

Sir Patrick Geddes: The Rebel and the Pioneer of Town Planning

Romasa Mohapatra

Abstract

Sir Patrick Geddes was born on October 24, 1854 in Scotland not far away from the City of Edinburgh, where he lived much of his life with his family. Trained as a biologist (Botanist), the decaying Edinburgh attracted his attention, changed him to a revolutionary city planner – the avant-garde of his generation and changed Edinburgh to one of the most enchanting cities of Europe – a remarkable Roman city! His relationship with India was significant where he lived the last decade and half of his life and worked. He was critical of his own countrymen over needless Eurocentric planning practices in Indian cities; a great supporter of the cultural renaissance of India and made many friends among Indian political leaders that endeared him much to Indian people. The paper tries to review some of his significant contributions to city planning ideas in general and his contributions to Indian planning concepts during his extended sojourn in India.

“This is a green world, with animals comparatively few and small, and all dependent on the leaves. By leaves we live. Some people have strange ideas that they live by money. They think the circulation of coins generates energy. Whereas the world is mainly a vast leaf colony, growing on and forming a leafy soil, not a mere mineral mass: and we live not by the jingling of our coins, but by the fullness of our harvests.”

- Patrick Geddes

“Patrick Geddes is fast becoming a rallying centre for the best minds of this generation; his thought,... will probably guide the future, since the Mechanists and Marxists in the present hour of their triumph, demonstrate the failure of their philosophies to do justice to either life or the human spirit.”

- (c.f., Meller, 1990:1)

Introduction

1.1 Sir Patrick Geddes confidently predicted the process of urbanisation and believed that the process could be analysed and understood for future enhancement of life and development. Lewis Mumford, a great admirer of Geddes, wrote (in 1950):

Geddes never laid claim to any particular body of knowledge. He was impatient to spend his time developing his ideas in a major treatise. The bulk of his work was in form of short articles, lectures, reviews, pamphlets, and books with collaborators. Geddes used the unconventional style of

private correspondence as a vehicle to communicate: what he was trying to do rather than what he had achieved. At a time when industrialization and Industrial Revolution was at a peak, and wealth was the key to life he wanted to transform the nineteenth century ideal of progress, "...from an individual race for wealth, into a Social Crusade of Culture" (Cherry, 1981:72).

1.2 Life of Sir Patrick Geddes:

Sir Patrick Geddes (1854-1932) was a Scottish academician and a social activist. He began as a biologist and spent most of his middle years in the university as a botanist and civic reformer (Edinburgh). In his 50's and 60's, his focus changed to city planning and international public life. Most of his thoughts and works are written in his book "Cities in Evolution" (1915). Geddes was involved in, and drew on, a wide range of international comparative experiences. He worked in places as Ireland, India, Palestine, and France, as well as Scotland that reveal an intellect, constantly seeking to 'self-improve and understand'.

Geddes was known as a city planner - in deed, some put him on the pedestal of 'father of modern town planning'. He was also the founder of the 'Sociological Society'. He was very popular among the city planners of his time, and a good example is the effect of his works had on Lewis Mumford. Around the period when new concepts of town planning was coming into form, concepts like the 'City Beautiful Movement', 'Radiant City' and so on, Geddes played an important role as an antidote to the 'socially naïve traditions' of the city planners. Mostly the architects and

engineers of that period focused on the physical form of the cities and regions. One of his well-known contributions is the concept of *conservative surgery* in slum-remedying schemes, which highlighted that rather than remove an entire neighbourhood, a small pocket of it could be cleared to provide a place for the congregation and other buildings remain in place (CIE: p. viii).

Geddes was a person who would pay attention to minute details. For example, during his stay in India (1914-28) teaching sociology and human geography (University of Bombay, 1919-1925) and practising planning of Indian towns and cities (52 of them), he gave value to the culture and traditions in terms of the city-scape, like a carved lamp post, a water tank in respect to ceremonial functions or pieces of architecture. In his mind, cities and neighbourhoods functioned as social organism, which led to an area to regenerate itself rather than replace it with an imposed design. (As a firm follower of Charles Darwin and evolutionary biology as evident from the title of his only full-length text: *Cities in Evolution*, he looked at neighbourhoods acting as a whole like an 'organism'.) His emphasis and appeal to the city planners and citizens was to enter into the 'spirit of our city', its 'historic essence' and 'continuous life' (CIE, p.x).

Geddesian Visions and Theories

2.1 Geddes' early approach to town and regional planning was based on a 'holistic and dynamic' appreciation of the whole environment, and particularly the connections between work, place, folk – a concept he borrowed from the Le Playist sociology during his early Paris stay (Meller,

1990). Here, Geddes may be compared with others, such as Ebenezer Howard, who advocated a 'clean slate' approach. Moreover, Geddes is credited with the term 'conurbation', which he used to suggest the relationship of a city with the communities and countryside around it (CIE: p. xiv). His approach was one that sought to better respect the 'organic unity of cities', and both to take into account the historic past and to identify the future potential of the cities. What is particularly exciting about the early work of Geddes is his interests encapsulated both the theoretical and practical aspects of land use and development of cities. He encouraged involvement of local people, e.g., his attempts to improve housing conditions in the Old Town of Edinburgh. In terms of delivery, he appreciated the need to link ideas relating to design and layout to their effective execution. Some of his innovative ideas in city planning could be summarised as follows:

1. Geddes viewed city as a complex social form. He emphasised use of surveys, so that the complexities could be reflected in sophistication and details on certain social issues in the city plan.
2. For planners his suggestion was that surveys be on a regional level and not just within the city limits, governed by political boundaries.
3. To achieve this end, he contributed an imaginative and vigorous sense of 'civic movement' utilizing concept of "citizen participation". To him, practicability and public interaction would make the plan more saleable to themselves (planners) and the politicians.
4. In case of civic survey he used tools like exhibitions, civic education functions

and pageants (e.g. the one at his residence in India on his arrival at Indore in 1917, and at the Outlook Tower, Edinburgh).

5. In implementation, he himself prepared two such exhibitions, which he showcased in world-fairs, and various cities. The results of surveys were placed in civic museums, which functions as a permanent centre for the transmission of civic culture.
6. In his version of the 'Cities in Evolution' he said, '...not solely as an attempt at the popularisation of the reviving art of town planning (and) of the renewing science of civics', but also as an expression of the 'essential harmony of these interests and aims'. (CIE, pp. xxv-xxix)
7. He suggested a wide range of experts and non-experts to work together in the planning process.
8. Overall, Geddes's 'Ideal City' consisted of a citizenry, which thought of the interrelation of the various activities in the region and the city and who managed a high level of collective enterprise.

2.2 Geddes's Thinking Machines

Geddes's 'Thinking Machines' are of interest because of the insight they provide into the ways in which Geddes brought together the formative influences of his youth and tried to make them a coherent social philosophy (Meller, 1990). He was able to develop his own ideas only with their help, his 'ideas maidens' as he used to call them.

No one else, however, could be similarly inspired because the structure and

development of each 'chart' or 'graph' was entirely personal to Geddes and his particular experiences and knowledge. Geddes' most famous 'thinking machine' was his earliest one, which he invented in 1879 (Meller, 1990).

The translation of terms *Lieu, Travail, Famille (Fr.)* to "Place, Work, Folk" Geddes placed in a sequence of squares made by folding a piece of paper three times. This concept was examined in a number of ways in years to come. It was true that there was a close relationship between these *three forces* in city life. His thinking machines were very useful to a number of ecologists and planners and architects and were used for their research purposes.

2.3 Overview of Patrick Geddes' *Cities in Evolution*

As one goes through his only full-length text (CIE, 1915), it appears that he critically analysed the emerging 'industrial city problems' of his times. He adopted two

words from archaeology, "Paleo-technic", which he used to describe the early stages of industrialization and "Neo-technic", for more recent developments. He criticised the faults of the "Paleo-technic" period with its coal-based power, grime and dirt and the unthinking and unguided energies used to create vast and cheap urban prison for the industrial man. The oppressive consequences of early Industrial Revolution in the British Isles with the emerging money economy instead of the "real economics" and appalling living conditions of slums disturbed him no end – the city as a "slum", "semi-slum", or "super-slum" (CIE: Chapter IV: 60-108). He lamented the social, political and economic consequences of "war and peace" – all that indicated his humanity. He impressed upon the need for conservation of nature and the relationship between towns and hills and mountains and recreation and pure water supply, calling for a "synoptic vision". Towns, he pointed out must cease to spread like "ink-stains". His "ideal city" opens up of new possibilities in

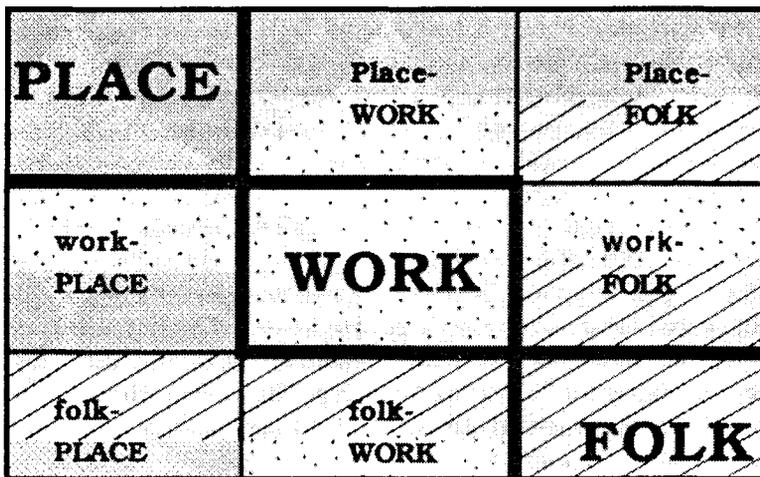


Fig. 1: Thinking Machine

Source: Meller: 1990

the “Neo-technic state” – concepts that are as relevant today as was during his times. On the other hand, he also emphasised on rural conservation and limiting urban growth, i.e., prevention of “urban sprawl” with a wider concept of “non-urban space”, other than mere concept of “towns and countryside” (Geddes, 1915).

The Western and European housing systems were dense, compact buildings with street facades four storeys in height, looking dignified and urbane on the outside that often concealed grossly inferior internal living conditions, as was in Glasgow and Edinburgh (his home town). He spoke of the reforms in these extreme, slum-like conditions, for better hospitals and prisons, and of ‘Municipal Hygiene’ with medical officers and health inspectors, sanitary committees, water trusts and so on. Geddes argued for the chance of clearance of unsanitary areas by “...rise of adjacent values, by increased competition for the bulk of dwellings and consequently, enhance rental and capital value of these”. He also cited the achievement of the Hampstead Garden Suburb and its creator Raymond Unwin, “Nothing can be gained by overcrowding” (CIE: Chapter XI: 222-245). He, finally discussed the value of travel quoting examples of the Roman Empire and its great communication networks. He stressed on “simple travel” as a means to improving the mind in contrast to the limitations imposed by train travels in case of workers between Edinburgh and London.

2.4 The Outlook Tower

In the middle of 1890s, Geddes started working on his project on the activities at the Outlook Tower and it was also a crucial

means for him to escape. Helen Meller (1990) writes how Geddes tried to “deepen the experience” of people about their own local region. Geddes felt that it was time to go beyond the region and understand the world. He had decided on making a museum, with a point of reference with the widest possible perspective. The museum is also located in the Outlook Tower (Edinburgh old-city – not far from his residence) and had a number of floors of exhibits. The materials were designed in a sequence to lead the visitor from the local to the regional and to the national and the global levels. The visitor was able to go straight up to the roof to the ‘Camera Obscura’ and view Edinburgh and the region. Then begins the descent from the Tower back to earth (via the “tea-room”), to the storey devoted to the historical evolution of Edinburgh, its present condition and its best future prospects. In Geddes’ mind the Outlook Tower became the prototype of museums of the future, “actual and possible”.

All the visitors to the Outlook Tower were instructed to view the great stained-glass window that Geddes had designed to symbolize his view of life. It was the *Arbor Saeculorum*, the “Tree of Life”. From the earliest days of the Outlook Tower and before, Geddes had been using artistic symbolism as a way of conveying others the implications of his work. The demand he created for the artistic realisation of his symbols had created a minor outburst of artistic endeavour in the city.

In 1885 he started to work on the long campaign to realise the building of a huge globe for the World Exhibition in Paris in 1900. He was fascinated by the “globe project”. He wrote of the globe:

“Instead of a book, were it is the best, the latest, here was now the most monumental of museums, the most simple of observatories, the microcosm of the macrocosm itself. But this was no mere scientific model in its institute, but the image, the shrine, and the temple of the Earth-mother, and its expositor no longer a modern professor in his chair, but an arch-Druid at sacrifice within his circle of mighty stone, an Eastern Mage, initiator to cosmic mysteries... the future of its accomplishments. No longer solely cosmic, but henceforth primarily human – the unity of the world now the basis and symbol of the brother-hood of man upon it: science is an art, geography and labour uniting into a reign of peace and good-will.”

– (Zueblin, 1899: 557-592)

But as usual, Geddes’ idea on the development of museums began to take off in a novel direction, which left deliberations of the Museums Movement far behind. A culmination of ideas was beginning to emerge, which he tried to express in a monograph entitled *Museums Actual and Possible* that was never published. The reason for its non-appearance is obvious as the chapters were constructed without logic, with much repetition, and from a very idiosyncratic viewpoint, as was the unusual literary style of Geddes. But he invariably shows up-to-date grasp on what was going on elsewhere, and his discussions show major sources of inspiration to him, especially since much of the “new museum work” were related to charting and explaining the contemporary world (Meller, 1990). Gradually over the next five years or so, Geddes began to dream of what he was



Outlook Tower: A view

(Photo: Courtesy A.C. Mohapatra)

to call an Index Museum. Giving full rein to his imagination, he began to piece together his ideas by drawing on the appropriate cultural traditions of Edinburgh, and by giving himself further practical experience by extending the activities of the Outlook Tower to achieve an adequate prototype of his vision. Geddes had also contributed scientific articles for Chambers Encyclopaedia and the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

The Indian Connection

3.1 To the modern generation of Indians, this great Scottish intellectual-reformer who shared a considerable part of his otherwise hectic life in India (1914-25) is practically unknown. Three aspects drew Geddes to India, its ‘mysticism’ (as to many other Europeans), a sense of adventure (in the vast landmass and equally vast humanity) and the ‘Indian Cultural Renaissance’. But the Imperial Britain, Indian art, literature and architecture was of a defeated people, inconsequential as compared with the ‘achievements of the white races’. Therefore, the architectural style imported were those of Imperial Rome or Greece. This did not interest Geddes. “What he was seeking he found in the South, the great temple cities of the ancient Dravidian culture. He wrote an euphoric article about the temple cities as examples of the integration of culture, history, and the urban

form at its best, ...” (Meller, 1990: 217). Geddes eulogised the ancient Indian ‘urban form’, e.g. the *courtyard*, the usual demolition target of British sanitary engineers. On the other, the educated Indians and political leaders were moving out of the traditional houses to ‘European Bungalows’ (The Nehrus, e.g.).

He came to India in 1914 with wife Anna (Morton) at the invitation of the Governor of Madras Presidency, Lord Pentland with his Cities and Town Planning Exhibition, he reached but the ship carrying the Exhibition (35 years of his work) sank off the Island of Minicoy – the First World War had started. He wished to carry his agenda of “Civic Reconstruction”, but also to find work in the vast Indian Sub-continent – his pecuniary circumstances having deteriorated over the years because of his projects and profligate life style.



Old Town Edinburgh from the Outlook Tower

(Photograph: Courtesy A.C. Mohapatra)



Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi

Source: <http://www.ballaterscotland.com/geddes/>

“...he has the precision of the scientist and the vision of the prophet; and at the same time, the power of the artist to make his ideas visible through the language of symbols”.

- Rabindranath Tagore

Geddes encountered Gandhi in Indore in 1917, and subsequently sent him the Indore plan. Both agreed on a role of religion in social and political life – to Gandhi more political, to Geddes an essential ingredient of ‘social evolution’. His interaction with Rabindranath Tagore was more enduring, both visionaries, both educators of a different kinds – a belief to nurture creativity than killing it. (Meller, 1990)

3.2 Urbanisation in India during 1900-1925

Indian urbanisation had gradually begun to change and the cities were very large in the pre-industrial era, when modern technology was at its infancy. Cities like Madras had a population of 817,000 and Delhi, 400,000. Urbanisation was a political agenda since

1880, when there were a number of sensitive issues in context of a colonial country. Indian nationalists had started to exercise some power despite the British in that period (Meller, 1990). Between 1914 and 25, when Geddes was in India, local self-governments and municipalities was seriously taken and it was mandatory to have a British official as well as a chairman – Jawaharlal Nehru then wrote:

“The whole steel frame of municipal administration as erected by government, prevented radical growth or innovation. The financial policy was such that the municipality was always dependent on the government. Most radical schemes of taxation or social development were not permissible under the existing municipal laws. Even such schemes for legally permissible had to be sanctioned by government, and the only optimist, with a long stretch of years before them, could confidently ask for and await this sanction.”

(Marshall, 1985: 41-48).

Hence, it was clear that the great leaders of the nation were also very concerned about city development and that the planning initiatives undertaken by the municipal administration were not considering the well-being of the natives and were not innovative enough.

3.3 Improving Indian Cities

Geddes, since his days with the Edinburgh Improvement Trust, was aware of their shortcomings. Their biggest drawback, in his view, was their need to be financially self-supporting. Housing for the poor in

India though, was not the same kind of problems that Geddes had tackled in Edinburgh. He said, "The huts were scattered in a haphazard manner, and these areas often had no proper access other than a narrow twisted lane which was mire and slush in rainy weather and a dusty beaten track in the dry season. Drainage was totally absent and protected water unavailable. The huts themselves were little hovels built of the flimsiest materials, walls were built of mud and stone or bamboo matting, and the roofs of kerosene tin sheets, rags, gunny sacks, canvas, bits of wood, reeds and hay. It was rarely possible to stand up inside one of these structures." (Meller, 1990: 209)

Geddes likened them to prisons without access to any kind of natural facility. In Madras, on his first commission with the Cities and Town Planning Exhibition, he advised the municipality to appoint a town-planning officer rather than set up an Improvement Trust. His success with this recommendation brought him a rich personal reward. He was able to secure the services of an architect – planner to work with him in India. The first town-planning officer was H.V. Lanchester who at that time was the Vice-President of the Royal Institute of British Architects (in 1913), and a founder member of the British Town Planning Institute. When he took up his appointment as Town Planning Officer of Madras in 1915, he tried hard to carry out the kind of survey work, which Patrick Geddes insisted was the essential for proper planning. His report on Madras contained materials from a major survey of local conditions, including maps illustrating the occupational structure of the city, population densities, plague black spots, rates of mortality, and infant mortality, and much laboriously collected materials of

this kind. Lanchester's architectural plans for Madras, however, still retained elements of the grand design with Beaux-Arts vistas and impressive buildings in the classical style, rather reminiscent of his 'City Beautiful' designs for the municipal buildings of Cardiff in Cathy Park. Lanchester found his contact with Geddes very stimulating, and he worked with him on many plans between 1915 and 1917. He was particularly important in helping him in Lucknow, where Lanchester had set up an architectural office to supplement his earnings and where he could most easily produce the detailed plans and drawings to back up Geddes' ideas.

3.4 Practical Applications of some of the Geddes Projects in India

Geddes advocated civic surveys as indispensable to Planning, 'Diagnosis before treatment,' and these were the same principles, which were incorporated in the city plans of the Indian cities he worked for. His work in India could be classified into the following categories: (a) The Diagnostic Survey, (b) The conservative Surgery, and (c) the Sociological Approach and Planning for Health. There were also a few traditional characteristics in the prevalent in the Indian town and cities between 1915-17, which had to be taken into consideration while planning. (Tyrwhitt, 1947)

(a) *The age of the cities:* Indian cities where traditionally planned, some of them like Gwalior had impressive fortresses in them. Some cities were more than 2000 years old (*Kasi/ Varanasi/ Banares*). The cities were dilapidated due to the neglect and often due to the military occupation. Old

towns were not improved but were abandoned, and new sites were explored.

- (b) **Sanitation:** The sanitation system introduced by the British was based on the European system, which was unsuitable to the traditional Indian societies. Water – borne sewage was too costly and there were inadequacy of water in most of the these towns and cities. People relied on wells and ‘tanks’ for water supply that is for bathing, washing and drinking water, especially in the Southern India. These tanks were getting old and the water polluted. The older tanks were abandoned and new ones were dug.
- (c) **Social structure:** There were a number of caste groups, which existed at that time, and there were certain pockets of the cities, which were exclusive to certain castes. The planning of the houses was as such that there existed a courtyard, for ventilation and circulation of air, the climate being hot and humid. Also every house would open out to the street with a veranda in the front. Soon the streets were getting crowded and the bullock carts would hit the houses at the corners of the streets. The British engineers went by the design of straight roads and some of the houses were run down in spite of protests.
- (d) **Civil lines:** British officers found the cities unhygienic and over crowded to live. Hence, they developed exclusive colonies (these colonies still exist and are occupied by the military in old cities), with acres of land around the bungalows, as land in terms of England was cheap. There were a number of workers and domestic help in these

‘bungalows’ doing household chores, like baby sitting, gardening, cooking, etc and they were given quarters inside the compound to live.

3.5 Geddes’s Diagnostic Survey

Geddes’s exploration on how a city can be remodelled in order to achieve the best results led him to the Diagnostic Survey approach to planning. He was worried about the fact that too many cities of the time imposed new streets without any survey as to what were ‘the local needs or potentialities’. Gardens too were swept away and new were created according to the taste of the designer. The traditions in the Indian cities were intertwined with the intricate pattern of the streets, and buildings of high importance and architectural beauty. The first method adopted by Geddes in Diagnostic survey was to “unravel the old city’s labyrinth and discern how it has grown up” (Tywhitt, 1947: 27). Hence cities and towns were surveyed before any kind of improvement was made in them. The next step was to further explore the region and to understand the driving forces of the existing societies, economy and development processes. His third principle in diagnostic survey was that ‘it was important to retain the heterogeneity of a city as well as the scale of the city’. The smaller the city, the better man can associate himself with his environment and is closer to Nature. He believed that power in a city should be decentralised towards the larger region. Geddes, however said that the success of civic surveys lay in the hands of the individuals who resided in these cities and took interest in participating in the process of understanding their civic life and well-

being. He further said that by this process, people would realise, "...the simple tasks of cleansing and clearing, housing and gardening are full of wealth of values for health and civilization." (Tywhitt, 1947: 36)

3.6 Conservative Surgery

The town of Tanjore (Tanjavoor, Tamil Nadu) was an old town with the city plan being laid in the old conventional pattern. The streets and the city itself over the period of time were getting congested leading to a number of problems of sanitation as discussed earlier (Tanjore Report, 1915:17). Geddes was given the task to redevelop the old city and lay a new gridiron of forty feet streets over the existing – which to him was a bad idea as this would lead to population driven out to new quarters and creating congestion there. He decided on going ahead with his 'Conservative Theory':

- (a) There was no requirement of new streets. Simply by enlarging the existing streets there was enough space for communication.
- (b) The plan was made healthier by simply removing some of the old and dilapidated houses and fresh air could circulate in the lanes, and reach the houses.
- (c) The estimated cost that would be incurred if the gridiron plan was followed was – some 30,000 rupees whereas by the conservative surgery the cost could be only 5,000 rupees. Geddes argued that in spite of the 'Conservative Surgery' method being simple to execute it is also lower on the cost of development.

However, he was also aware that there was more to just simplicity of the process of Conservative Surgery – It had a few disadvantages. (a) It required a patient study of the town plan. (b) It required detailed and accurate maps of the town, something that is unavailable in most towns of contemporary India. (c) The engineers and the surveyors were to be trained before starting the survey process. (d) Last, one might get impatient in the entire time taking stages and feel tempted to sweep of the idea and go by the gridiron plan – i.e., it is easier to do things from the scratch than redevelop a town or areas within the town.

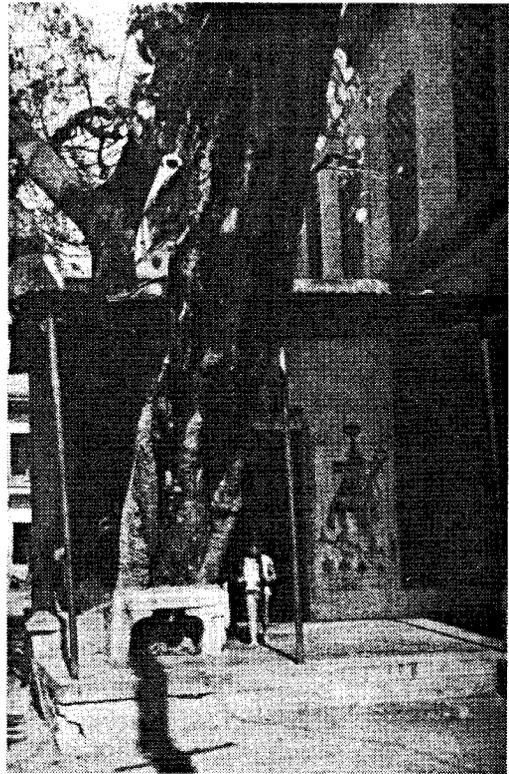
3.6 Sociological Approach

Geddes during his stay in India realized that for proper planning, it was important to understand the social structure of the society. Indian families in those days and even in recent times, are used to staying in large families. He thought that the Europeans were considering 'large families' staying in single dwelling units to be overcrowding, but it was actually an integral part of the "social structure". The European design did not fit-in as well in the Indian context. He said "...rather, we should proceed to redesign our plans more in accordance with the nature of families for whom we have to provide"(Tyrwhitt, 1947: 61). Geddes thought of plans in which instead of the builder making the house plans, housing plots could be allotted with open spaces in between. These open spaces could be utilized for planting fruit trees and other vegetation (for the community). The advantages to this system of planning were that, (a) it gave a freedom to design; (b) the plans would be more oriented toward

community rather than the European designs, which symbolised isolation (Geddes, 1915) and (c) instead of single homes, there would be one big house accommodating more people where there was a possibility of making modifications if required in future. Further, a number of families would be sharing the same facility, which is economic and cost effective – remarkable insights and stunning practical ideas of this great mind. Geddes understood the minute social details of property inheritance system in India, which also was a system prevalent among the Europeans, but mostly among the elites. In contrast, the system was prevalent in the poorest of the poor in India, too.

3.7 Planning for Health

At the time when Geddes was in India, sanitation and public health was one aspect, which was the most neglected, also due to the fact that India was under the colonial rule and matters of public health did not construe priority to the British. There were a number of famines, and most of the time the people died in millions by waterborne diseases. However, Geddes viewed it differently and emphasised that people be made more conscious of the methods available to protect and keep the sources of water protected and clean, that was prevalent in the old traditions where water was considered sacred and respected in whatever form available. He said that the “...real wealth can only be created in a life-efficient environment” (Tyrwhitt, 1947: 70). Geddes’s deep understanding of religions and the manner in which they impact traditional societies was appreciable. Many a time religions like Hinduism, Jainism, Christianity preached the need of “...purity



Source: Meller, 1990

of elements of air, water, earth and fire and its relation to the human body – or life” (Geddes, 1915). He suggested raising consciousness among the public, the religious aspect of health, which could be well suited to the Indian society.

3.8 Open spaces and Trees

The Indian towns were small in those days, and it was mostly a rural environment that Geddes could see around and understand. The meeting grounds in these towns were the town or the village square, where the elders, children and at times the women would gather. These squares would have a well, a shaded tree with a platform to sit around, and a small and beautiful temple.

Geddes thought of this as a wonderful way to keep the village traditions alive even in the towns, and that the towns could be planned in a similar manner – his idea of reducing congestion by providing open spaces.

The native people were not aware of land being available for the preparation of gardens and there was an instance where the following conversation took place between Geddes and some of the village folk: “Why have you no garden? Would you like to have one? - Yes I should but I do not know how I can get it” (Tyrwhitt, 1947: 86). Geddes, in fact, promised the people that he would bring the people’s concern to the higher authorities.

Geddes’ ideas were in a way sympathetic to the then conditions of India and the native population. Hence, he was disliked by the British in most of the cases as the policy was to retain their ‘superiority in design’ and ‘ideas’ and to implement the European planning concepts rather than look into the traditions of the Indian society. The British carried the same ideas to other colonies as well – creating Europes in colonised cultures. Development as a result was a mix of both the Western system and the traditional Indian system. These are reflected in the cities like Madras, Lucknow, Indore etc., inclusive of the old and the new towns. Nevertheless, Geddes’s contributions saved a number of old cities from falling apart into ruins.

Conclusion



Source: <http://www.ballaterscotland.com/geddes/>

“I have heard much praise from my Jewish friends concerning Mr. Geddes’s work and personality. All who know him admire and honour him highly”

- Albert Einstein on Patrick Geddes

Robindranath Tagore was famous in the West as the first Indian to win a Nobel Prize, for literature (1913). Both men, Tagore and Geddes were passionate internationalists. No sooner had educational system in Europe and North America emerged in the forms familiar today – with subjects compartmentalized in standard curricula taught through disciplines driving towards examinations – new challenges to change the system arose (Meller, 1990). The industrialised carnage of the 1914-1918 (World War I) gave added points and urgency to the progressive movement in education. In Britain (for instance), the English philosopher, Bertrand Russell and the Scottish teacher A.S. Neil created “progressive” child-centred schools. Both Geddes and Tagore were absorbed by the ideal of international institutions of higher education. The poet was feeling his way towards making one, at Santiniketan in Bengal; the Professor applied his admittedly more schematic and theoretical approach to setting up Scots and Indian Colleges at the

University of Montpellier in south France. From here, Geddes wrote to Tagore in 1927, "I think we are fundamentally at one in principle, despite all differences in expression? Notably in the idea of converging our studies" (<http://www.patrickgeddes.co.uk/>). Up to the services of the community life – at present so depressed-in east and west alike, "...Inter-war internationalist idealism founder in further terrible world war, but the ideas of Tagore and Geddes fed into latter's educational thought." (<http://www.patrickgeddes.co.uk/>)

Undoubtedly, Sir Patrick Geddes was remarkable, unique in his unorthodoxy. What distinguishes him, from an Indian perspective was his 'universality of human values', his 'idealism', and the 'undying optimism in the future of humanity'. His imprints on India may be found in the forgotten dusty plans of Indian cities or etched out on the walls of Osmania University, Indore city, Santiniketan or the Lucknow Zoo. But, he also sided with the native, his culture and poverty, ceaselessly striving to reconstruct a 'social evolution' in turbulent times in its social and political life, making many endearing and enduring friends (Mohapatra, 2004). What pushed him further into his "exploration of the social world" was his faith in "inherent goodness of man" and "humanity" and his ability to transcend the current owes to a beautiful future.

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Romasa Mohapatra
Commonwealth Doctoral Fellow
School of Planning
University of Waterloo, Ontario, CA
romasa78@hotmail.com