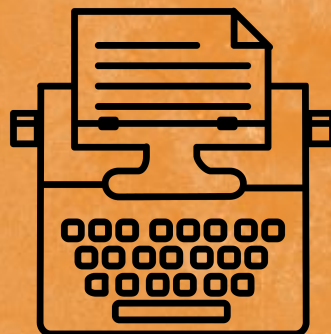


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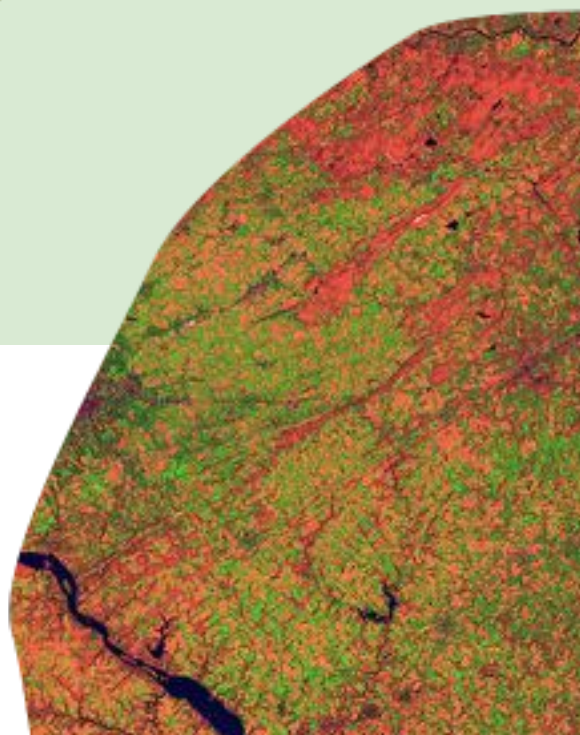
Author:

Occupy Climate Change (OCC!)

*Creative story
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FORMAS



FIRST DAIRY ENTRY OF MY LIFE

Jayanth Venkatachala

30th October 2200

Well, this is my first ever diary entry of my life. I've lived for 205 years now, although the last 105 years have been in silica form. They installed me into a new robot, sophisticated like a human. I am still getting used to it. For some reason I finally decided to do this and in the old-fashioned way of typing on a laptop. I don't think these people even know what a laptop is. I found yesterday in the carton with all my other human memories. It feels weird to feel like a human again after being in a mechanical robot for over a century. It still amazes me that I'm alive, thanks to science. I had lost my complete touch with typing, but the software allowed me to improve my proficiency. It feels like cheating, but hell, works for me. I feel lucky and grateful to be one of the few who still gets to live this way. I didn't buy this, they put me in it as an honour for the work I did for the environment. I can't thank them enough. I'd like to start by writing about these past years as a summary in a few pages. This doesn't do it justice, but this is the first entry, so I'll keep the details to another day. Let me today talk about this amazing town, Mysore. This is where I grew up as a kid and did most of my work. They like me here I think, and I owe everything to this city.

The city of Mysore, also now famously known as the "model city" wasn't the same about 200 years ago in 2018. We didn't have these transportation pods, hyperloops and trees everywhere. It was simple, people now won't even be able to imagine what it even looked like. We had tar roads, petrol and diesel cars, two-wheeled bikes, trains that ran on diesel that took days to go to the capital, there was air and water pollution, there was traffic jams and people died in vehicular accidents, and that was normal. Life moved at a much faster pace. Adults were busy with their jobs. Students had homeworks (yeah, they had to study at home too). Kids from this age, must hold candles to those kids from the past. We had cash for money which we used to keep in wallets and purses. Each country had its own currency. The world and the city have changed significantly now. To appreciate the current state of this city, I must explain how the city looked way back then. I'll talk about what my role was in changing the city to as it is now, in this entry.

Mysore, was exactly where it is now, well the tectonic plates don't move that fast. The weather was relatively good compared to other cities, considering that global warming had started to show its effects. It was one of the cleanest cities in India. It was known for the Royal palace that has now survived the time. It stands out now more than ever compared to these modern buildings with glass windows with solar panels. The Chamundi hill had a temple on top, which thousands of people visited every day. Hardly anybody goes there, now that religion has lost its prominence to science, ever since the multiverse theory was proven. The hill was losing its flora and fauna to deforestation. The forest ecology was under threat. There even used to be forest fires on the slopes. The two lakes, Kukkarahalli lake and Karangi lake were the home for migratory birds every year. But their numbers were declining every year. People also used to jog along the perimeter of these lakes. There was environmental activism going on around these two issues for decades, but nothing was done about it.

The city was well planned for that day and age. The economic hub was in the centre with the academic areas, residential areas and finally the outskirts surrounded it in that order. The city

had much less people as it did not have as many industries, like in Bangalore which was then then the Economic centre of the state. But now we are it. Ever since we started cleaning up our act in Mysore with regards to sustainability, it attracted the attention of the multi-national companies to shift their country head-quarters to here. Bangalore became too crowded and polluted. Locals even migrated to Mysore, bringing their knowledge and expertise. I saw both positives and negatives in this shift in the early years. The city was bound for a rapid “environmental” change. With us not being able to meet the 1.5 degree celsius mark, thanks to all the sceptics and so called “leaders” who did not understand how science worked, the problem of coping with the changes in Mysore compounded. There was chaos in the beginning. People needed direction and guidance to move forward. This is when I came back to Mysore, quitting a well-paying job in Sweden, which was all peaceful and living life at its own pace.

I was a product designer back then, who had immense interest in the impact of climate change in the future. Most of the work I did, was to design products to attain sustainable development. People knew me for that in Mysore and respected me as their local hero, even though I wasn't even there. As I kept a close eye on the situation back home, I decided that the city needed me more than I need that job I had, so I decided to come back home. It looked, bad. The city was not the same anymore. The kind and peaceful citizens of the city were agitated due to all the changes happening around them all of a sudden. One can understand that. This is when I saw the need for guidance to the people of Mysore, and to most major cities undergoing the same situation. I started a podcast in English, which now most people understood in India, talking to experts from around the world almost every day about the possible solutions. By now, the academics had projected what would come ahead of us and how to resolve the situation. My aim was to disseminate the information objectively to the masses. The major news channels in India were busy covering the petty antics of politics in India and they didn't do a good job with that either. Number of podcast listeners grew rapidly, and by the end of few months at least one person from every family listened to it.

The first thing I made sure with the podcast was that I pressed the need for cooperation among people of all kinds of background and differences. This was the toughest job as the previous governments had made sure to play identity politics, creating a wide gap and hatred among various sects of people. I stressed every day on the need for cooperation and that it was the only way going forward to live peacefully. It took time, but people realised it. The random floods, and landslides as a result, in the neighbouring districts in the Western Ghats took its toll killing thousands of people over years, but this brought people together. People shared their resources with the affected, knowing someday there will be others who would have their backs. Also, the long-lasting, inter-state conflict over the outlet of river Cauvery into Tamil Nadu was resolved due to heavy rains. Now Karnataka had excess to even store it in dams. So, those two goods came out directly from this grave situation. I brought in experts, activists, environmentalists, geographers and scientists from India and abroad, who had predicted these flooding decades ago. They systematically laid down the story of how corruption and political agendas suppressed the necessary actions to prevent the future catastrophe. People realised their lives were disregarded by the system and their elected representatives. They had lost hope in their leadership. What could one expect from the uneducated leaders who each had folders full of criminal records. It was all money and fame they wanted. Now more than ever, the facts hit people hard and they took the ownership of the mistake of electing them. After all India was and is still a democratic nation.

This is when the great “Party of the Future” then, now known as “People’s Party” was assembled in the state of Karnataka. I was invited to join the party. I had my reservations in the beginning but having seen that it was comprised of just experts and highly knowledgeable people who knew what they were doing in their field, I decided to join it. We first laid out an objective system of self- regulation within the party to keep in check the personal goals of its members. Everybody in the party was motivated to do the right thing collectively no matter what, for the first time in the history of the world. Our main aim was to create a sustainable future in every which way. We didn’t play identity politics but rather stressed on the action plan on how we would solve the current distress. People finally had hope. In the elections we cleanly swept all the other old parties winning by 98% majority. That was some election. It showed people cared about their future and were ready to do whatever it took to fix the current problems. I was made the minister of the Environmental Protection and I was honoured and was ready to take authority over the situation.

The first thing I did, was assembled a board of members which included senior environmentalists, activists, academics, graduate and post graduate students from various engineering fields, scientists, people’s representatives, state environmental historians and political ecologists to discuss and take decisions collectively based on science and objective data. I hired an objective mass media house who shared our principles to cover each decision and meeting we had about the environmental issues so that public was up- to- date with what was going on. We maintained transparency with the public as they had trusted their future in our hands. Two cities in particular had most of our attention. Bangalore and Mysore as they were changing rapidly. Like I mentioned earlier Bangalore was losing its charm and Mysore was gaining all of it. Both had their environmental issues and I’ll talk about Bangalore another time, but for now I’ll stick with Mysore. I laid down the two major environmental issues with the city earlier.

I deployed local students and academics, committed to our cause to study each issue in depth. They conducted deep studies about the issues by studying historical records, talking to people around the hills and people who exercised and lived near the lake who had observed the changes in the lake’s ecosystem. The activists readily jumped in to help with the information they knew. The problem turned out to be a corrupt system which was lethargic to take actions. In case of the hill, the older parties took bribes to ignore the encroachment of the hill slopes by local timber companies. The forest fires were not due to natural causes, but due to uncontrolled burning of the left-over trunks by them to create easy paths to encroach more forest. The lakes saw the decline in migratory birds due to eutrophication of the lakes. The sewage water from nearby localities were disposed into the lakes. The lack of food for these birds made them to go elsewhere. The lakes also did not have constant inlet of fresh water.

These issues were easy to solve with our committed and aspiring youth, who were the majority of the population then, whose human resource was wasted due to high rates of unemployment. They got a job now, so we took care of that aspect of sustainability. We banned the timber companies near the hills, as a matter of fact, we banned illegal deforestation for good. Locals who observed illegal activities readily informed us pro bono, about those nefarious activities out of their new-found respect for their environment. Some even tried to catch loggers and sometimes successfully did, before our team even showed up, putting themselves at risk. We reforested large areas of the hill, the city and the Western Ghats with the help of locals and school students. The Western Ghats (not part of the city) recovered over time and floods were

mitigated. For the kids it was a game to see who planted more trees. For the future of Mysore and the state of Karnataka, it was new hopes. I tried to involve locals in every possible step for it was a matter of their own future.

The lakes were cleaned over a couple of years. The sewage water was re-routed to the new sewage treatment plants around the city. We used the then available technology to produce biogas from the sewage and biodegradable wastes to be used for cooking and powering vehicles. We planned a network of underground canals to collect and feed rainwater from around the city to the lakes to replenish it with fresh water. The excess water from the lake was sent to the nearest agricultural areas around the city. Thus, a constant flow of fresh water was maintained. The migratory birds slowly started reappearing. Waste treatment plants were setup outside the city to recycle the non-biodegradable wastes. We already had good waste collection system, hence was named among the cleanest cities back then, but the treatment plants needed attention and improvement, which we did. People helped the cause by doing their basic duty of separating trash and using recycled products and avoiding food wastes in many ways, enthusiastically.

Our party grew in the national level rapidly. The system worked very well, and we were elected into power in the centre. They recognised my achievements in resolving environmental issues in the city of Mysore and in the state and appointed me as the Central Minister of Environmental Protection. I gladly accepted the new challenge and did my best. You can see the results of that now I guess. That story is for another day. Mysore drew attention from all around the world. The people's enthusiasm and dedication to take care of their local environment inspired people around the world. The environmentalism and the new cosmopolitanism instilled in the people of the city through mainly the two issues above, sustained, resulting in the shift of the centre of economics to Mysore from Bangalore in just two decades. People felt rewarded for their good deeds. The growth felt natural and people adjusted to it smoothly now that they knew how to. The new migrants adopted our way of living and everybody lived happily here. The city still is growing, and I am happy that I played a small part in this process, after all it was the will and action of the people that was paramount in this development.

I'll end it here for today, it's almost time for the cricket world cup finals between India and Pakistan. Somethings never get old, like me since I was installed in this robot. Haha! Anyway, I'm glad our countries resolved our personal relationships. I liked typing out this dairy, no wonder why people did this. I'll be doing this more, but see you for now.

Jayanth



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