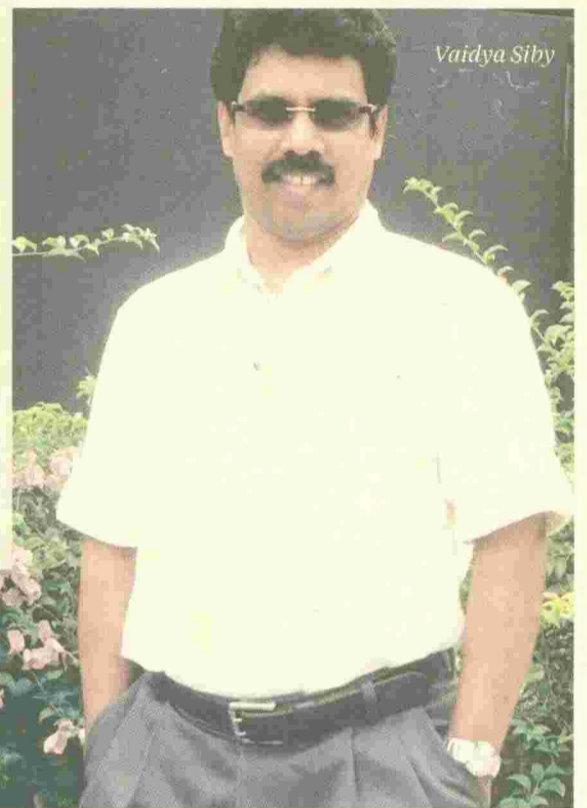


Friends of the Earth

Just how would one go beyond the Earth Hour? **Aneeta Sundararaj** finds out from three individuals



Brenda James



Vaidya Siby

Tonight, millions of people will turn off their lights (from 8.30 to 9.30pm) for Earth Hour. While this will certainly save energy, here are stories of three people who make a conscious effort to be environmentally-friendly every day.

ENVIRONMENTAL ADJECTIVES

"Avid gardeners are welcome to collect discarded stalks, leaves and flowers which can be used as mulch or compost. Please bring your own bags or buckets." This is the sort of email you'll receive from Brenda James, 35, on a regular basis.

From the time she started Nook Flowers, Brenda was determined to be friendly to the environment. It started with simple things like the message cards which are made from recycled craft paper. Messages are handwritten.

"It's always a challenge with flowers," explains Brenda. "The fair trade and organic suppliers do a good job, but I find it hard to buy in huge quantities. Look at the size of this place," she says, casting her eyes over her shop which is, really, a nook in a row of commercial establishments in Bangsar South, Kuala Lumpur.

"With a small fridge, I can only buy small quantities of flowers and have to get the stock to move fast.

When I can, I choose local flowers like sunflowers, those from the chrysanthemum family, and lilies. Most come from Cameron Highlands, orchid farms in Johor, and even Sungai Buloh."

To emphasise Brenda's policy of "re-using and re-purposing", regular customers are now in the habit of bringing their own vases to the shop. "This way, I don't use floral foam and other packaging materials."

Acknowledging how lucky she is to have clients who share her vision, she tells of the time she used empty condensed milk tins to decorate cocktail tables at a wedding. Then there was a corporate event where the centre piece had a base made of glass bricks salvaged from construction sites. "In the middle, we used dried willow sticks

from the previous Chinese New Year and adorned them with paper flowers cut out from old newspapers."

Brenda, who whispers "go make someone happy" into her flower arrangements before delivering them, insists that "paper and netting are secondary as the flowers are the heroes of a bouquet and make up the essence of it".

"Talk to your florist," she says passionately. "Ask where the flowers came from. I am more than willing to explain why I do things in a certain way."

In future, don't be surprised when you receive an email from this florist who has a penchant for adding adjectives to inanimate objects. For example: "If you have any handsome glassware, may I have them please?"

For more about the work Brenda James does, log on to www.nookflowers.com



Brenda uses milk tins as decorations

POWER OF THE SUN

"In ayurveda, we believe that nature is made up of five elements: Fire, space, water, earth and air," says Vaidya C.D. Siby.

Sharing the philosophy behind this ancient science, he explains: "These elements exist in all entities in different proportions. When the equilibrium of these five elements is disturbed in the body, we get diseases."

According to the senior physician at Ayur Centre Sdn Bhd, living in tandem with our environment begins by accepting that "without the power from the sun, nothing in our environment can be transformed. In our body, this power is represented in the digestive system. As the sun rises, one's digestive 'fire' will also rise. As sun sets, this 'fire' becomes poor. So, when the sun is at its highest at noon, that's the time to eat the heaviest meal of the day".

"These are all laws of nature," he adds. "If you don't follow them, Mother Nature will warn you with symptoms like headache, abdominal distension and back-

ache. If you neglect them, you'll end up with chronic diseases. Then, you're a burden to nature because you have to use natural resources to treat your diseases. You will become indebted to Mother Nature."

He explains further: "For instance, if someone is obese, the first thing is to help him understand how he became obese. Then we help them go through a process of healing using techniques to remove unhealthy toxins and fat deposition in the body."

Usually called a detox programme, the process Siby recommends for obesity involves external oil application, fasting, dietary restriction and elimination of toxins, introduction of a new diet regime, exercises and breathing techniques.

He concludes: "By respecting nature, you're respecting your individuality and protecting yourself. Living in a natural way is the soul of protecting the environment."

For more on ayurveda, contact www.ayurcentre.com



Ayurvedic treatment is influenced by the environment

LIFE&TIMES LIVING



ROLLING STONE THAT GATHERED MOSS

There is a saying: "Sow a thought and you reap an act. Sow an act and you reap a habit. Sow a habit and you reap a character. Sow a character and you reap a destiny."

Can we, then, influence our thoughts to create the best possible destiny? For Anne Munro-Kua, 63, the answer is yes because, "what and how each of us thinks matters, way beyond our individual lives and Earth Hour".

Anne, a "clean coach", uses a tool called Clean Language that was first developed by David Grove

who discovered that people use metaphors to describe their most traumatic experiences. "Metaphors crystallise the structure of those experiences," elaborates Anne.

Grove then started to ask and develop questions about the symbols and images in the metaphors. In the process, people became really clear about their metaphors and discovered their own unique ways of resolving their issues. The questions are "clean" because they support rather than interfere with this process of self-awareness.

Here's a simple example: Say you've spent hours looking for a book in your flat. Your friend waltzes in and, in less than two minutes, she's found exactly where it is. This brings on a real sense of shame and embarrassment that the house is in such a mess.

Bring this problem to Anne and, using Clean Language tools, she'll probably ask you: "When your house is a mess, what would you like to have happened?"

As the question and answer session progresses, you may discover that the metaphor you've been holding on to is this: "Because I've lost control over my

house, I'll never move forward in life. I'll be like a rolling stone that gathers no moss."

Focusing on the metaphor above, you may eventually accept that your home is probably never going to be featured in a magazine about stylish homes.

However, it's your home and you're happy living in it. With such a realisation comes a sense of peace and respect for the space and environment you live in.

This deceptively simple method of questioning helps you overcome the trauma and brings you into self-awareness of how you're thinking. It is all empowering.

The more telling part of this process is the difference in how people then begin to interact with others around them.

Before, they may be aloof and distrustful, thereby, creating a negative environment that surrounds them.

"By connecting with themselves authentically, they can connect with others and co-create the world and environment that they want to live in. Such is the power of one," concludes Anne.

For more on Clean Language, contact www.annemunrokua.com

"What and how each of us thinks matters, way beyond our individual lives and Earth Hour".
Anne Munro-Kua



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