural programme consisting of classical and semi-classical dances.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE QUARTER



Hon'ble minister JD Seelam addresses the participants during NSC

Day -2:

A special session was held from 9.30 to 10.30 AM, on 29 November, 2013. Shri J D Seelam, Hon'ble Minister (Revenue), Ministry of Finance, Govt. of India was the Chief Guest. He said that it was a great privilege for him to be part of a gathering which works untiringly facing innumerable hurdles at grass root level. He mentioned that there is a requirement of 50 million skilled people and we need partners who can work with educated, semi-educated unemployed school dropout youth and give them adequate skills and empower them with working skills, livelihood skills and place them in suitable jobs. He said that we need to go beyond the realm of bureaucratic rules, sow the seeds for women empowerment, empathise with the marginalised and build a skilled workforce. He also requested for the active participation of all non-profits in their feedback and sharing their experiences in the formulation of policies to help in bridging the gap between the government and the beneficiaries. Dr J Alexander welcomed the Chief Guest. Dr Ghandi Doss proposed the vote of thanks and Ms Koely Roy presided over the session.



Ms April S Wells making her presentation on Community Colleges

Five thematic sessions were held on “Addressing the local needs of skill training through Community Colleges”, “Skill training opportunities in Agricultural Infrastructure and Agro Industries”; “Livelihood opportunities in Naturopathy”; “Health challenges the youth face in India” and “Skill training initiatives under CSR”. Dr Xavier Alphonse, Ms April S Wells, Mr Rajsekhar Reddy Seelam, Dr R Mrinalini Gopinath, Dr PSN Rao, Prof Srujana Kumar, Dr Manish Joshi and Dr Avanish Kumar made presentations.



Special Address by Dr A Santhosh Mathew

During the Valedictory Session a special address was given by Dr A Santhosh Mathew, IAS, Ph.D, Jt. Secretary and Director, NRLM, Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India. In his address he explained the NRLM project in detail. The Guest of Honour Shri JC Sharma, IAS, Principal Secretary to Government, Labour, Employment, Training and Factories Department, Govt. of AP briefly mentioned about the skill training programmes promoted by AP Government. The session was chaired by Dr J Alexander. Mr Felix D'Souza proposed the vote of thanks during which eight trainees were given opportunity to share briefly about their skill training experiences, their present jobs and income. All the trainees were felicitated by the Chief Guests with gifts. Two local partners, Mr Anthony Reddy and Mr Ajay Babu were also felicitated with FVTRS memento and gift for their support, cooperation and service to FVTRS team towards NSC.

MODEL PROJECTS

FVTRS promotes agriculture based skill training since food security is a major concern. Kottayam Social Service Society, a partner organisation of FVTRS, has gone far ahead in this field. Hence KSSS' activities are presented here as model projects.

Pioneering Activities of KSSS

Bio gas Plant

The Janatha RCC model Biogas plant constructed at KSSS has a capacity of 25 cubic metre and is the biggest unit in the locality. It is capable of digesting 300 kilograms of organic waste and producing fuel equivalent to eight kilograms LPG, thereby providing adequate amount of gas for 18 hours of cooking at Chaithanya canteen. The recently completed biogas plant was inaugurated by Shri KP Mohanan, Hon'ble Agricultural Minister of Kerala. The Minister stated that this was an exemplary step for waste management at source and sustainable energy production. He encouraged the society to adopt such kind of greener waste management and energy production technologies. KSSS is taking initiative to solve the problems of mounting waste and energy crisis through the provision of different types of biogas plants like portable biogas plant to the public with government subsidy.



Poly House

With an aim to promote the agricultural sector, and to familiarise the farmers with modern farming technique models, KSSS has set up a Poly House in its premises as a model unit. Poly House farming is part of a hi-tech agricultural system of practices and is used to obtain the maximum yield from minimum land area. It employs various scientific technologies including sophisticated micro-irrigation systems. Another merit of the Poly House is that it enables farmers to cultivate in all seasons and therefore crops can be cultivated in the off seasons also. In the 400 square meters Poly House which has been commissioned at KSSS with the cooperation of State Horticulture Mission pea cultivation has been done. In this model Poly House the first seedling of the first pea cultivation was planted by His Grace Mar Kuriakose Kunnacherry, Archbishop Emeritus. It will continue to present itself as an exemplary model for those who seek innovative farming models.



1 fish 1 paddy project - A case study

This project undertaken jointly by 2 sub-groups of members of Navajeevan Farmers' SHG in Makil village has emulated wonderfully the rather new concept of 1 Fish 1 Paddy. 13 farmers are involved in this farming project in which about 15 acres of paddy land is under cultivation. They started with the fish cultivation in 2012 in 4 acres of land and following the fish harvest, used the land for rice cultivation.



MODEL PROJECTS

The group of farmers started the project with the assistance extended under the LIFE Project and systematically went about the procedures - acquiring the baby fishes, treating the farm land, constructing the bunds to hold the water, establishing pump sets etc. They maintained the records of the processes involved so that the project is transparent and there will be no room for conflicts among the farmers involved.



The yield from the fish farming did not rise up to their expectations owing to a low water table in the surrounding areas than estimated. They had to use two pump sets to maintain a minimum water level but the harvest was not so heartening. However, they are positive that they have learnt a lot from the process and that they would get a better yield in the following year. The group had secured the support of ADAK (Agency for Development of Aquaculture, Kerala) to get fish babies initially.

As of now their hopes are cast upon the approaching rice harvest. They are keen to follow the schedule recommended by the agricultural experts as to the time and quantities for fertiliser and pesticide applications. They forecast that for an optimum profitable harvest they require a yield of around 2 to 2.5 quintals of rice per acre.

The group has identified different agencies for selling the produce and has evaluated the most cost effective ones. They deem that selling their grain produce to the Civil Supplies which is a government undertaking will be the most profitable. Another area in which they used government services was in treating the land - wherein they utilised the services of women in their Panchayat ward who were registered under the Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Generation Programme.

KSSS appreciates the hard work of the group and looks forward to developing such initiatives further as model programmes for other villagers to engage in. This type of group endeavours is especially relevant in these times when Kerala is facing criticism about its shortage in food production and over dependence on neighbouring States for its minimum requirements.



Annual Food Security Campaign

The campaign vehicle was designed in the form of a Frog beside a few Mushroom on the theme, 'Food Security and Bio-diversity for Sustainable Development'.



The Road-show campaign was flagged off on November 2, 2013 by Shri Thiruvanchoor Radhakrishnan, Hon'ble Minister for Home Affairs, Govt. of Kerala. The Flag-off ceremony organised at the Thirunnakara Bus Stand attracted the public and many of the on-lookers participated enthusiastically in the competitions arranged for men and women. Prizes were distributed and coconut-climbing machines were presented to the participants of the ongoing batch attending 1-week training in coconut tree climbing at KSSS' Regional Centre in Kidangoor. The Road-show and Publicity Campaign vehicle travelled around the operational villages of KSSS and encouraged the self help group members and the general public to participate in the 16th Farmers' Fair that was organised from December 4 to 8, 2013 at KSSS.

Update on Modular Employable Skills (MES) - A Vocational Training Scheme Supported by the Ministry of Labour & Employment Government of India

MES is the 'Minimum Skills Set' which is sufficient for gainful employment.

Objective: Provide vocational training to school leavers, existing workers, ITI graduates, etc. and improve their employability by optimally utilising the infrastructure available in Govt., private institutions and the industry. Existing skills of the persons can also be tested and certified under this scheme.

It is a demand driven Short Term Training Courses, based on Modular Employable Skills (MES) decided in consultation with industry/stakeholders. Central Government will facilitate and promote training while industry, private sector and state government will train the persons. It has Flexible Delivery Mechanism (part-time, weekends, full-time, on-site/offsite) to suit the needs of various target groups and different levels of programmes (foundation level as well as skill up-gradation). The services of existing or retired faculty or guest faculty are be utilised and courses will also be available for persons who have completed 5th standard. Testing the skills of trainees by independent assessing bodies will be done to ensure that it is done impartially. The essence of the scheme is the certification that will be nationally and internationally recognised. **The major changes are: No registration fee for registering new organisation; no need of giving bank guarantee; no examination fee for the students; the training cost reimbursement is increased to Rs.25 per trainee per hour; Northeast India organisations will get 10 per cent extra.** For more information on scheme and registration, visit the Modular Employable Skills /SDIS section in the websites of Directorate General of Employment and Training (DGET) and Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India.

Messiah of organic revolution

G NAMMALVAR was one of a kind, a messiah of farmers who was revered as a saint-teacher by his followers. He was an agriculture scientist, a graduate of Annamalai University, who left a government job at the research station at Kovilpatti when he realised that he could do nothing for the resource-poor farmers who depend on rains to cultivate their parched land. Thus began an odyssey of half a century when Nammalvar travelled across Tamil Nadu spreading the message of organic farming in his gentle style of story-telling to make farmers understand what is good for them. "By using chemical fertilisers," Nammalvar said early on, "I found that farmers incurred only losses and costs went up. I realised then that in order to get optimal results in farming, farmers should rely minimally on external inputs like fertilisers. This was a turning point in my life." Here, organic farmer **RAMASAMY SELVAM** who first met Nammalvar in 1993, talks about his association with this icon of sustainable farming who passed away on December 30, 2013, while leading a campaign against the plan to extract methane gas in Cauvery delta. He was 75. Every politician of note in Tamil Nadu, from Chief Minister J Jayalalitha to Vaiko of MDMK, mourned his death as "an irreparable loss".

The history of organic farming movement in Tamil Nadu starts with Nammalvar. He always said it is no use trying to teach a farmer. Instead, one should make the farmer understand the issue. He never stopped learning from them himself and had become a vast repository of farming practices and knowledge that he shared with whoever was interested. He never pushed ideas down anyone's throat. Each farm is unique according to the farmers' understanding and the conditions, Nammalvar would say. He would keep experimenting with what he learned from the farmers, refined this knowledge and then gave it back to them.

One of his sayings was: "Farming is not a way of producing crops to make money. It is a way of living, and a way of living that is possible even in the 21st century." He trained hundreds of farm youths as trainers and helped many farmers to be master trainers—all this without government support.

Nammalvar gave up his trousers and shirt and always dressed in a simple way, wearing the same kind of clothes the farmers wore. Sometimes when he would arrive, dirty with travel, someone would give him a new set of clothes and get the old ones washed and ready for his next visit. He learned to speak simply, too, so that he got his message across. Simple sentences



with Tamil proverbs, telling real stories that touched the heart of his listeners. He could keep scientists and agriculture experts also spellbound. He travelled extensively and spent most nights in buses. One evening Nammalvar suddenly asked: "What would you like written on your graves?" All of us said different things. When his turn came, he took a little time and then said: "This is what I want written. 'Here sleeps peacefully a man who disturbed some people's sleep.'" Yes, he now sleeps after rousing thousands from

their sleep. He made his whole life a mission of speaking about the ills of chemical farming and the need for organic farming for nearly four decades.

Once a reporter asked, early in Nammalvar's crusade, if he was sure farmers would switch to organic. He replied: "I don't mind if they do not change now. My work is to tell the truth and sow the seeds. Some seeds germinate quickly if the field is good. Others will take weeks and some will take years. I am sure my seeds are good seeds and will germinate surely even after decades." That has happened. As a result, almost all the political parties have listed support to organic farming in their election manifesto. This silent revolution was sown by him.

The last time I met him was on December 29 at a book release function in Thanjavur. He was very weak so we all pleaded with him not speak. But he refused and said people were there to listen to me. He spoke for more than an hour. After the meeting we urged him to rest for a few days. But he was insistent on continuing his campaign against the gas project in the Cauvery delta. He died the next day in a hamlet called Pisini near Atthipatti in Pattukkotai block. He leaves a vacuum that none can fill. ■

Ramasamy Selvam is coordinator of the Tamil Nadu Organic Farmers' Federation

FVTRS is prepared to organise an Exposure Visit to the Organic Farm of late G Nammalvar in Tamil Nadu. Interested partners may contact FVTRS.

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Readers may send their valuable feedback, comments and suggestions on FVTRS news bulletin.