

The Man Who Made a Forest

Written by Alex Baer
Tuesday, 10 April 2012 16:09

The whole business of heroes and fame routinely gets tangled up, mangled and strangled by modern life, interest levels somehow high in vapid and empty people created for the times, people famous only for being famous, their lively, spontaneous actions for renown all baled up with (and sometimes bailed out by) well-rehearsed legal dance-steps, or the fancy footwork of plain-deadly infamy.

In our modern world, we often confuse price and value, among so many other things. That is marketing's tales-and-sales mission, and marketing always lands its beachheads well-prepared.

Contrast today's fleeting flights of fame, awards for spurious and curious being, against those of the world's geniuses of the past who invented and gave back to the world so incredibly much.

For people not forced to work every hour of daylight and then some, simply to survive, there were fewer distractions to detour idle genius -- no radios, no movies, no teevees, no MP3s. So, they tinkered, dabbled, experimenting in real, tangible, and practical ways: The Leonardo da Vincis, not DiCaprios, and the Benjamin Franklins, not Bratts.

Yes, yes: ☐ Let the litany begin -- Times change, so do people, so does life, so do life's rewards, and all the rest. Besides, lighten up -- one person never matters, it is often argued, and all of this may be so...

...except when it is not. Rarely, but sometimes still so, past masters from the old world seem to yet be among us in the winds of this new world, mixing in the warm and cool breezes about us.
Case in point:

A 17-year-old teen in India has been quietly and tirelessly busy, ignoring the modern world and its superficial systems and goals. He has been focusing his energies instead on gardening in the northern part of his country, trying to breathe life into an old, dead-seeming sandbar, not into a brand new movie script.

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It was a very important endeavor, Jadav "Molai" Payeng decided, and so, he quietly dedicated his life to that one effort, *absent of fanfare, cameras, fans, paparazzi*. He kept planting and planting, even transplanting ants, to help nurse along his growing creation's ecological balance.

It is now more than 30 years later, and the teen boy is now a 47-year-old man. Where there was once a barren sandbar, a lush, green, jungle forest now stands -- 1,360 acres in all. A *masterstroke*, this is, most would readily say.

Payeng had originally asked the forest department for a hand, to provide some cover for wildlife, but received only an offhand suggestion to plant bamboo and not trees, which they said would not grow on the sandbar.

Despite the obvious and open-air nature of Payeng's *non*-undercover project, bringing green cover to wildlife, the forest department says it first became aware of that new forest only in 2008.

Assistant Conservator of Forests, Gunin Saikia, says they are all amazed. "He has been at it for 30 years. Had he been in any other country, he would have been made a hero."

If there were any justice in this dusty old world, Payeng would have been awarded all sorts of champagne-popping rewards for his eye-popping, three-decade-long efforts, not the least of which would be an Oscar-styled statuette he could hold high overhead, while shouting and shrieking, endlessly proclaiming, "I'm king of the world! I'm king of the world!"

Payeng does not seem that type. Instead, he quietly goes and does what he thinks is best, regardless of what anyone else thinks, whatever the opinion of others, no matter how long it takes. He spends his life growing, tending, and making a jungle forest, where there was once only killer heat, hot sand, and no shade.

This leaves us all in a most modern dilemma, best contemplated only during the new buds, shoots, and leaves of spring, making what we can and will of the dry husks and the papery

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shells of our own lives by slim, thin comparison.

<http://www.treehugger.com/natural-sciences/man-single-handedly-plants-entire-forest.html>