

26<sup>th</sup> May, 2016  
Stream Garden Retreat & Conference Centre  
**Organisation Update Announcement**

Dear Friends of Stream Garden,

Greetings to all our friends and supporters from around the world.

We have big news to announce to you and we hope that despite the change, you all will continue to support us at Stream Garden Retreat.

We are thrilled to announce that Stream Garden will soon change its name to Chestnut Hill Eco Resort ([www.chestnuthilleco.com](http://www.chestnuthilleco.com)). Not only the name but the concept of the retreat will also be replaced by an eco-friendly accommodation concept open to the larger public. We will also be upgrading the existing austere and monastic facilities to a more comfortable one for visitors from all walks of life. Our new restaurant, coffee shop, spa will continue to cater to visitors from Songkhla, neighbouring cities and countries.

So why have we decided to make this transition? Perhaps knowing how Stream Garden came into being and the manner in which it evolved in the last two decades will help you comprehend our need for such a change this year.

Mrs Vanerath Sornprasit (affectionately known as organic Pook) came across the teachings of Jiddu Krishnamurti in early 80's and was tremendously inspired. She immediately felt the extraordinary impact of it on herself and passionately wanted to make the teaching available to Thai people in terms of translations as well as to provide a place where people can visit, stay, explore and share the teachings.

Being brought up in the vicinity, in 1996 Pook bought the hilly jungle what now is Stream Garden. At the beginning there was just a narrow track on the land and she started the construction bringing in logs with the help of elephants.

The first building constructed was The Study, which to this day remains a charming little wooden house on stilts. Every thing happened there – inside, outside, underneath and on the terrace. Then was built the drivable mud road and Pook and her lady friend, Kai came in a four-wheel car. Slowly the place began to grow.

Alongside the happenings at Stream Garden, Pook started the Krishnamurti translation work with much support from long-time friends Chamrass and Phaiboon.

As organic as Pook herself, Stream Garden and the publication work too began to grow organically. Innumerable newsletters were translated every quarterly and given away free to almost every corner of Thailand. Rapidly, people came to

know of Krishnamurti and began to invite Pook and team to their homes, work places, schools, universities and monasteries.

The first International Krishnamurti Gathering was held in Thailand with the help of friends like Mr Vikram Parchure, Mr Rabindra Sign and Mr Raman Patel from abroad. Dr. Parchure and Javier also participated in these gatherings.

The translation work took great momentum with the help and hard work of Vikram Parchure. Under his supervision several books were published and placed in book shops across the country.

After the annual Gatherings, Pook and her foreign friends would travel in a van for a month to different parts of the country to interact with civil society groups, (NGO's) schools, universities, and monasteries. They would travel to where ever they were invited.

As Krishnamurti and S.G. became more widely known, more and more groups especially from the universities began to visit S.G. Many came to use its facilities to conduct their own workshops, but in the process began to take interest in Krishnamurti. Surprisingly many books and DVDs got sold from S.G and it became an arm for dissemination.

As demand grew, Pook being organic, the place began to grow too.

The groups coming to S.G. to use the facilities were also helping to pay the bills to support the Krishnamurti retreat. However, like many Krishnamurti retreats around the world which were not able to survive on the revenue of guests alone, S.G too faced similar situations.

What was not evident at the start was the impact of the global economic crisis. Thailand was not spared and its effects were soon felt at S.G. Groups slowly began to dwindle and paying the bills became increasing difficult. Nearby hotels also began to offer competitive prices for groups to hold meetings allowing smoking, drinking, non-vegetarian food with evening entertainments and fully air con halls and rooms. We just couldn't compete. Several changes in government during the decade long political stalemate also resulted in dwindling funds for university and NGO sector. As we know that none of the Krishnamurti retreats around the world survived just on the revenue of guests.

To make the problem worse, being on the top of a hill in a jungle made it extremely hard for S.G to find and retain a reliable team of staff. High rubber prices also made rubber tapping the top job preference for locals. It was hard to find Thai staff so S.G. began to recruit people from Myanmar. But they too would learn how to tap rubber that offered better wages than what we could afford. Being a quiet, vegetarian, non-smoking, non-alcoholic place, it was even harder to retain skilled Thai office staff. Without people, no organisation can function.

Also, unlike in earlier times Pook could not continue to subsidise S.G. that had grown to a large place. Her circumstances were also affected by the global crisis

and other concerns. All these factors compounded forced SG to take stock four years ago.

In 2013 Pook was willing to close down SG, rent out or sell the premises, continuing with a small Krishnaurti retreat nearby and her core work; publication and the dissemination Krishnamurti teachings.

At this time, Soonya, Pook's daughter and a couple of young men that Pook had sent to be educated at Krishnamurti schools in India, suggested not to close down S.G. but to incorporate other compatible programmes like health and alternative education. Both these ideas were tried out with limited success. Health programmes proved successful to a point and the education programmes, though much appreciated by nearby schools and parents, did not generate much revenue.

Again the time came to take stock. This time around, to avoid having to close down or sell the place, there was clearly no other choice but to turn SG into a business proposition. That is how the idea of the Chestnut Hill Eco Resort came about (we have a lot of wild edible chestnut or Luggow here). Our hope is that this will be a successful model and the proceeds of it will support the adjoining Krishnamurti Retreat Centre Thailand.

In no way or measure we are equating or mixing the new resort's approach or activities that may evolve in the light of Krishnamurti's teachings.

Sincerely Yours,

Stream Garden Management

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