



BIODYNE

A Newsletter of the Biodynamic Association of India (BDAI)

November 2011

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Biodyne is a newsletter of the Biodynamic Association of India (BDAI). The BDAI is a not-for-profit organization promoting biodynamic farming through training programs, workshops, publications, etc. BDAI would like to harmonize the biodynamic work in India and is ready to support regional groups and associations.

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The views expressed by the authors do not necessarily reflect an agreed-upon opinion or the policy of the BDAI or the editorial board of Biodyne.

Calendar of upcoming events

2012 January 31. Workshop: Biodynamic work in the world - how do we promote development; organized by IBDA, DI and Section of Agriculture, at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland - for information and registration write to sektion.landwirtschaft@goetheanum.ch

2012 February 1-4. Next agriculture conference organized by the Section of Agriculture at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland see www.sektion-landwirtschaft.org/ and www.anthromedia.com.

2012 March 5-12. Next BD training workshops by BDAI in Shenbaganur/ Kodaikanal, Tamilnadu see BDAI website www.biodynamics.in.

2012 March 17/18. Conference on issues of biodynamic practices and research at Hyderabad, planned by the BDAI.

2012 June. Next Demeter International Members Assembly to be conducted in Slovenia; for members and guest members of DI only. - See also www.demeter.ne

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Editorial

Dear members of the BDAI,

Dear biodynamic practitioners, apprentices and aspirants,

Dear friends,

Let us open this edition of a renewed Biodyne with sincere apologies for the silence of Biodyne for several years. We believe presently that we can revive biological and dynamic spirits of the BDAI and thus have the courage to announce a new beginning. A new beginning not only of this publication, but of enthusiasm and dialogue and happy controversies and creative interaction.

The writer of these lines is the present Secretary of the BDAI. While our registered office is with the NGO ICRA at Bangalore, thanks to their always-helpful director Mr. P. Babu, my working base is at Auroville, Tamil Nadu, at the Coromandel coast near Puducherry. Other members of the Management Committee of the BDAI are listed in the publishers information.

In February 2011, our society's President, Mr. C. Jeyakaran - to friends known as Jakes - participated in the International Conference of the Agricultural Section of the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland. The conference was conducted under the theme "Future Workshop - Agriculture. From burning issues to beacons of light." Then, in June 2011, I participated in the Members Assembly of Demeter International in Hessa, Germany. Jakes and I, we shared the impression that the circles of biodynamic farming - which, when certified and marketed under a brand name, is known as Demeter farming in most parts of the world - have opened up widely to the global movements of organic farming, ecological sustainability and social justice, and felt that this is encouraging and invigorating, personally as well as for our activities in India.

I hope that the articles in this Biodyne convey our readiness for collaboration with all those who work towards ecological balance and healthy life on Earth, as wholeheartedly as possible within the given circumstances, human resources and capacities, and financial means. You are most welcome to address us, the editors of Biodyne and the Secretariat and Management Committee of the BDAI, either by e-mail or by postal mail - see our contact details in the publishers information.

With cordial regards,

Lucas Dengel

The following is an edited version of the press release of Demeter International (DI) on the Members Assembly (MA) of DI in June 2011 in Germany. The original press note spells biodynamic with a capital B so as to convey that in several countries it is a registered trade name. However in India, we, the biodynamic practitioners, tend to use biodynamic as a well-defined attributive - though there is also a good amount of "misuse" of the term. The trade name Demeter for certified biodynamically grown food is not yet known in the Indian market.

The Members Assembly of Demeter International 2011

Members of DI met in Germany, from June 20th to 25th, for their annual Members Assembly (MA). Forty delegates from twenty countries visited model farms, processors and retailers to get first-hand impressions of Demeter production and trade, followed up with lectures on inner quality and on latest research into food quality indicators. A keynote address on social and philosophical aspects and several more lectures provided background for workshops and debate.

Whosoever had expected that the MA got caught

in motions on standards and statutes was up for a surprise. As suggested in this year's International Conference by the Agricultural Section of the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland, in February, the workshop of the MA was organized around the core issue of the essentials of biodynamic work and produce.

Naturally, amongst these essentials mentally collected during the workshop one could find the biodynamic preparations - those we are working with as well as those which are yet to be developed the sensitization of soils and crops to cosmic influences, the wish to create farm individualities, humane and species-appropriate interaction with farm animals, holistically nutritious food, etc. but also the issues of global climate change, ecological sustainability, fair trade and transparency, and social justice. And, though biodynamic and Demeter work is regarded as a powerful means to achieve great positive change, areas in which we fail or lack were stated honestly.

DI meets annually in June for the harmonising of biodynamic activity world-wide. This year the meeting was at Loheland, near Fulda in Germany, hosted by Demeter e.V., the coordinating body for biodynamic and Demeter work in Germany. The venue, an anthroposophical community with farm, Waldorf school and conference facilities, provided a beautiful and appropriate ambience for the work of the delegates. Though the location is in the geographical heart of Germany (since the unification of the country that had been divided after WW II), in regard to internet and e-mail connection many participants used to top connectivity and broadband performance were frustrated.

Demeter International looks optimistically to the future, with increasing areas being farmed biodynamically. The positive consequences for the earth, for global climate change and for the nutrition of man are significant and offer encouraging perspectives.

(Lucas Dengel)

A week in North Korea reflections of an Indian by the Taedong river. Excerpt (about one-third) from an article by C. Jayakaran, May 2010.

More than a week has passed since I came to Pyongyang, the capital of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPR Korea or North Korea), and I am filled with a lot of impressions and thoughts. It is the last morning of my visit and I am sitting on a stone bench by the Taedong river, which is just 50 meters from the Pyongyang Hotel where I stayed the past one week.

The Taedong river basin is considered to be the cradle of Korean culture and civilization since the days of their first founder-king Tangun more than 5,000 years ago. This country is definitely different, and I am trying to understand and make sense of my North Korea experience, the North Koreans' outlook to life, their political system and their point of view about the tense international situation around their country.

It is around six at dawn now: I have already completed my half an hour of morning stretching and yoga exercises by the Taedong riverside walkway park, and am watching this fairly clean river flow through the city of Pyongyang. It is late spring and the weather is comfortable. Pyongyang is a riot of colors from the beautiful azellias and magnolias and innumerable trees and shrubs in bloom at this time of the year; in this green city the air is clean unlike in any Indian or Chinese cities that I have visited.

Fishing seems to be a popular activity by the riverside, and judging from the fairly good fish catch by the anglers, it looks like the Taedong is well stocked with fresh water fish. Many people, both young and old, are jogging or walking briskly to keep fit, and my presence here is a bit of an oddity and attracts nervous glances. There are many older people sitting around the stone benches by the river, and I am reflecting on my impressionable stay for a week in this unique country, a country which is in the

world headlines now for suspected sinking of a South Korean navy patrol ship in March 2010. It also makes the headlines for its defiant pursuit of a nuclear program for power generation and defense purposes; this is much opposed by the other world powers, especially those producing and using nuclear power, and which also have deadly nuclear missiles pointing to Pyongyang already. Such are the flimsy threads of logic on which world opinions are built.

The plans for this journey began a few months ago with the initiative of Erik Sohl from the Anthroposophical Society in Jaerna, Sweden. For the past many years Erik has been acting as a bridge to bring biodynamic/organic agriculture methods from Europe to China and the DPR Korea as well; thanks to Erik's vision and determined efforts, I had the opportunity to visit China many times since 2005, on interesting organic/BD farming consultancy assignments and for training programs in biodynamic agriculture.

The DPR Korea has been a country of immense interest to a lot of people working on organic and self-sustaining agriculture issues in this part of Asia. The idea was to help this much misunderstood country with good, modern sustainable organic agriculture concepts and methods, so that they are totally self-sufficient for their food requirements. Through Erik's initiative some agronomists from the DPR Korea have attended training programs on biodynamic agriculture both in Kodaikanal, India, in 2009, and near Beijing, China, in 2007. After all, this is probably the only country in the world which has adopted green/organic agriculture as one of its national policies; this is in line with their Great Leader's policy of Juche (as I understood it), meaning absolute self-reliance in production, and grass-root level self-sufficiency.

The powerful industrialized nations seem to be trying their best to bring this country to its knees by putting an economic and physical blockade, and this

small determined country is forced to fend for itself, and as I can see it hurts. Many organic farming enthusiasts worldwide want to help the DPR Korea to improve its agriculture, so that they can be doing organic/biodynamic farming successfully and independently, free from the influence of the multinational agri-business companies like in the rest of the world; and hence my visit with Jaison Jerome to do an organic/biodynamic farming training for fifty agriculture officers in Pyongyang in mid-May 2010.

Kosima Weber Liu is a German lady living with her US-Chinese husband John Liu in Beijing for over twenty years now. They have a company called Environment Education Media Project (EEMP) based in Beijing, and have done several documentaries highlighting the need for sound watershed management notably in China, Mongolia and Africa. "The Lessons of the Loess Plateau" is John's most recent film highlighting this concept and helping us with the understanding needed for managing living ecosystems for human survival anywhere. Kosima has been visiting DPR Korea since 1991, and has been a friend and well wisher of this country bringing experts in sustainable technologies to Pyongyang for seminars and workshops. In cooperation with Erik from Sweden and the PIINTEC from the DPR Korea, Kosima organised a five-day International Workshop on Environment from May 13th to 18th in Pyongyang.

Our local host was the PIINTEC (Pyongyang International Information Center for New Technology and Economy) organization, and their enthusiastic team of Ryu Kyong Il, Kang Mung Ryol, Kumran/golden orchid, Ri Kyong Sim, Rim Mu Song and Ginsem from PIINTEC. They were our constant companions during our eight-day stay in Pyongyang, and, coming to think of it, we had very little other local contacts for conversation. Dr. Kerry Bowman from the University of Toronto, Canada

and an expert on Gorilla Conservation in Congo, was there to speak about environment conservation issues and success stories in agroforestry and wildlife conservation. Yang Liu, a Chinese lady working for a German company specializing in city waste composting, was there to talk about fast composting of urban waste. Jason Jerome and myself from India were invited to talk about organic and biodynamic agriculture, with practicals thrown in to make compost and a few biodynamic preparations.

Storage of biodynamic preparations

A note received from Demeter International in December 2010.

The question had arisen : Are there alternatives to storing the BD preparations in peat?

In some regions of the world peat is not available, but other materials had not been evaluated till date. In a study run by Uli Johannes König (Biodynamic Research Institute Germany) in 2010, peat in the storage box was compared to coir dust, rice hull and compost for effectiveness. The preparation stored in each material for three weeks was stirred and spread on small plots, and, using research methods on formative forces, an evaluation was done on the preparation in storage, on the preparation when stirred, and on the plots where it was applied.

Preliminary results of the research work suggests that coir dust is effective as a storage medium, but that rice hull and compost are unsuitable.

Uli Johannes König comments: Steiner recommended peat, perhaps because other materials were not available to the farmers in Central Europe, but coir dust (and other materials) were not excluded. In the subsequent year trials will be repeated and expanded.

It should be noted that preparation storage is not only an issue of maintaining appropriate temperatures and humidity, but that it also and more importantly concerns the preservation of life forces in the preparations and, through this, their full effectiveness.

These first results of the König study confirm traditional methods of storage. Only coir dust provides an adequate shield as well as peat does, and this only when it is well compacted. In reference to Demeter certification standards and guidelines, both materials are acceptable; other materials are not and will be regarded as a non-compliance requiring correction.

Horse and other whisperers (by Lucas Dengel)

The Hollywood movie “The Horse Whisperer” released in 1998 is a drama about an injured girl and her injured horse who, with the help of a so-called horse whisperer, recover their emotional and physical health. It is based on a book of the same title by one Nicholas Evans (published in 1995) which in turn is based on actual characters such as Tom Dorrance (1910-2003), Bill Dorrance (1906-1999) and Ray Hunt (1929-2009), and Buck Brannaman who is very much kicking and alive, all of them US-American horse trainers and promoters of “natural horsemanship”. The movie introduced the mainstream audience, again, to the concept of mental or psychological communication with animals.

As much as man can converse intimately with horses, he or she can do so with dogs and cats, cheetahs and lions, dolphins and whales, falcons and chickens, cobras and crocodiles, and even with bees, butterflies, ants and termites. Once an inner contact has been established with beetles or snails i.e. creatures that do not easily impress with keenness to communicate with humans, the step to converse with plants, with flowers, trees, vegetables and cereals is not that big anymore. And from there, maybe, the

step to communicate with creeks and rivers, rocks and mountains becomes imaginable...

Many earlier cultures respected Nature and cultivated our potential to speak with her. Our present global agro“culture” seems to cultivate only one attitude, that of ruthless exploitation for maximum profit. Precondition for this attitude is a complete lack of closeness and communication and empathy. And equally sad, many people engaged in routine jobs of this heartless animal husbandry, seem to lose not only contact with the spirits of animals and of nature, but equally with their own hearts and souls. My motivation for bringing up the matter in the Biodyne is twofold:

Firstly, animal husbandry, till date, has not yet been a field of great achievements in organic and sustainable agriculture. Earthworms and rhizobacteria, soils and cereals, veggies and fruit seem to get more attention than chickens and cows. Even in India, where thanks to Vedic traditions the cow is supposed to carry an elevated status, cattle is often treated as crudely and brutally as in other parts of the world. To conclude, it is time we have a close and relentless look at our practices of animal husbandry.

Secondly, Rudolf Steiner's insights into nature, his capacity to communicate with the elementals of earth, water, air and fire, and his approach to biology, zoology, botany and physiology, can be so overwhelming that we tend to forget our own insights and instincts and intuitions, which may be small but potentially are equally rich and far reaching. Biodynamic training and farming needs to embrace chicken and cow whisperers with the same enthusiasm as it embraces Steiner's insights. The doors of perception that Steiner has opened to many of us, need to be used and entered, and this is possible from many angles.

**Biodynamic Training Course October 2011
feedback by a participant.**

Early in the year, I was forwarded an application for the biodynamic training workshop. This

opportunity was a great find, as the workshop was a unique experience. The six days of classes gave the 25 participants a complete insight into the biodynamic world, covering the theoretical, practical, scientific, as well as the metaphysical aspects of this holistic method of agriculture in great detail.

The course materials, lectures, practical sessions and discussions were very well organized, and answered to all the participants' queries and doubts. One of the most interesting lectures, for me, was the one on scientific research on biodynamic practices presented by Dr. Perumal from Chennai, who shared results from his ongoing research on soil testing methods, as well as findings from other scientific research in various biodynamic practices. It was amazing to be able to relate the intuitive knowledge passed down from Steiner to the conventional scientific explanations for the observations seen on the field. The practical sessions at the herbal garden of Kurinji Farms also had a huge impact on learning the various BD preparations and their field applications. It was a fantastic opportunity for me to learn the processes hands on, to implement on our own farms, as well as to teach these methods to farmers and workers who work with us.

The international mix of individuals from various walks of life, some connected with conventional agriculture, some from the field of education, others owning small and medium farms, and some who were planning to start farming, added to the richness of this workshop, that allowed the participants to closely interact amongst each other, and to learn from not only the course but also from each other. The workshop was like a big first step, and I look forward to integrate and grow with this special community in India.

Miss Avantika Jalan

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