

Swami Valmiki Sreenivasa Ayyangarya is a revolutionary who does not preach but only prefers to work. What he wants is a change in the mind set of the people of modern times, since they are out of sync with ground realities of agriculture. He is a native of Karnataka but adept in several languages.

How should agriculture be practiced? Nature does not practice anything. When plants grow they exist in a micro environment which is a complete eco system in itself. Hence coffee plantations which we visited on 9th April 2013 in Kodagu in the higher altitudes of Karnataka, bordering Kerala, in the Western Ghat mountain range adopt natural methods of mulching and recycling farm wastes. Although many plantations use fertilizers and pesticides, there are very few who successfully ward off pests and diseases. These were the plantations who had adopted Keshava Krishi methods and Guruvani formulations made out of farm wastes.

A lot of biodiversity was seen in these plantations. Coffee tree grows well under shade in these latitudes. Hence there are a number of trees which are usually tall and these provide the partial shade. Many of these are native to these habitat and trees like silver oak and other conifers are imports possibly by British planters.

Coffee plantations also have pepper vines and cardamom growing in the shade of these trees. Pepper vines are usually climbers on the shade trees. The plantation owners who practice Guruvani making and Keshav Krishi take advice continually on the agronomics. One of such plantations has seen above average size coffee berries. We could also see that these coffee trees were having very large leaves.

In practicing Keshav Krishi, the plantation owner/farmer /plantation worker has to observe nature and determine what to do. The two main techniques are Ekadashi and Trayodashi.

In practicing Keshava Krishi, the study of phenomena is essential. One has to read nature and see what it indicates. Soil acidity/alkalinity are controlled by the complex interplay of soil, flora and fauna.

Inputs for Keshav Krishi agronomy usually do not require costly purchases. Hence savings in costly inputs like pesticides and fertilizers help in improving the economics of coffee plantations who have adopted Keshav Krishi. One of such plantation owner has several cows and a bio gas digester. This provides enough cooking gas for family needs. They also use solar water heaters and solar lamps since power outages are frequent. The remotely located plantations require mobility and usually small vans and mini trucks are used in such small plantations for transportation.

As we spent one night there, we could experience the rapid drop in temperature after sunset. We could have a peaceful sleep without the trouble some mosquitoes which were few and not in such large numbers as we experience in cities. This is remarkable since that plantation had two large ponds, in one of which we had a refreshing bath.

It was indeed a pristine environment with a large biodiversity of plants and some animals, birds and an example of how monoculture plantations can be made to be environment friendly and exist in harmony with nature, as much as possible. The way towards sustainability in agriculture?