RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

As the 21st of December approaches, the various channels like Discovery and National Geographic are busy showing us how nature has changed, other predictions of change and so on. The upshot of all this and the various indecisive meetings in Rio and Doha, there is a lot of awareness being created about ones environment and how we contribute to its destruction. It is very common therefore to see regular programmes of tree plantation by the various organizations like Rotary and Lions purporting to do good.

It was rather disconcerting therefore when my viewing of one of these programmes was rudely disturbed by a persistent and loud noise emanating from the neighboring plot of land. It is about four acres of land full of neem trees (now becoming more rare in Chennai), mango trees and a few cocoanut trees. There were a lot of flowering bushes too. The noise was emanating from a large bulldozer, a JCB as they are referred to clearing up the plot. Every tree and bush was cleared out and the land flattened out!! Once this was done, lines were drawn for plotting and an architect came by to inspect the plot; Ours in an area where hi-rise buildings are not allowed, so the building design will obviously be independent bungalows with some garden space.

I was left wondering how many of the residents of the bungalows that will be built will try to grow trees around their homes, how many will be planted on exactly the same spots as the decade old full grown trees that were uprooted and how many of the children living in these homes will participate in tree planting for environmental protection.

I also wondered if it was too much to ask of an architect to inspect a plot so full of beautiful trees before the clearing up so that a minimum of destruction is needed? Perhaps it is more profitable to clear up the land, build and then offer to do the landscaping and gardening. In any case every one of these acts will add to our GDP, the uprooting as well as the manicured recreation.