

A deeper look at Co-Creating **Eco-Habitats..**

Organo Newsletter - November 2020



The Organo experience

By Prabha Dhamotharan

I have never had any previous knowledge about gardening or farming. In fact, I don't remember growing any plants in my balcony or terrace, in the previous apartment that we lived at.

I had no plans as such to learn anything about farming when we moved into Naandi. I started farming as a way of time-pass. Once I started to involve myself though, I found it to be very interesting. The farmers and other people involved in farming here taught me a great deal as well.



Institute of Rural Development). That is how I started beekeeping too at Naandi.

I am sometimes amazed at how much I have learnt in the last 1 year at Naandi and still continue to learn every day.

Life has changed so much after moving to Organo Naandi, I tell my husband that farming is far more fulfilling to me than being gifted gold or jewellery! I can easily spend the whole day at the farm and still look forward to coming back the next day, and the next...



The satisfaction of finding something new and implementing it to success prompted me to learn more about newer farming techniques.

Apart from learning more about the plants, I started to involve myself at the goshala too. I gradually learnt quite a bit about cows and how to take care of them.

When I came here, there was a beekeeping box already available. When I enquired around, I was told that all previous attempts at beekeeping were not successful. I eventually got interested and did a weeklong course at NIRD (National



The Story of Ananthavaram aka Antharam...



With this intention, we have acquired 50 acres of land to build an integrated eco-habitat with a community of 150 residents and a wellness retreat.

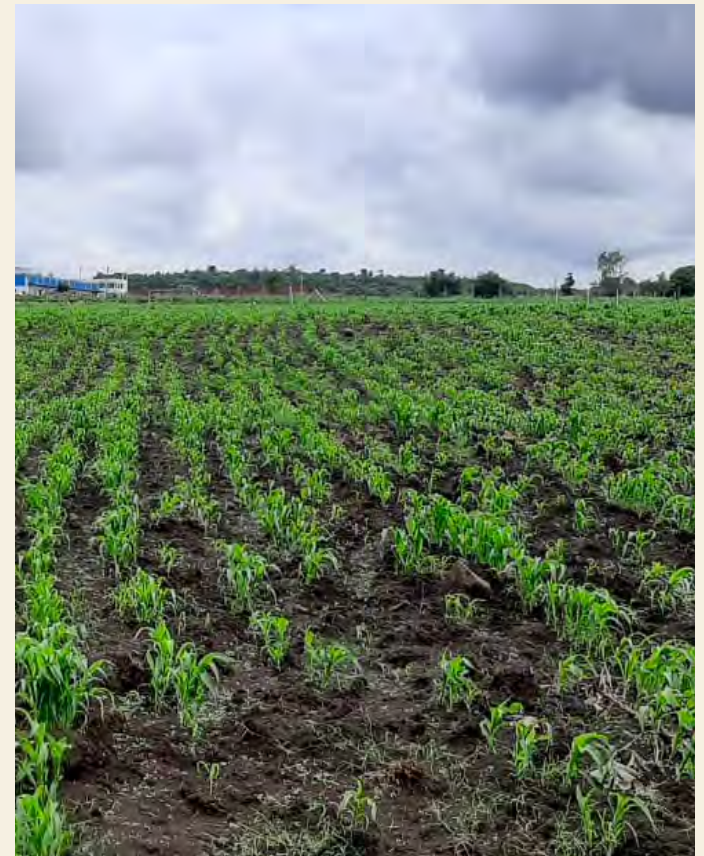
We are targeting to bring out a new typology with some corrections from the learnings of our first project. To begin with, we are aiming to eliminate the movement of automobiles, especially 4 wheelers, within the community.

We are making it a more pedestrian-friendly community as the residents would be mainly weekend occupants who may be looking at it to get away to a peaceful place with their children.

Locals fondly call the village Antharam. Ananthavaram, as it was known once upon a time, is the history of that particular village. After Organo Naandi, we are setting our eyes on weaning people away from the city to achieve our primary goal of counter urbanization. Additionally, we aim to impact five surrounding villages. The simple reason for choosing Antharam is that it is away from the hustle-bustle of the city and is also unaffected by the real estate mindset of the city.

Antharam has inherent advantages of being amidst agricultural area where many farmers are still into agriculture and are willing to continue it for their livelihoods.

Another advantage is that the village has its own native culture. And we believe if there has to be an impact, we have to create a project around it to make it happen.



The community is being designed to work on a timeshare basis with the wellness resort so that these homes will be gainfully occupied at all



times. We are also making an effort to reduce the footprint of each building while also making it more user friendly. Features which are related to Saptha Patha are going to be further researched and improvised as we are attempting to achieve some extent of water security, solar energy shared with the grid, and yet not waste any money in terms of connected demand charges with the government.

We have also understood what grows in this soil. Since it is black cotton soil we are planning to grow crops that are best suited while ensuring safe, practical or pragmatic organic practices. We are trying to respect land topology as much

as possible and avoid disturbing fertile soil within the site and also design homes with rural ethos.

There is a poem in Telugu "Palleku podham, chalo chalo" which means let's go to the village. What we are trying to recreate here is the same sentiment where people come here, to their second home, they are welcomed by the ambience and feel of an actual village along with all the urban comforts.

We would also like to create the ecosystem for people who want to work from home post the COVID era.



The houses we are designing will be well ventilated and energy modelled, including at the cluster level and other aspects. The community is going to have 20 to 25% of the land allocated for afforestation with local species of plants found in Telangana regions.

We are paying a lot of attention to achieve better biodiversity by planting many local species.

As things stand today, Organo Antaram project is in the process of procuring all the necessary approvals and we are expecting to launch it by March 2021. At the cost of 2.25 crore for each house, the entire community is going to be in a 1:3 ratio, which means 1 acre of land will have 3 units in it. This is the density that we are targeting and it is going to be a group development which will also come under the HMDA limits.

Rainwater harvesting - Lessons from Naandi

By Rakesh Koti



At Naandi, we have created a water-balanced community. This means that the annual water budget is below the total amount of rainfall falling on the land. The community has been managing only with rainfall and Borewell until now.



Some of the water falling on the land is diverted to ponds and rainwater storage structures but most of it is directed to deep aquifer recharge bore wells. These Borewells improve the groundwater table.



While the groundwater table has increased, there is a marked difference in the way farmers around the community have been utilizing their lands. A lot of them have converted their lands into cricket fields. It is more lucrative for them to turn their land into a cricket field than do farming.

Most of the water for maintaining the lawns in these grounds come from the ground. With over 20 grounds around Naandi, the groundwater resource has started depleting. The community is not benefiting from the efforts of recharging the groundwater table. Although the dependence is still completely on rainfall and groundwater, it gets challenging in the summer.

While designing communities, the question that we want to answer is what would happen if

1. The rains are low
2. There is no water from the government
3. The groundwater resource has been depleted.



One way is to depend on water tankers. But is there a better way? How much water must be stored? Is it practical to store that much water?

Our efforts are going into resolving these very questions.

How I Lost The Argument With My Parents!

By Vaishnavi

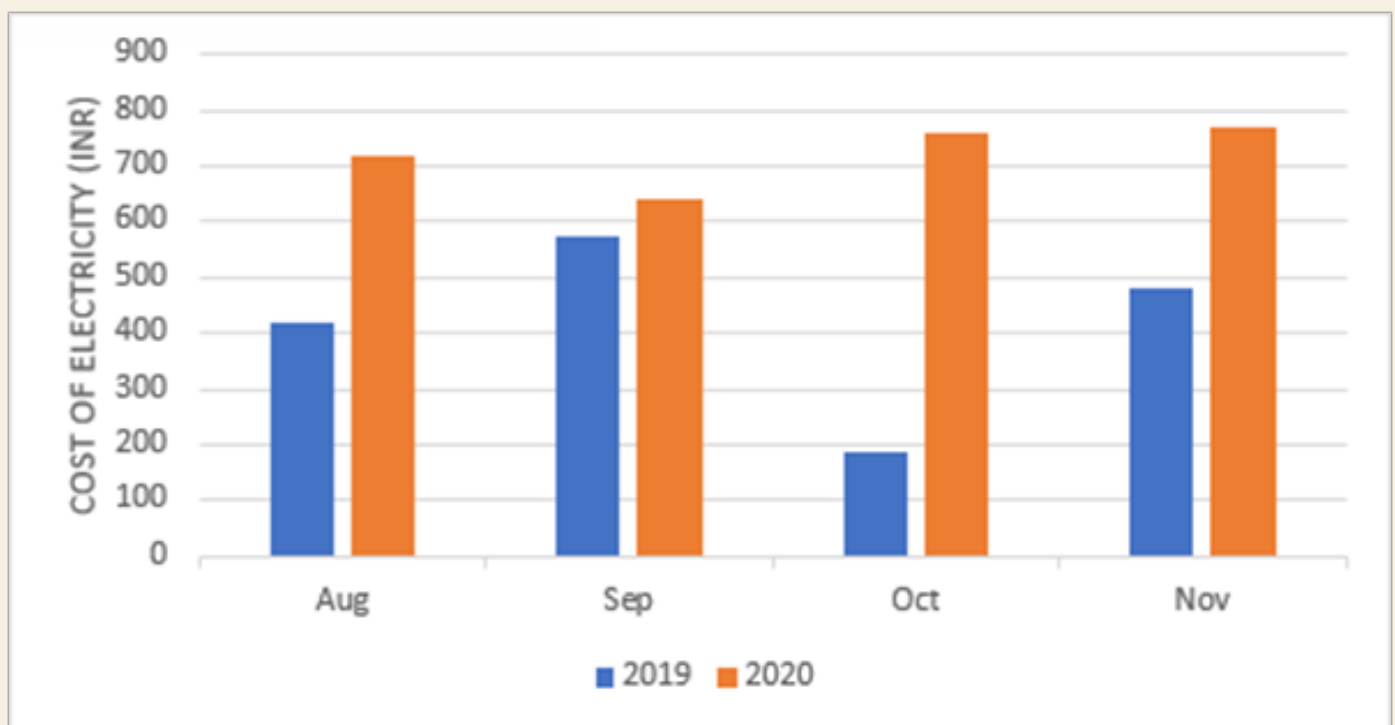
All this began recently when I got vexed with my parents blaming me for the increase in our power bill.

I went home during lockdown with the hope of spending time with them but faced arguments over my bad habits which led to an increase in our power bill.

I didn't care much initially and thought of it as a silly reason to argue over. Eventually, it went to the extent where my colleagues would hear the plight of my parents during our daily virtual meetings.

I have never considered this to be a problem because it is not a very insubstantial amount of money as a percentage of what I earn. The power bill was equivalent to buying a KFC bucket. The only reason I looked at this was because of my parents who have been observing my way of living since the last few months.

To prove to them that I am not inconsiderate of how much I am contributing to the monthly bill, I have taken up this exercise and to my surprise, they were right. The consumption did overshoot drastically during my period of stay from August to November.



The blue lines correspond to energy bills last year. The orange lines correspond to energy bills after I moved in this year.

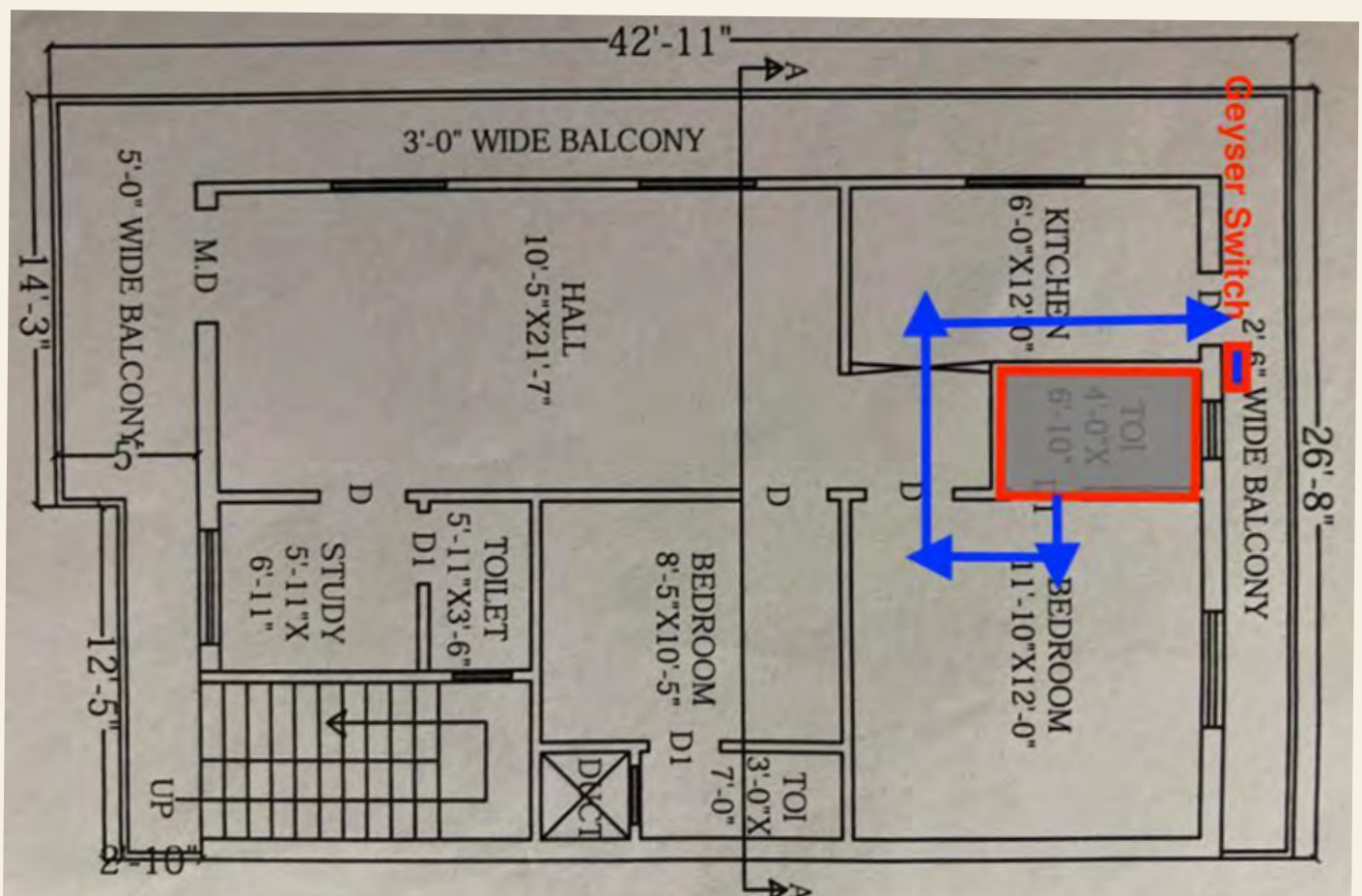
So I have decided to write down their complaints.

- Operating fan regulator speed at 3 rather than 5
- Not leaving devices on stand-by
- Switch off the geyser after use
- Not using the air-conditioner when it's already comfortable outside

Some of the above were doable whereas some were not. I tried keeping the fan regulator on 3 for a couple of days to see if I was comfortable. I tried to implement the suggestions for other points as well.

Following were my observations during this test period.

- I realized that I wasn't feeling as comfortable when the fan speed was at 3. I would sweat frequently and felt uncomfortable the entire time while working. Eventually, after a day or two, I increased the speed to 4 and observed myself. I could immediately feel the difference and decided to leave it at this
- I made sure that I would take those extra few steps to go to the TV switch and run a final check to make sure all the devices were switched off every night
- The one thing I still forget is to switch off the geyser after taking a bath. This made me realize that the switch located in the balcony of my house was not accessible enough to put this habit to practice. Here is a floor plan of my house with the location of the geyser switch and the bathroom



I am going to relocate the switch inside the bathroom so that it is more accessible and I won't forget.

- Not running the AC has been a little difficult to follow. I realized that I was mostly feeling uncomfortable due to the thick blanket and not necessarily the temperature. Changing to a good cotton blanket helped me sleep better without the air-conditioner.

Over the last month, I have been trying to cut down on my electricity usage by being mindful

of my behaviour. Although it was uncomfortable in the beginning, now I am fully adjusted and it has become my new norm.

I realized that more than energy-efficient appliances, lighting and gadgets, it is the behavioural change that contributes a lot to how much energy my family consumes.

As my dad keeps saying: "the body is very efficient in adjusting itself to the outside environment. You should give it time to adjust."



My little adjustments

By Prasad Devineni

Initially, when I moved into Naandi, I thought I would have to make a lot of adjustments, lifestyle-wise. But among the several good things about this place is that while it is far removed from the city, it is actually not too far from the city in terms of distance.

You are living in nature, but you have all the amenities of modern living here, including air conditioning and the internet. Internet is something that we cannot do without, but that too is pretty good here, so I can easily work from my Naandi home over the weekends when I visit. It is the best of both worlds, I would say.

The other small adjustments that I had to make were quite pleasant, in fact. When I open the balcony doors of my bedroom, I am often greeted by sparrows! I have not seen sparrows



in the city for a long time, almost a decade. But here, they are everywhere and right outside my balcony doors almost every morning.

Sometimes a bird or two enters the house and cannot seem to move out. But that is hardly an inconvenience. It is only a matter of getting used to little things like these and actually enjoying them.

Spiders or insects crawl in too sometimes, but that is not an issue either. It is all a part of living in the midst of nature and getting used to this way of life.



The idea behind Organo Et School initiative

"The Key to Understanding the future is one word: Sustainability"- Patrick Dixon



Organo Et School's purpose is nurturing a learning environment for all stakeholders where inclusive holistic eco-living is celebrated. We have three principles that are woven into all our programs,

- Environment
- Experiential Learning
- Interactive Curriculum

There are both indoor and outdoor programs while we consider the needs and learning goals for designing any program.

We encourage participants to adopt sustainable living ideas at an individual level that can make a difference. Eventually, participants become aware of their resource consumption and work towards reducing unnecessary waste.

Begin your journey of Sustainability with Organo Et School.

To understand more about this initiative and various sustainability practices check out these intriguing blog posts.

<https://www.organoetschool.co.in/articles>

How do Rurban communities benefit grown-ups?

The conversation about the aftereffects of rapid urbanization on the young generation and senior citizens has always been a hotly discussed topic in every platform. However, there aren't enough discussions that address the mid-generation or the adults. The sad thing is, the pressure of fast-paced work and busy city life seldom give them the opportunity to sit and think about any of these.

But the long-term effect of this isn't going to be healthy as mental and physical health would be adversely influenced by this lifestyle.



Don't we all agree that this segment of people also deserves their due share of peacefulness in life? How do we achieve this without compromising on their ambitions and aspirations?



In a complete urban setup, this possibility may become difficult as the environment needed is hard to achieve amongst the skyscrapers. On the other hand, going back to an absolute rural setting would create hindrances in their career path.

The solution has to be holistic that includes the best of both worlds. How about a Rurban life that extends both the comforts of urban space and advantages of a rural village? It might sound a bit utopian but is definitely attainable.



Here, they get to spend time with their family, like-minded community, and their inner self which makes life more meaningful. Mindful living influences them to be more conscious about their surroundings and helps look at the larger picture.

In simpler words, it lets people wake up to the music of birds rather than speeding vehicles. A calm and peaceful environment that is full of life.

Hobbies and skills which took a backseat in their busy life get ignited with the motivating atmosphere. Farming activities inside the community can keep them engaged.

For those who work from home, Rurban environment would be a natural mood booster owing to the serenity of the place. The opportunity to take part in collective community activities would support in balancing a healthy and happy social life. Being close to nature amidst like-minded people is one of the best things that a community like this can put forward.



Endless possibilities

Rurban communities put forward infinite chances for people, the adults, to unwind and rejuvenate their mind and body, and introduces them to a slow-paced life outside the concrete piles.

Visitors of Naandi



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Madhu Reddy

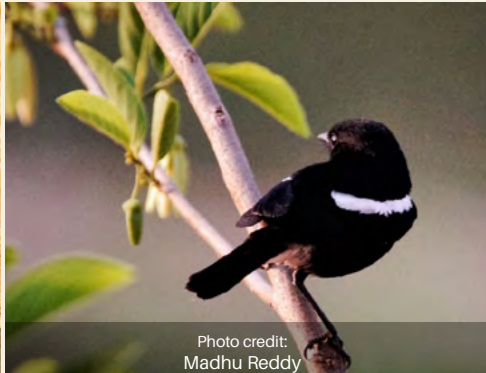


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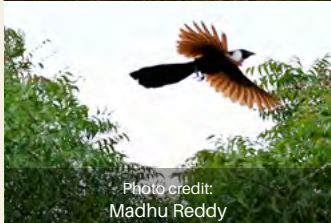


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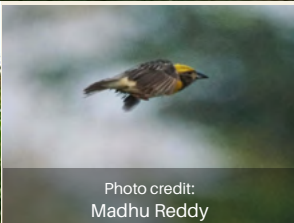


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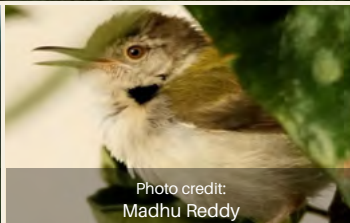


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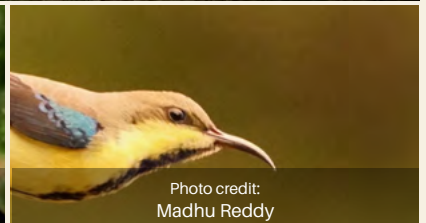


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Co-Creating Eco-Habitats that Celebrate The Living