

# ORGANO NEWSLETTER



# NAMASTE

**My Name is Bala Raju**

**I am your neighbour from Yenkapalli Rurban and I am here to reintroduce earth to your home.**

## ORGANO'S JOURNEY



“Co-creating eco-habitats that celebrate living” is the motto that drives us to build our communities. For us, an Eco-Habitat “is a natural ecosystem integrated into living spaces for urban dwellers, consciously recreated with sustainability at the core; designed to have minimal negative impact on the environment.”

Ever since the inception of Organo, our focus has consistently been on developing eco-habitats that offer the Rurban experience, a curated blend of sustainable practices in rural and urban living.

Naandi is the manifestation of our efforts towards creating a Rurban Eco-habitat based on net-zero and triple bottom line principles. A community for the passionate and the conscious.

Through the journey of Naandi, we have learnt many valuable lessons. The most important among them is the understanding that sustainability is a way of life rather than an external factor that needs to be achieved. Every inhabitant needs to realize that their actions must be self-monitored and accountable to sustainability.

**Our lessons from Naandi have led us to improvise and at times reinvent the guidelines to raise the bar in the development of similar ventures of ours. Some of the important learnings are:-**

✔ The importance of primary healthcare: Considering the fact that the proximity of medical facilities is a huge concern for gated communities situated on the city outskirts, we have decided to make a provision for primary healthcare centers in our upcoming projects.

✔ The installation of solar power panels: The panels installed on every villa and the number of electrical components to facilitate them, weren't ideal for maintenance. Therefore, installing solar power generators in one place would be more energy-efficient and easy to handle.

✔ Self sufficiency must occupy prime position when it comes to farm produce. Only in the case of excess production, business prospects may be considered.

✔ The tunnel draft system: We have found out more efficient and cost-effective methods that can be implemented from the design level of the building which will help in providing ample ventilation rather than digging the ground.

✔ The importance of a social impact study: The Social Impact study takes precedence in all our developments. This not only helped us in getting a deeper understanding of community living in our neighbourhood but also empowered them to grow and evolve at an individual and community level.

## NAANDI CHRONICLE



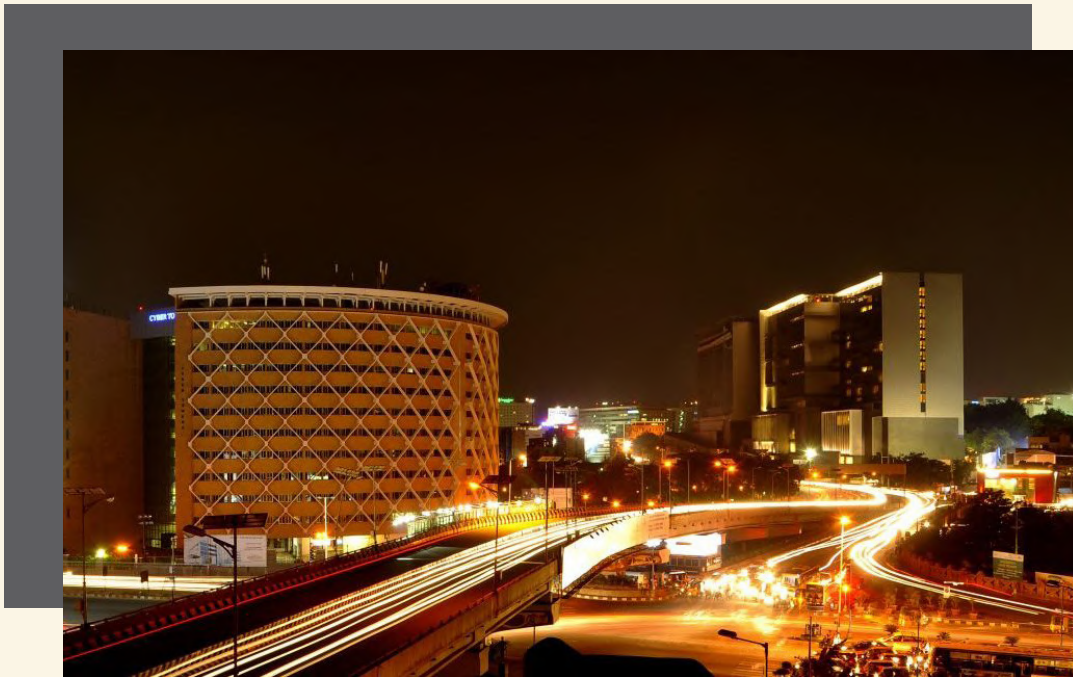
**We have always known that Sustainability is a Journey, Not a Destination. Building Organo Naandi has been a fruitful but a demanding journey.**

### **Our 3 key takeaways include:**

- ✓ Building a truly self-sustaining community that positively impacts people & the environment can be turned into a profitable business opportunity.
- ✓ More and more families are passionate about living in an eco-friendly way and are opting for real estate solutions that offer this.
- ✓ Living in a sustainable Rurban community improves end-user well-being, brings the comforts of urban living along with the health benefits of rural living.

Looking forward to sharing more take-aways and lesson learnt in our next issue

## GROWING HYDERABAD...



Technology hub Hyderabad has edged out 129 other cities in the world to emerge as the world's most dynamic city, according to the seventh edition of the City Momentum Index by global real estate services firm JLL.

The City Momentum Index 2020 covers 130 major established and emerging markets to identify the cities that have the strongest positive momentum in their economies and real estate markets over the short to medium term. This research highlights that, despite a slowdown in global economic growth, several markets are continuing to exhibit remarkable dynamism, particularly in Emerging Asia, which once again dominates the Global Top 20 ranking. The results show a continued shift in global influence from west to east.

The ranking 'identifies the cities that have the strongest positive momentum in their economies and real estate markets over the short to medium term.' The ranking recognises dynamic cities from a real estate perspective and factors in office space off-take, real estate growth, transportation issues, pollution, business environment and policies.

Hyderabad and Bengaluru made it to the top of the list as they have embraced and adapted themselves to the innovation economy and have a favourable demography and business climate. A more active real estate market helped Hyderabad push ahead of Bengaluru.

While all seven Tier 1 and Tier 2 Indian cities feature in this year's Global Top 20, the southern Indian cities in particular – Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Chennai (5th) – are ahead of their northern peers, supported by favourable demographics and business climates. Their expanding tech industries and start-up cultures make them a magnet for young and ambitious talent from across the country.

**Reference:** *The Hindu & Economic Times news articles and City Momentum Index 2020 by JLL*



## EXPANDING THE BOUNDARIES...

**Organo's intent was not restricted to building just a 'Rurban' community for people living within but also to make an impact on social, economic, agricultural progress & aid skill development in the neighbouring villages.**



### Organo's Social Impact endeavour encompasses:-

- ✓ Employment to farmers from nearby villages
- ✓ Training to the farmers on organic farming and helping them to market their produce
- ✓ Training villages on skill enhancement through workshops and training
- ✓ Awareness of waste management in nearby villages and help them with methods to do it on their own.

We realized that every social impact plan must begin with a thorough understanding of the people and their lives. Our initial research led us to the non-organic farming methods practised by most farmers in the neighbouring villages. This made us realise that our first step of impact had to begin with introducing natural sustainable farming methods.

Our teams regularly and consistently visited the farmers to educate them on the perils of using chemicals. In order to ensure that they switched to Organic farming, we began with providing what was needed by them to do so. Not many farmers were convinced at first but on witnessing the impact of natural farming methods implemented by a few, more and more of them began approaching us for support. With the help of 'Art of Living Foundation', we trained 100 farmers over a period of 3 days and several follow-up meetings after that.



At the peak of it, there were about 96 farmers who were farming organically through the Farmer Producer Organization with Organo marketing their entire produce. Our training every month and meetings every week ensured that the farmers were fully informed of the techniques and insights on natural/organic farming methods. We took care of all their needs right from giving them the apt kind of seeds to solutions for nutrient and pest management. In addition, we had supervisors visiting their farms every day to observe and help whenever required.



**The ripple effect of our interventions created a healthy impact that was beneficial for all.**

- ✓ More than 100 farmers were trained to cultivate organically
- ✓ More than 90 farmers started growing organic produce which was bought by us at a higher price and marketed in the city so the farmers need not worry about the sale of produce
- ✓ We could introduce farmers to several urban dwellers who took inspiration and converted to organic farming
- ✓ Several job opportunities were created. Most of the supporting staff who are employed at Naandi are from nearby villages, whom we have provided training.

In a nutshell, we were trying to empower them as we grow together.



## WHY SHOULD WE EXPAND BOUNDARIES?



“Co-creating” and “Collaborating” are imperative for a Rurban community to thrive. Should it be confined within the community walls? Not actually. Inter-dependence and co-existence have been the keys of human survival and sustenance.

Since the ideation stage, Organo Naandi was never only about the internal community. It was always about the lives inside and outside our perimeters because we believe that the goal of sustainability can be achieved only when the whole community agrees to it and works together to build it.

If we look from the agriculture/food angle of this scenario, the chemical cultivation practices in the neighbouring villages had a huge impact on the ecosystem. The soil health was so poor that they had to use tonnes of chemical fertilizers to balance it. The urea rich soil and crops attracted more pests and diseases. When they became uncontrollable, more chemicals were sprayed unethically causing further damage.

The dangerous thing about excess chemicals is that it can spread even farther than we can imagine as it can spread all over through air, irrigation water, rain etc. This could

deteriorate the soil health drastically, affect the air quality, contaminate water bodies and so on.

Sooner we realised that building organic farms inside our community is not enough but there have to be collective efforts from others as well for a sustainable living experience. Our research showed that the lack of awareness and resources are major causes that motivate farmers to cultivate more chemically. To address this fundamental issue, we had to educate them, train them, and encourage them to practice non-chemical cultivation.

With time, they themselves started realising the difference through their improved health, crop yield, better profits, etc. and tried to convert fellow farmers to practice similar methods.

Naturally, this helped us in terms of better air, water, and soil quality and we were able to get farmworkers from the same village to help us with farming inside the community. What we are currently witnessing is the growth of individuals and communities together with a collective belief in sustainability as the way forward.

**“In the long history of humankind (and animal kind too) those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed”**

**-Charles Darwin**

## IMPROVING LIVES



Growing together as a community can result in far-reaching impacts than individual progress. While co-creating eco-habitats that celebrate living, we were able to encourage and train people in the neighbouring village to earn a profitable livelihood and practice better cultivation.



**Vodla Rajayya's** journey from a clinical centre's compounder to a Biogas system & waste management Operator. He joined as Housekeeping support and opted for a position to collect wastes from all the Villas. As part of waste management, he has learnt the process of segregating all the degraded & non-degraded material from the wastes, became skilled in shredding and Bio-Digester processes which help in a quick production of Biogas stored at our balloon on daily basis.



**Ganesh** is one of our MSTs (Electrician) who have been working from the early days of our project from being a "barren land" to "sustainable living & net-zero" community. He has been a farmer turned electrician who has learnt all the practices of renewable energy sources like Solar energy, Waste management & Biogas plant. He has been working with us on every daily operation and helped us be a "net-positive community" through managing the appliances, max demand and peak load management of our entire power system.



**Pandu** is our bio-pool operator who hails from a farmer background and joined Organo as daily waged labour. His interest in our sustainable living ideology helped him learn new skills like housekeeping & hospitality. After shifting into operations team handling Biopool, he learnt water conservation techniques in operating the bio-pool system along with the swimming pool maintenance using organic practices (treating pool without using any chemicals)



## CELEBRATING RURBAN LIVING...



### LIFE.ON.A.SLOW.TRACK – LIFE.ON.A.RURBAN.FARM



When we planned to settle in India, Hyderabad after returning from the UK, we wanted to stay in the heart of the city. We moved from the heart of the city to suburbs - twice over a few years to avoid pollutions of all sorts - air, water, noise. And then we moved to Organo Naandi, a place where we found solace. I feel staying close to nature undoubtedly has a great positive impact on our lives.

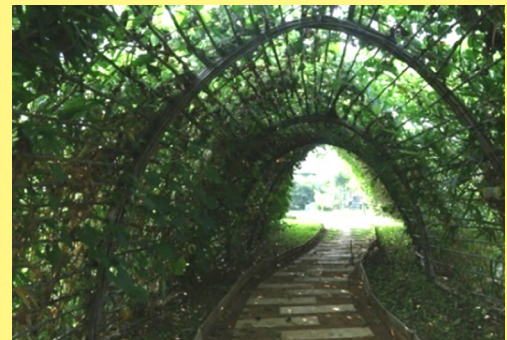
Rising up to the chirping of birds, living amidst plenty of flora and fauna, breathing fresh air, and more importantly the clear view of the sky during the day and night - sunrise, sunset, moon, stars, constellations is an absolute delight. Nothing else can replace this sheer joy.

On the food front, we were worried about the level of contamination - in green leafy vegetables, milk, fruits and vegetables. Organic food and the fact that we have complete visibility & control on the produce in Organo gives us assurance and contentment now.

Clearly, a Rurban community cannot be in the middle of the city (at least in the current scenario). The community is little away from the city and thus some of the needs, luxuries are few kilometres away. But these are minor adjustments that we have to live with to be in the centre of nature.

I hope Hyderabad city transforms to develop into multiple rurban communities to ensure we don't pollute nature any further... ”

**A Naandian family,  
Krishna Kishore Susrla**



## CELEBRATING RURBAN LIVING...



### LIFE.ON.A.SLOW.TRACK – LIFE.ON.A.RURBAN.FARM

“ After all these years of my life, I realised that my eyes are now looking at the real colours of life. My ears are now able to listen to the very minute sounds of rustling leaves. To my wonder, all the plants which I planted started talking with me. Plants and animals for which I kept the names started responding to my names.

**Maybe it's true that our senses become more sensible and get**

- ✓ The feeling of having an extended family (vasudhaiva kutumbakam) even in inviting a newborn calf or bird in our community
- ✓ Getting the unusual and unexplainable happiness and smile while watching the open sky with no limits
- ✓ Walking barefoot on Mother Earth while doing a little farming or supporting the farming staff
- ✓ Enjoying the surreal scenery of a sunset and a moonrise on a clear sky

Even though there are few important things like medical assistance and transport, I feel 'adjustment' is a word that we generally don't use where our mind and heart love to stay in one place. After coming to this community I felt like I was reborn...

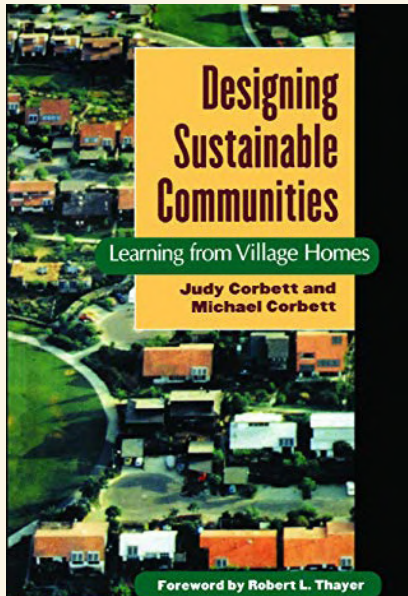
Reborn, rejuvenate and relive. Yes... let's recreate the possibilities... ”

**A Naandian family,  
Srivalli**





## PROPONENTS OF SUSTAINABILITY



“Designing Sustainable Communities - Learning From Village Homes” by Judy Corbett and Michael Corbett, is a story of how Village Homes, an eco-village community in Davis, California, has been developed. From ideation to realization, the book takes readers through the struggles that the creators had to face to finally see their dream come true.

This book captures succinctly some of the issues that even we had faced during our initial days of planning Organo Naandi.

Due to its completely different vision of how communities must be, Village Homes faced a lot of heat from the City Council in the initial days.

The idea of narrower streets with housing spaced closer than usual to the street and one

another, agriculture being part of the community design, natural drainage, etc. did not sit well with the City Council.

The advice given to them by the City Council was to redesign the project using existing standards



‘eliminating all controversial features. Instead, they chose to argue point by point before the city council’.

Six years later, the project got completed. The houses went on sale during the period of recession. Sales were bad all over, but the houses in Village Homes sold in spite of the recession and real estate agents recommending clients against buying in the project.

This stands as testimony to the fact

that Village Homes was designed with empathy towards the way people want to live, as opposed to telling people how to live.

The project started in 1972 and by the late 1970s, the project was completed. It has been 40 years since then and Village Homes has been an inspiration to many other “Garden Cities” around the United States - Haymount, Virginia, Civano, Arizona, Coffee Creek Centre, Indiana, Davisville, California, Prairie Crossing, Illinois, etc.



**Source:** “Designing Sustainable Communities - Learning From Village Homes” By a **Judy Corbett**



## SUSTAINABILITY ENTREPRENEURSHIP...



As we reflect on examples of entrepreneurship and leadership in our nation, we see that people are increasingly choosing business ideas that enhance the lives of people, lessen our impact on the environment and direct focus on shared prosperity. During the last 25-year growth of our organization FHD Group, we have started pursuing Sustainability Entrepreneurship and have expanded into multiple sectors and businesses that continue to be built on Triple Bottom Line goals.

Sustainability Entrepreneurship is a process in which entrepreneurs explore opportunities in an innovative manner for economic gains, positive impact on society and environment, and cultural relevance on an equal footing.

Triple Bottom Line (TBL) is a framework that goes beyond the traditional measures of profits, return on investment, and shareholder value. It includes environmental and social dimensions.



Built-on principles of TBL and driven by the spirit of Sustainability Entrepreneurship, we continue to design & develop Cause-based eco-habitats, that not only provide a habitat where life exists but one in which the very act of simple living helps support many important social & environmental causes.



At Organo Naandi, our dream was to bring the Sparrows back. As biodiversity increased in 5 years, we were happy to see the first flock of sparrows visit within the community, in addition to many other bird & animal species. We now know how to create environments for both human & non-human residents.

Our next step is towards finding an apt solution for water in communities. With water scarcity haunting many Indian cities, we are exploring sustainable methods & ways to design solutions for rainwater harvesting, storage, conservation and water demand reduction in rural eco-habitats.



# INVESTING ON COLLECTIVE FARMING AND REAPING SHARED BENEFITS

Many of us have the perspective that buying a piece of land is an investment for the future. Owning farmland and doing agriculture on it is futuristic and indeed a thoughtful decision only if we are clear about the return from such investment.

But the tricky fundamental thing is, benefits/return from such investments would only be the size of individual share that you hold from the big circle.

Now imagine this, you would receive the full potentials of the entire circle despite having paid for only one part. Wouldn't that be even more profitable from the investment perspective?

The question is what is the return that we are talking about! Well if we look at a village model, the farmers usually do not mark their boundaries and cultivate on

entire farm without leaving effective agricultural land for boundary walls. They work collectively, gather resources together, share labour without incurring additional costs, manage crop and irrigation with better collective solutions and market their crops effectively.

On the other hand, an individual farm would also involve all these stages but with extra cost and reduced effectiveness.

Through our communities what we are aiming at is the adaptation of this village model with collective farming as its centre. The sustainability goals and effective agricultural practices would become easy to achieve through such models.

From an individual perspective, you are benefiting from the entire community rather than just your piece of land.





## MAKING A DIFFERENCE...

No matter what we do or where we live, the underlying fact is we are all part of the society and share equal responsibility for one another. For less harmful growth and development we will have to help others and empower them.

In Rurban communities, you have many opportunities to contribute, both passively and actively, on a daily basis. Thankfully, you have a headstart through your 1st act of choosing to live in a Rurban eco-habitat. Your first step has already brought down your carbon footprint and lessened the burden on our environment.

Your second step can be to help with skill development amongst neighbouring villagers, be it on organic farming, language skills improvement, work skills development and more. Most often, many of such are not in line with the needs or aspirations of local villagers.

But as Rurban community residents, you will have a deeper insight into their told & untold needs and will be able to support their growth, while ensuring inclusive & holistic shared prosperity.

Your third step can be an example and inspire local and regional community members to emulate all sustainable as well as responsible living principles that you are following in your everyday life.

Through responsible living, you can champion a cause, on both small and large levels. All you have to do is pay attention to the people around you, and try to find ways to address their needs.

**“ There is no exercise better  
for the heart than reaching down  
and lifting people up ”**  
**-John Holmes**





# NAVIGATING THE CHALLENGES OF BUILDING AN ECO-HABITAT

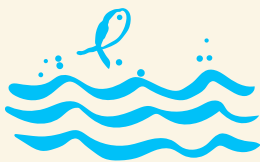
At Organo Naandi, everything was built on and around the concept of Sapthapatha (seven strands of sustainability). Sapthapatha includes inclusive holistic solutions in terms of Earth, Food, Air, Water, Energy, Shelter & People.

## Earth



One of the initial challenges was bringing life back into the soil. Because of prior industrial farming techniques, the site had been bleached of nutrients and life. So, extensive natural farming efforts were made to improve soil health & nutrition. This helped accelerate natural farming activities and offer safe food access to residents, which was the key part of Sapthapatha.

## Water



The fourth item of focus was proper rainwater conservation and management within the site, without much disturbance to built areas as well as farming areas within the community. This was done through natural contours, a network of channels & ponds, and into recharge borewells, ponds & wells. Also, many farmers are converting neighbouring agricultural farms into cricket grounds due to urban dwellers recreational requirements, proximity to city and real estate pressures. They find it is more lucrative than farming. This has led to groundwater reduction as the upkeep of the cricket grounds demands significant water supply.

## Food



As part of the farmer outreach program and in order to expand eco-habitat boundaries, significant efforts were required in the initial period to educate & convince neighbouring farmers to adopt & continue organic agricultural practices. Here, we had to collaborate with and build capabilities on rural development, farming cooperative and social impact.

## Energy



The fifth item was ensuring the community was energy independent and self-reliant in terms of energy needs through solar power production on the rooftops of each home. Not only are the energy needs of each home met, but also the energy requirements of common areas in the community.

## Air



The third big challenge was the construction & installation of approximately 2 km long Earth Air Tunnel System to provide fresh air into the homes. This involved trenching to lay the long tunnels underground and channel air into them to be geothermally cooled, which then provide fresh air to each home.

## Shelter



Sixth was building eco-friendly solutions into the homes and community spaces. For instance, outdoor cafe Alfresco is roofed by a bamboo structure, the largest in India. Constructing this structure meant that a specific type of bamboo had to be sourced and highly skilled & trained technicians needed to execute the works.

## People



A seventh, & most important challenge, was getting people's buy-in to this idea of Rurban living. Thankfully, this was easier because the early believers of this concept were also the ambassadors of the idea. And once the community matured, the proof of concept was evident. In addition, another main intent was to offer employment and skill development opportunities to neighbouring villagers and to improve income predictability for the farmers, which required a lot of outreach and education efforts.

## LEADERS BEHIND...

Organo started with a shared vision to provide an authentic living experience to people today, a life that not only is technologically progressive but one which revives cultures and brings people together.



### **NAGESH BATTULA**

Founder, Managing Director

Nagesh who started and spearheaded the Fountainhead Design Group (FHD), is a natural learner and a self-taught leader. In his vision “Organo was founded to re-establish a conscientious connection with the way we produce and consume resources as a community. Our goal is to create replicable community development models built on triple bottom line success and net-zero thinking.”

Nagesh Battula initiated Organo based on triple bottom line principles with an intention to build more meaningful sustainable communities. A system where the profits as developers and investors are as important and dependent on profits to the planet and its people. This goal could only be achieved by making the boundaries of architecture more fluid to include seven strands of sustainability where we go off-the-grid by amalgamating agriculture, skill development and social engagement with Architecture.



### **RAKESH KOTI**

Head of Sustainability

Rakesh is the Head of Sustainability at Organo. After completing his Masters in Energy Systems from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, he has worked in the US as an Energy Specialist with a focus on residential homes.

With a passion for developing sustainable built environments, Rakesh has returned back to India to head the sustainability division at Organo.

## NEWS FROM NAANDI...



### Bhumi - Celebrating the spirit of the earth

As a member of this extended family called Earth, we have embraced Earth as our mother since the beginnings across the races, across the generations. Sustainability is always a way of life, not the other way around. Things turned around, as the human turned ambitious and our actions left a deep scar on the soul of it. When the earth's reaction to our action is on a violent streak, the human race understood the need for a mindful response to save ourselves, therefore, sustaining the health. There might be millions of responses that are rising across – at individual, community or at the state level. Designing and Manifesting eco-habitats that are inclusive and that counter urbanisation is Organo's way of responding to bring sustainability to order.

Organo intends to bring those efforts in the form of interactive talk sessions and introduce those champions to urbanites. Bhumi is one such event, where Organo hosted talks on diverse topics that surround the earth. Participants included Naandians, many nature enthusiasts from the city and architects. The event featured the talk of Shanti Sunkara, a Naandian who shared her cycle of experiences from living in a rural set-up to a chaotic urban setting and then to a Rurban life. Prominent Economist, Naandian Anil Sood talked about Circular Economy – an emerging economy that blends technological and bio life cycle thereby reducing the burden on the earth. Shyam Sunder Reddy, prominent farming professor conducted a very mindful topic – Fair Share, its meaning for us, others and more.

Many questions were answered during the workshop, while many new questions have emerged as food for thought for the participants.





## VISITORS OF NAANDI...

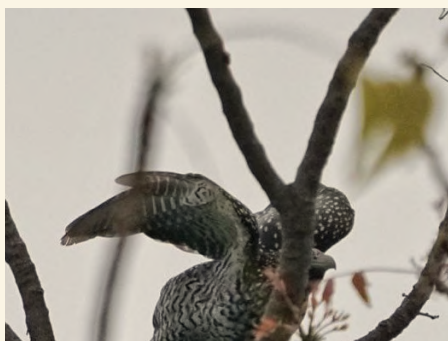
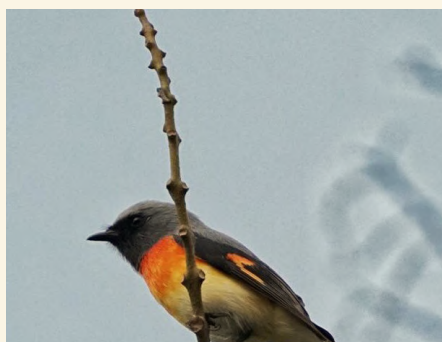
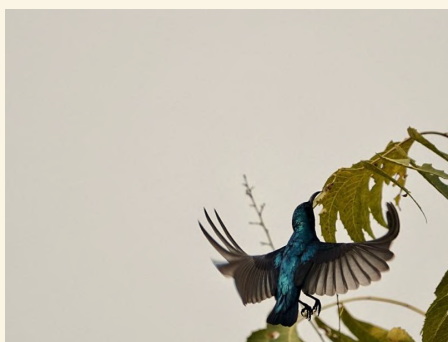
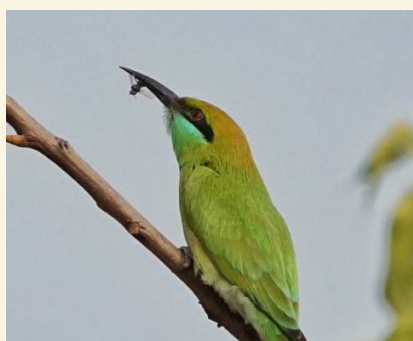


PHOTO CREDIT:  
**MADHU REDDY**



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Co-creating eco-habitats that celebrate living