

## Green education

“You can be educated without being literate , and one can be literate and yet remain uneducated “

My above statement is a paradox ,however when I see examples of what has been quoted above in different parts of the world, the statement starts reflecting some truth in the paradox .

### Background of the islands

In 1988 when I moved to Port Blair , a posting that used to be called a punishment /hardship posting by government officials .Port Blair used to be called Kaala Pani – Black waters ,since the freedom

fighters during the British Raj were imprisoned in these islands and they could not see out of their dark ,dingy cell and hence the chilling name coined as Kaala pani.

The Andaman& Nicobar-A&N archipelago consists of 365 islands ,stretching 850 kms from north near Myanmar , to the south - the Great Nicobar islands which is only 90 kms from the northern shores of Indonesia on the Strait of Malacca .TheA&N islands are clad with thick tropical forest ,tequila clear water, with rich corals teeming with rich variety of fish flitting in and out of the coral reef .

In the 80's the transport infrastructure to and fro from the mainland India was poor .Indian Airlines flights used to come twice a week and ships used to come once in 20 days .

Most tourists who used to come there for holidays ,came with at least one distinct objective of collecting a piece of coral from the pristine islands , or take back home exotic wood planks from the local tree called padauk, which has equivalent strength of teak wood. I as a uninitiated person in sensitivities of nature came with similar extractive mind set !

In my early days of posting in the islands I was fortunate to meet the local anthropologist who shared the lifestyles of the local tribes like the Jarawas, Sentinelese ,Nicobarees .

The stories I heard about them raised my esteem for them, contrary to my earlier drip fed learnings from so called modern sources of knowledge of contemporary society , that tribals are people who are not “modern’ and are behind times .

Over the years I have wondered whether my literate status makes me more modern than the deep wisdom of nature that is embedded in the culture of these isolated, ancient tribes who have lived in complete harmony with nature for thousands of years without compromising the natural capital, as modern society is resorting to.

Let us analyse the **literate** modern living and observe the heavy toll it is taking on forest cover which has declined from 47% in 1947 to approximately 11 % on a global scale ,desertification is taking place at the rate of a mile a minute, we are merrily chasing down water aquifers to depths of 1200 feet and more for our daily wasteful water use practices , without blinking an eye or any great concern for water mangement!

Let us get a glimpse of the **educated** best practices of the tribes of the Andamans .

The tribes of the Andamans have a practice that when they hunt in a particular area of the forest for " 10 moons " they stop hunting in that region for 20 or more moons,(they have no concept of dates in their society) the simple logic is that they give rest to the hunted species for regeneration . Similarly if they have fished in a particular sea side they give "fishing rest" to that coastal area for a certain predefined period by moving to another part of the island for regeneration to take place in the ocean eco system .

The tribals in the state of Madhya Pradesh have a practice of picking up three big leaves in the morning for handling their biological waste .One leaf is used for defecating on top of the leaf, the second is used as toilet paper and the third one for covering it, so that another person does not step on it , in the bargain avoiding foot to mouth fecal contamination which is big cause of disease in India .

Just compare this with our current sanitation practices in vogue both in urban , rural parts of many geographies of the world ! In urban India the archaic flushing system developed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century ,is water intensive and the flushing in the toilet corrupts over 150 litres of water downstream and we know that in cities only 30% of sewage water is treated, as per government records. The open defecation is the order of the day in rural india without even covering it with mud .

Local fishermen in the state of Kerala pick up baby fish in the net while fishing , the baby fish are put back in the sea for it to mature for future catch . A sustainable fishing practices , as opposed to bottom trawling practiced by modern day trawlers which have resulted in " desertification " of the ocean and reducing the catch dramatically, leading to concepts like Marine Stewardship Council-MSC . MSC certified fish indicates that the concerned fish is not in the endangered list and hence can be consumed .

Restaurants have started featuring color codes for fish in the menu :red orange and green .The fish indicated by red means it is endangered and guest should avoid ordering ,the orange category indicates that the particular breed is entering the endangered segment and the green coded obviously –go for it .

To know more about marine stewardship council please see <http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/keralas-ashtamudi-lake-gets-recognition-for-sustainable-clam-fishing/article6574978.ece>

A related site worth visiting is <http://www.wri.org/our-work/project/food-loss-waste-protocol/publications>

### **Forms of learning methodology.**

There are two kinds of learning methodology- evidential and most of our operating systems in every enterprise are based on the past evidence and the second form of learning is experiential . Many individuals have reengineered their organisations to change their operating systems to a new reality commonly referred to as sustainable development through the experiential route .

## **Need for green education.**

The definition of Green education is to practice and embed practices which dovetail the concerns of the planet people and reasonable profit. Excessive profit will lead to depletion and collapse of natural capital resource base as cited earlier. Is green education becoming main streamed ?

There are faint signs of green education sprouting world over premier institutions have made a modest attempt to bring green education in the curriculum .

Between 1988-1992 the hotel team in Port Blair entered the green education domain through self learning and even without knowing that it will gradually become be the order of the day. I will like to call this a experiential learning .

The practices that we followed in the late 80's have terminologiestoday such as cradle to cradle strategies , compensatory and depository afforestation ,moving from linear production process to green circular economy .

Signs of such concept are taking roots in the campus of Dayal Bagh college in Agra. I am told that simplicity is the ethos of the college run by Radha Swami Sanghthan .A 800 kw solar farm is in the campus, the energy from this source is used frugally ,each family does not get more than 300 units per month. Although water is available the supplies are restricted to one hour in the morning and evening.

Everybody cycles or walks in the campus.

How do we scale up such examples in our future smart cities and more importantly how do we retrofit existing cities to bring signs of green practices, by example by many stakeholders and through policy directions of the city and state authorities?

