

Echoes of Eco



February, 2010

Vivekananda Kendra- **nardep** Newsletter

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Patrick Geddes (1854-1932)



Patrick Geddes was a Scottish biologist and town-planner. He was attracted to India through Swami Vivekananda and Sister Nivedita. He had met Swami Vivekananda twice and had also interacted extensively with Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose. He was the first international biographer of Acharya Bose.

He visited the temple towns of South India – Madurai, Thanjavur and Kanchipuram. He was impressed by the architectural marvels of the temples as well as the beauty and practicality of traditional temple town plans. He promoted an integral and holistic understanding in town planning which motivated the conservation of the traditional, natural and cultural heritages of the living space.

Later he corresponded with Gandhi through letters. Gandhiji valued his letters dearly. Geddes also held a long correspondence with Tagore and helped in the designing of Shanti Niketan. Sister Nivedita thanked him in her book *Web of Indian Life*,

He enumerated his principles of city planning thus:

- Preservation of human life and energy, rather than superficial beautification.
- Conformity to an orderly development plan carried out in stages.
- Purchasing only the land suitable for buildings
- Promoting trade and commerce.
- Preserving historic monuments and buildings of religious significance.
- Developing a city worthy of civic pride, not an imitation of European cities.
- Promoting the happiness, health and comfort of all residents, rather than focusing on roads and parks available only to the rich.
- Control over future growth with adequate provision for future requirements.

(Mentioned in Robert Home (1997) *Of Planting and Planning: The making of British colonial cities.*)

Geddes also pioneered the low-cost housing movement. Along with his colleague Er.A.C.Sinha who was a graduate of Manchester University, he designed perhaps the first low-cost house based on traditional methods and raw materials.

The colonial era and high class Indians' own fascination with European ways (Geddes called them with contempt 'Anglicized Indians') of thinking hampered implementing his visions in India, some of which he later implemented successfully in Israel.

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All Elements are Divine



The Earth His feet, All waters His garments; All space His body; All directions His hands; Sun and Moon His eyes; the Primordial Being of the Vedas contains as part of Him the entire manifest physical universe.

- Natrinai (Sangham literature)



Not blind opposition to progress, but opposition to blind progress.- Anonymous



Global Warming and Cost-Effective Construction

This month...



The Census of India defines 'houseless population' as the persons who are not living in 'census houses' ie 'structures with roof'. According to 2001 census data there are 447,552 houseless families consisting of 1,943,476 persons in the country. Of these 58.1 percent were enumerated in the rural areas while 41.5 per cent in the urban areas. Average household size of the Houseless family for all areas stands at 4.3, while it is 4.5 for rural and 4.1 for the urban areas. Even these figures are deceiving because the 'census house' includes categories like pucca (permanent), semi-pucca (semi-permanent), serviceable kutcha (temporary) and non-serviceable kutcha.



Embedded energies and Carbon emissions:

Every component of conventional building materials carries enormous hidden ecological costs and related embodied energy which are beginning to manifest in global ecological crisis like global warming - making their invisibility to economic calculation no longer possible. Thus bricks which constitute 27 percent of the energy required for a conventional building also emit 31 tonnes of CO₂ for 1 lakh brick units.

Cement factories emit 90 kgs of CO₂ for a bag of cement and hidden in every bag of cement is embedded water - 350 to 500 litres. And steel which has become an inevitable component of conventional buildings emits 4.3 tonnes of CO₂ at every one tonne of its production.

Clearly pucca housing for every one on earth may not be only an utopian dream but also environmental nightmare that may extinguish human survival itself. Perhaps not so, if we can make a shift in the choice of building technologies.

Sustainable Technologies for Building



Energy economics of many of the sustainable technologies show that they can create vast improvements in energy efficiency of the whole scheme of things.



When compared to conventional roofing where embodied energy in totally 522 MJ/unit Filler slab roofing economizes embodied energy by 30 percent volume reduction. The compressed earth blocks (CEB) technology reduces 23 kg per square metre of CO₂ emission (Wire cut bricks- WCB: 39 kg/m² vs. CEB: 16 kg/m²). They also reduce 429 MJ/m² of energy consumption per square metre of walls they built (WCB: 539 MJ/m² vs CEB 110 MJ/m²).

Affordable, adorable houses for all in the planet need not be after all an utopian dream or ecological nightmare but an achievable target that economically and environmentally can make sense for all of us.

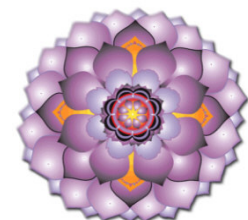
66 Students of Sivanthi Aditanar College of Engineering, Tiruchendur, visited the Gramodaya Park on 26th February to learn about Cost effective building technologies



- 192 patients were treated at Vivekananda Kendra's Green Health Home at Vivekanandapuram.
- A guest Lecture was given by Dr. Ganapathi on "Miraculous healing effects of herbals and modern trends in traditional herbal medicines". The programme was held for Traditional Healers as well as for students. It was attended by 350 persons. The programme was organized by Field Publicity Dept., Govt. of India and Tamilnadu Traditional Healers Association and held at Govt. Arts & Science College, Vellore.

SSS

Sympathy (for all people and for the natural world);
 Synthesis (of the different parts of a system); and
 Synergy (the combined, cooperative actions of people working together to make their place a better place)
The Three S's of Patrick Geddes





Sr.Premlatha interacting with villagers for livestock management awareness camp

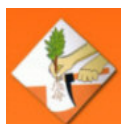


Livestock Management Awareness



Commissioning the Bio-Methanation plant

This month... Agriculture



- Workshop on Capacity building for Adoption of Technologies (CAT), Supported by NABARD, Chennai was held at TRC, Kalluvilai from 11th to 13th February with Dr.Kamalasanan Pillai Smt.S.Premalatha and Shri.S.Rajamony as resource persons. 26 persons attended the workshop.

This month... Agriculture-I



- Workshop on “Azolla Cultivation” was conducted at TRC, Kalluvilai for 11 persons through ATMA, Thiruvananthapuram on 16th February with Smt.S.Premalatha, as resource person.
- Workshop on “Composting Technologies” was held for 10 students of Vivekananda College, Agasteeswaram, at TRC, Kalluvilai on 16th of February with Shri.S.Rajamony as a resource person.
- Awareness camp on “Livestock Management” (FTTF) was held -sponsored by NABARD, Chennai at Thazhakudi, Kanyakumari Dist on. 18th February with 19 participants and with Smt.S.Premalatha and Shri.S.Rajamony as resource persons.

This month... Water



- Water measurement from 14 wells in Kanyakumari Dist was carried out by VK-NARDEP as part of the programme of Central Ground Water Board, Chennai.

This month... Renewable Energy

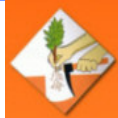


- Paper on “Bio-methanation plant with water Hyacinth, Ipomoea and Sea weed as input material” was presented by Shri.V.Ramakrishnan for National workshop on “Innovative Strategies in Grassroots Development” held on 18th and 19th at Gandhigram Rural Institute, Gandhigram
- Awareness cum training programme on Shakti Surabhi Bio-methanation plant was held on 24th February at Technology Resource Center (TRC) Kalluvilai with Er.Ramakrishnan as resource person. Nine persons attended the programme.
- 10 Shakti Surabhi Bio-Methanation plants were commissioned through NABARD, Chennai

To see the universal and all pervading Spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. – Mahatma Gandhi



This month... Agriculture-II



- Workshop on “Organic farming” was conducted at Gramodaya Park for 50 persons through ATMA, Alapuzha on 18th February with Dr. Kamalasanan Pillai as resource person.
- Workshop on “Azolla Cultivation” was held at VK-NARDEP, TRC, Kalluvilai on 24th February with 6 participants. The resource person was Smt.S.Premalatha.
- Workshop on “Livestock Management” (FTTF) was held at Marunkur, Kanyakumari Dist.on 27th February with 23 beneficiaries and Dr.P.Kamalasanan Pillai was the resource person. The programme was sponsored by NABARD, Chennai.
- Workshop on “Nutrient Management for better farming” was held at Kozhikottupottai Kanyakumari Dist with 23 beneficiaries. It was sponsored by (VDP) NABARD, Chennai. It was held on 27th February with Shri.S.Rajamony as resource person.



Workshop on Azolla cultivation: Multimedia session and hands on training.



Workshop on Composting Technology for students.

This month... Networking



- National workshop on “Innovative Strategies in Grassroots Development” was held at Gandhigram Rural Institute and Sri. G. Vasudeo Secretary VK-NARDEP attended the concluding function and gave the valedictory address to 100 participants on 19th February.
- Training programme on “Public Distribution System and Human Relations” was held for 29 officials of Tamilnadu Civil Supply, Chennai at Technology Resource Center, Kalluvilai from 19th to 21st February.



Public distribution system and human relations: Workshop session

THE HINDU • SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2010

Meet on innovative strategies in grassroot development

“A good development model should be innovative”

Staff Reporter

DINDIGUL: Rural oriented techniques are the need of the hour. A good development model should be innovative, holistic, sustainable and flexible with humanistic values that could be adapted to local conditions, said G. Vasudeo, Secretary, Vivekanandha Kendra.

He was delivering the valedictory address at a national workshop on innovative strategies in grassroots development held at Gandhigram Rural University near here on Friday. The planners should think of the last man and work out plans for his development. When the heart feels for all, creation and innovation will automatically pour out. If you work on an idea intensely, innovation will come. Contemplating on a particularly problem too would help get better ideas, he said and advised transla-



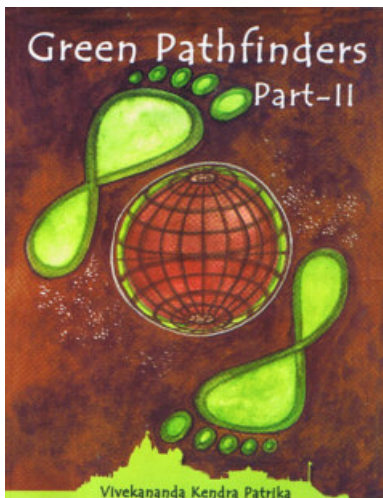
TIPS: G. Vasudeo, secretary, Vivekananda Kendra, addressing the workshop at Gandhigram Rural University in Gandhigram. – PHOTO: G. KARTHIKEYAN.

tion of ideas into action. Highlighting problems in the existing development models, the secretary said most of the existing development models were urban and profit oriented, inflexible, non creative and closed one. Considering financial success as bottom line for any development model would bring only short term gains and limit the

vision, he cautioned. “Development is another way to express creativity, purposeful action and sustainable growth.” In his special address, GRU Registrar N. Narayanaswamy said that any development should be sustainable and have values. Knowledge and innovations should be shared and helped all to move forward, he added.



Publications



An Important sequel :

In this Kendra Patrika which is actually a continuation of the previous one, we are going to see how grassroots activism is slowly changing the planet for the better locally and how these local efforts are cascading into a mighty force changing the mindset of people at large.

We also see how there are regions which are being protected by the state or preserved by nature to become intensely high bio-diversity sanctuaries. We also see how there are principles and worldviews and belief system help mould our perceptions of nature and from that perception how our activities and technologies evolve and determine the way we react with nature.

Ultimately we are beginning to realize the wisdom of the old tribes that what we do to the web of life we do to ourselves. For ultimately, we are all one united in the great circle of life.

In this continuation we see one section as an introduction to the way the individuals, communities and grassroots organizations are involved in bringing the change that is needed to save humanity from the impending ecological doom. The change that is being shown in this section is a change that is not percolating from above through state power but through the activism and wisdom of the local populace and communities and also individuals. Chipko Movement to Ralegaon Siddhi, Bioshnois of Rajasthan to Anthony's Wonder Garden in Tamil Nadu the readers are taken on a tour of how individuals, communities and institutions are building from bottoms up a sustainable living.

Next Section deals with the green sanctuaries that are present all over the planet where efforts are being made to conserve species and also natural bio-diversity hot spots. Emphasis is given to Biosphere reserves and natural bio-diversity hot spots. The last section is an important component of this compilation. Here the heart of the problems is being touched. Bio-diversity – its loss as well as its preservation is linked inevitably with the worldview that humanity nurtures. The section further shows how linguistic diversity is also fast eroding. The section shows how the mindset of the humanity is changing today for the better after allowing it go berserk towards self-annihilation in the path of eco-destruction. The focus on Sustainable development has even ushered us in an era of green-careers.

Eco-Facts: To Ponder and Act



A single tree will absorb one ton of carbon dioxide over its lifetime. Shade provided by trees can also reduce your air conditioning bill by 10 to 15%.



India faces a huge energy deficit: till 2001, only 44 per cent of Indian households had access to electricity. But consumption's galloping: between 1947 and 2001, India's per capita power consumption rose from 15 to 592 units. If India has to move ahead economically, it must find ways to bridge the deficit.

Realize yourself. That is all there is to do. Know yourself as you are—infinite spirit. That is practical religion. Everything else is impractical, for everything else will vanish. - Swami Vivekananda



A prayer to the Cosmic Spirit

Oh, Great Spirit

Whose voice I hear in the winds, And whose breath gives life to all the world, Hear me, I am small and weak, I need your strength and wisdom. Let me walk in beauty and make my eyes ever behold the red and purple sunset. Make my hands respect the things you have made and my ears sharp to hear your voice. Make me wise so that I may understand the things you have taught my people. Let me learn the lessons you have hidden in every leaf and rock.

I seek strength, not to be greater than my brother, but to fight my greatest enemy - myself.

Make me always ready to come to you with clean hands and straight eyes. So when life fades, as the fading sunset, my Spirit may come to you without shame. Let us Honor the sacred.

Let us honor the Earth, our Mother.

Let us honor the Elders.

Let us honor all with whom we share the Earth:- Four-legends, two-leggeds, winged ones, Swimmers, crawlers, plant and rock people.

-Lakota Shaman Hymn
[Native American]



Unity of all Existence

I have shown you this evening autographic record of the history of stress and strain in the living and non-living. How similar are the writings!

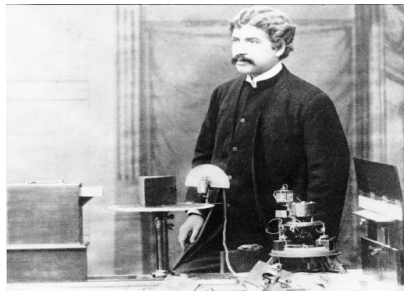
So similar indeed that you cannot tell one apart from the other. We have watched the responsive pulse wax and wane in the one as in the other. We have seen response sinking under fatigue, becoming exalted under stimulants, and being killed by poisons, in the non-living as in the living.

Amongst such phenomena, how can we draw a line of demarcation, and say, here the physical ends, and here the physiological begins? Such absolute barriers do not exist. ...

It was when I came upon the mute witness of these self-made records and perceived in them one phase of a pervading unity that bears within it all things: the mote that quivers in ripples of life, the teeming life upon our earth, and the radiant suns that shine above us - it was then that I understood for the first time a little of that message proclaimed by my ancestors on the banks of the Ganges thirty centuries ago:

'They who see but one in all the changing manifestations of this universe, unto them belongs the Eternal Truth - unto none else.

-Jagadish Chandra Bose
[Indian Scientist]



A prayer to the elements

When our people pray at Mayan ceremonies, something very beautiful happens. None of the elements is overlooked at such a ceremony.

We greet the rising sun to ask for light, energy, warmth and strength. We greet the setting sun to invoke history, to ask our ancestors to give us strength and to stand by us and to greet small night animals.

We greet the wind as it picks up to clear our breath...When the wind dies down, we call on the energies of Mother Earth and of the seeds, so that we may blossom again, as seeds do.

And when we appeal to the celestial star realms, it is to protect our selves in the universe in the Void.

The heart of the Earth is like our mother, a mother who nurses her children, nurses life.

-Rigoberta Menchu Tum
[Mayan Woman Leader]

