

People in Conservation

Biodiversity Conservation and Livelihood Security



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Opening Words

A specter is haunting the world! After all too brief a lull when the Berlin wall fell, the reign of the depredatory logic of capital which destroys both nature as well as civilizations, is again being challenged. On the rabid *right*, the specter takes the form of Islamic fundamentalism¹, and the alternative it has to offer is no less barbaric; On the *left*, it is the coming together of secular, progressive, radical and democratic forces comprising of individuals, communities and social formations, and the alternative they have to offer is of peace, freedom, justice, respect for human rights and ecological stewardship. Many fear that in this tripartite face-off, unless the last mentioned win, there is a serious threat to the very survival, not only of the human civilization as we know it, but of the entire planet, in terms of the ecological collapse it promises.

On the other hand, those working towards an ecologically sustainable and socially egalitarian world are asked (often patronizingly) whether the last century hasn't decisively shown that all attempts at social, political and economic transformations, in the radical and democratic sense of the word, will only end in a form of totalitarian system? Are all those who still speak in such language not living under a delusion? Aren't they just being professional trouble makers, thwarting the country's economic development, i.e. growth in GDP? After all, for such 'unrealistic' people who talk about 'utopian' alternatives, has it not been proved once and for all, that Margaret Thatcher was right, that "**There is No Alternative**" to capitalism? Proved beyond doubt that humanity has in fact attained its highest potential with capitalism (euphemistically called liberal democracy), and that as an edifice it offers the best of worlds in comparison to all hitherto known and postulated systems? In any case, since it represents the final stage of human evolution, it is insurmountable, because as Francis Fukuyama says, humanity has arrived at the **End of History**.

Yet, is the whole edifice as hegemonic as it appears? And if there is an alternative (or even many alternatives!), what are they? The problem with such questions is that no sooner are they posed than they already give rise to possibilities for more than one answer; i.e. by

1. This is not to say that the rabid right is characterized only by Islamic fundamentalism. It is equally characterized by Hindu and Christian fundamentalism. The latter are however more-or-less co-opted by the capitalist system – and manifest themselves in a legitimized fascistic form while the former takes an adversarial position vis-à-vis expansionist forms that neoliberal imperialism takes, even if it cares nothing about human rights and rights of nature. This however should not be seen as tarring all believers of these great religious traditions as being rabid.

merely asking them, a space is created for allowing the **imagination** of alternatives to Thatcherism. For examples, terms like radical ecological democracy, ecofeminism, ecosocialism (and many others) have become common currency amongst those who are fighting for ecological, gender and social justice.

The word **imagination** is not being used lightly. It seems that there are indeed many such so-called **unrealistic utopians** (tautology?) who are imagining just these sorts of alternatives, even today. Often ignored by the mainstream discourse of the dominant, they have created or are creating alternative ways of living and being, sometimes in small hamlets and tiny communities, at other times right below our urban noses (like a Trojan horse!). It is not as if all these people know each other or have consulted one another or are working according to a predetermined program. Indeed many have started their alternative experiments quite oblivious of each other, spontaneously or organically - as a response to a local issue - while others have done so out of complete disillusionment with the existing system; and still others because it seems as if, fatigued by the unequal battle of political confrontation, they are in this manner perhaps seeking a tactical retreat without renouncing the battle. Whatever the reason, there is something almost magical about this phenomenon. It is as if unbeknown to themselves, these people have enlisted their name with an **Imaginary Party**², and are struggling to affirm "*new magical geographies of imagination, new islands of safety inspired by dream, by normative desire to do something more autonomous, something more meaningful in our own neo-Dark Age*". And what's more, "*from these outposts, from these 'new undergrounds' these 'new reserves' they're sometimes launching frontal attacks on this degenerative system*". Seeking an "*authentic life*" against a "*deadening of spirit at work, and a pollution of mind at home*" they are forming "*collective micro-movements against the totalitarian mega-machine*", their existence is marked by "*an authenticity of action and consciousness...a positive energy...pockets of affirmation*". This is not an escape from politics but a "*reframing of politics*". Invoking Gabriel García Márquez's 'One hundred years of solitude', Andy Merrifield fondly calls such people "*magical mischief makers*" who devote their imagination to "*magical activism*" and "*spend their time 'sneaking about through narrow trails of permanent subversion'*".

2. About this party and other insights that appear in this paragraph read Andy Merrifield's, "Magical Marxism – Subversive Politics and imagination", in which he questions the validity in a vastly changed world of some erstwhile political notions and practices adapted by the left.

It seems then that a new language of liberation, a dreaming language³, is being fashioned, one that is fit for intervention and engagement, one that without necessarily doing away with the old 'political subject' of epochal transformation – the industrial working class - allows for multiple 'political subjects' to co-emerge on equal terms – who will tell to the future generations the tales of how the historical task of radically transforming the world "from the bottom up", was accomplished. Perhaps these stories began as an invention of imagination before they became real, for – to put it in the immortal words of Marquez - *"We, the inventors of tales, who will believe in anything, feel entitled to believe that it is not too late to engage in the creation of a new and sweeping utopia of life, where no one will be able to decide for others how they die, where love will prove true and happiness be possible, and where people condemned to one hundred years of solitude will have, at last and forever, a second opportunity on earth"*⁴.

To such magical mischief makers, who will **believe in anything**, even the impossible, because they are such realists⁵, this issue is dedicated.

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News and Information⁶

Harnessing solar energy

Solar power continues to be a rising source of energy in India, even for more deprived communities. Greenpeace, in collaboration with CEEDS (Centre for Environment and Energy Development) and BASIX, launched a unique decentralized energy project using a solar-powered micro-grid in Dharnai, Bihar. This has solved a long-standing energy crisis, as the village had no electricity despite about thirty years of efforts to obtain it. This empowers a community to improve their livelihoods in a clean, renewable way.

Health and Hygiene

Innovative new technologies continue to be produced to improve the wellbeing of children and adults whose health suffers because of underestimation of the importance of hygienic practices. Tasks like hand washing are simple yet life-saving actions, making awareness a key priority or many in the health profession. In a small village of Gadchiroli, Maharashtra, Dr. Pawankumar Gulabrao Patil, of NIRMAN's SEARCH program, developed a hand-washing device that is foot-operated (hands-free) and water-conserving. The device, made for under thirty-five rupees, encourages and teaches the significance of using soap when washing hands. In conjunction with this program, he also has conducted health education workshops for children, even making up hand washing songs to encourage its importance while retaining audience interest.

Education

Youth empowerment through reformed education systems makes sustainable career paths possible. In Ladakh, a solar-powered building of an institution called SECMOL (The Students Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh), has achieved this through groundbreaking work in the field of Ladakhi education. Students are gaining environmental education through local knowledge rather than the standard textbook content from Delhi that discusses environmental issues that are of a different nature and do not relate to their region. Students gain confidence through the uniquely accepting and encouraging attitudes of teachers and staff providing

3. And here how can one not think of the lyrical communiqués of the very charismatic Zapatista, Sub-commandant Marcos who leads by following?

4. See The Nobel Prize in Literature 1982 speech by Gabriel García Márquez, *The Solitude of Latin America*: http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1982/marquez-lecture.html

5. Borrowing from Che Guevara who famously said "We are realists, we believe in the impossible."

6. This section was contributed by researcher Sarah Chapel (scchapell@gmail.com) who interned with Kalpavriksh. She is a student at American University Class of 2015, International Studies, School of International Service.

academic support to those students who fail the class X examination, and offering courses which let the children explore unconventional areas of study such as traditional Ladakhi music, sustainability, and social issues. All of these factors form students who are academically, personally, and professionally successful, many going on to green livelihoods and entrepreneurial endeavors.

Livelihoods

Methods of conservation have been initiated nationwide, including one called Collaborative Adaptation Research Initiative in Africa and Asia (CARIAS) which works on understanding how climate change is affecting livelihoods in India. They research what could happen to river basins, estuaries, and coastal communities with a one degree rise in temperature. This small factor, it is estimated, will have enormous consequences including floods, decreased crop productivity, decreased land area (through rising sea levels) and decreased rainfall, harming farmers' livelihoods and food security. If the problems caused by climate change can be better understood, solutions will become more possible.

Citizens take charge

In Bengaluru, a civic group named "The Ugly Indians" is cleaning up the city in a decentralized, self-motivated way. These citizens desire Bengaluru to be a model city where trash, paan-stains, footpaths, and public restrooms are well-maintained on every block. Anonymously and with no defined leader, the group uses social media to ask citizens to bring to attention locations of Bengaluru which need improvement, and the "Ugly Indians" will discreetly fulfill its duty. This direct civic action invites others to do the same, creating a people-centered solution to community problems.



Perspectives

Is an ecological vision the same as an environmental one?

In contemporary discourse and everyday speech "ecological" concerns are synonymous with "environmental" ones. It is widely held that an ecological world-view is the same as an environmental one. "The environment" is a mere afterthought to human society, itself now, increasingly, an appendage to the economy.

Nothing is more common today than the idea that the goals of "development" need to be "balanced" with the protection of the "environment". From ministers and policy-makers to economists and journalists, this is how the issue is framed. It is as though nothing need change fundamentally about the way we live and think and relate to each other and the natural world (both outside and within us) for us to find "solutions" to environmental problems. Merely some minor, compensatory adjustments to our lifestyles and patterns of consumption will suffice. So it is believed.

A hurried, impatient "solutionism" has come to take the place of considered thought and careful reflection. However, if one finds the patience to think rigorously about the gap between an environmental and an ecological perspective, the differences are many and stark.

Consider some aspects of an environmental perspective. In an environmental world-view things are viewed in a mechanical, fragmented, compartmentalized fashion. So, for example, bauxite in the mountain is one thing and the water it incidentally stores, which sustains the tree-cover and the farmers' fields in the valley below another. Secondly, it views not merely nature, but increasingly human beings (our minds and body-parts) too, as a resource, as a commodity to be exploited and consumed, not merely used for purposes of sustenance. (Notice, for instance, the ease with which we have come to speak of "human resources", "resource people", or the *preposition* we use so often while referring to people, the same as the one we use for objects - "that", all of them suggesting a fundamental ethical blunder of cognitive objectification. When this writer was in school in Patna in the 1970s, the teacher would have red-marked such usage and corrected the word "that" with "who", or "whom", as appropriate).

Thirdly, as said before, an environmental perspective also presumes that minor peripheral adjustments in the economy and the system of production are all that

is needed to set things right. Fourthly, it is so often, so readily, assumed that everything in nature is replaceable. The hacking down of a rainforest can be balanced by “compensatory afforestation”. Rivers diverted from their course can be made to yield an equivalent or greater supply of water elsewhere. And so on. Fifth, the uprooting of cultures and communities is not given much importance in a developmental-environmental vision, as the present land acquisition bill shows. Yes, people are “displaced”, in some Archimedean sense, but they will be “compensated”. The enormous socio-ecological violence of state policies is inconsistent with a properly ecological vision respectful of life. An ecological vision, as the term is used here, has no room for “endangered species” or museumized cultures.

Sixth, an environmental vision feigns innocence when it comes to the power wielded by modern systems of organized technical knowledge. It takes an unjustly and foolishly disdainful attitude to the everyday practical knowledge by which so many rural communities still live, the sort of knowledge which allowed, for instance, the Jarawa tribe in the Andamans to survive the Tsunami (by following the animals to the highlands), even as highly educated, ‘civilized’ Swedish tourists sunbathing on the beaches perished. Finally, an environmental vision has no sensitivity towards a civilizational view of the natural world. This is a fatal omission in India, because of the place of the forest in Indian tradition (tapovan). The modern, environmental perspective views everything from the perspective of the Indian state, whose glory is its highest aim, the technocrat-expert being the agent who is empowered to fashion the natural environment to national goals.

In contrast to all this, an ecological vision is holistic. It views things in an integrated manner, as part of living organisms and habitats all interdependent with each other. It maintains the dignity of human beings, no less than that of the earth and its creatures, by refusing to objectify them in some rudely utilitarian fashion. It retains a civilizational view of knowledge, technology, and the natural world, not willing to surrender to the ambitious materialist goals of the nation-state.

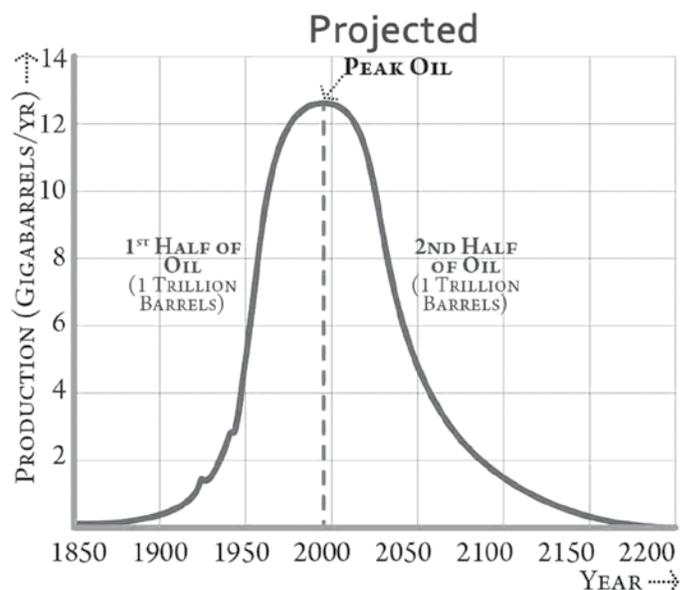
Author: Aseem Shrivastava (maybeaseem@gmail.com) is a Delhi-based writer and ecological economist. He is the author (with Ashish Kothari) of the book **Churning the Earth: The Making of Global India** (Penguin Viking, New Delhi, 2012). He has spoken and written extensively on ecological issues connected with development and globalization.

Peak Oil – Why our world has inverted

We live in a unique age called the industrial age which is usually associated with fabulous discoveries, inventions and achievements that we intrinsically accept as beneficial to us. One of these phenomenon is the idea of ‘perpetual economic growth’ - that every aspect of our lives will get bigger, better and faster. And it did do exactly that over the last 260 years since the industrial age started in 1750. It naturally follows that we don’t want this era of plenty and more to end.

The truth that is little understood is that industrial age and this rapid economic growth in fact started when we learnt how to exploit a 500 million year savings account of stored cheap energy in the form of fossil fuels - mainly oil. The fabulous constructs of our modern life that we so take for granted are premised on this cheap energy – half of which we have burnt already.

Now the funny aspect of geology is that finishing half of global oil reserves is the true danger point. This is because the rate at which we can get oil out of the ground follows a bell curve as shown in the diagram below.



We get the first half of oil reserves faster until it reaches a ‘peak’ when half the oil on the planet is over. And from there on, no matter what we do, we get it slower and slower. This is a geological reality discovered and proved by King Hubbert, a geologist who was working for Shell Oil Company. As per his predictions we are presently at the peak which is the maximum rate and so no matter how much our growth based economies want to get more oil to grow, it is not geologically possible. And without getting more oil, growth itself is impossible. This explains why we are seeing economies all over the world collapse because they were based on the idea of perpetual growth which can only happen when we can get more and more

oil out of the ground. With the advent of **Peak Oil** this is not possible. We therefore have to accept that our economies are going to be in permanent shrinkage and so we need to change our outlook of perpetual growth and redefine our economic paradigm around shrinkage. This is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact it is exactly what is needed to correct all the harmful effects we are having on the planet like forest depletion, soil degradation, species extinction, drying rivers, falling water tables and even climate change.

Peak oil is a signal of energy limits that we had better learn to accept and respect. It is a reality and is non-negotiable. We better deal with this reality before reality deals with us.

Author: Mansoor H Khan (acreswildfarm@gmail.com).
He studied Computer Science at Cornell and MIT and then made 4 feature films including Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak and Jo Jeeta Wohi Sikander. Presently living on an organic farm in Nilgiri Hills.

Food for thought and thoughts on food

Food sovereignty begins with defending the rights of those who produce food - adivasis, dalits, peasants, pastoralists, fisher folk – and in particular those of the women of these communities, to own, use and democratically govern their lands, territories, water, forests, seeds, animal breeds, biodiversity, local markets and knowledge that communities have collectively evolved and nurtured over generations. It is about all of us, who produce, distribute, and consume food, being core to defining food policies, rather than these being driven, controlled, and determined by corporations and the global market. It is about asserting our political choice to grow food agro-ecologically and to consume this diverse, local, culturally appropriate and safe food in our communities. It is also about resisting the destruction of our diverse food cultures, be it millets or beef, and its replacement by a monoculture food menu manufactured by Corporations or fascist fundamentalists. It is about celebrating our diverse cultures of food, saving our seeds and with one another, ploughing our fields with indigenous animal breeds and nurturing life in our soils with animal manure and urine, and numerous other indigenous practices.

In doing so, it is about dismantling and asserting our resistance to the industrial agriculture system, determined to enslave us by taking over our lands and forcing us to become permanently dependent upon and consumers of their products - seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, tractors, mechanized harvesters, weedicides, and GMO technologies, processed and packaged foods. We end up producing and consuming for their market,

their greed and not for our needs. We get trapped into cycles of debt - eternally striving to produce and consume more and more "commodities" - hoping to climb out of the debt trap. This industrial production that we end up supporting, destroys the earth, air, water, soil, seeds, animals, insects, birds, knowledge, cultures, songs, dance, stories, art and crafts, self-sufficiency, systems of sharing, collectivism, community reciprocity, and our health. It has displaced women as key decision makers in agriculture and food systems, aggravated patriarchal violence and gender inequality. The irony is that lands which traditionally supported diverse agro-ecologically farmed food crops, have got transformed into fields of toxic monocultured commodity crops: paddy, maize for industrial poultry, coffee, mango, cashew, eucalyptus and rubber plantations, cotton, chilli, vegetables, fruits and sugarcane. We sell these commodities, and buy food from the same corporations that control the market chains of food and agriculture. The State's⁷ neo-liberal economic policies since the early 1990s have systematically displaced peasants (small farmers) from their central role as food producers who feed the citizens of this country, and pro-actively enabled corporations capture the "business of food". This capitalist patriarchal corporate industrial food and agriculture system, fuelled by global capital in collusion with governments, is decimating lives, livelihoods and the environment the world over, deepening hunger, violence and inequality, and is a key driver of the energy and climate crises.

It is time for us to call a halt to this plunder, resist being colonized and reclaim the commons; and the only way to do so is to commit to this vision of **Food Sovereignty** - a political philosophy and program of action to resist and dismantle the existing corporate controlled food and trade regimes and take back control over our food systems. Food Sovereignty is about building a just world and, in the words of the International Peasant Movement via Campesina which coined the term, "*Food sovereignty implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social classes and generations.*" It is about defending the rights of Mother Earth and those of future generations.

Author: Sagari R Ramdas (sagari.ramdas@gmail.com).
Sagari Ramdas is a Veterinary Scientist and a member of the **Food Sovereignty Alliance**⁸, India.

Website: <https://foodsovereigntyalliance.wordpress.com/>

7. Successive governments of all political hues.

8. The Food Sovereignty Alliance emerged as a response to this crisis and brings onto a common platform adivasis, dalits, pastoralist and peasant social movements along with co-producers, to build solidarity with one another for a common vision of food sovereignty, in defence of our sovereign rights to food and the rights of mother earth.

Khadi and a Green Economy

A green economy is one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. The single-most important challenge that humanity faces today is the need for economic development within ecological limits. Humanity must live within clear planetary boundaries to attain sustainability in the long run. Human well-being/prosperity should be the core agenda of an economy, which motivates economic activity and justifies economic output.

There is a strong relationship between ecology and prosperity and prosperity can only be conceived as a condition that includes obligations and responsibilities to others. Economic activity, which undermines ecology, will lead to unsustainable prosperity. Unsustainable consumption is at the heart of ecological crisis. It leads to financial instability.

The effects of climate change are uncertain, and threaten potentially destabilizing costs on society. If necessary action is not taken, it might lead to a loss of 5% to 20% of gross domestic product (GDP) per year. But curtailment of climate change is not an easy task. According to the International Energy Agency, at least \$11 trillion will be required between now and 2030 to shift away from fossil fuels (IEA 2009). According to familiar axioms, the problem of climate change may be tackled by internalizing costs such as environmental and social costs, which have consistently been externalized, into the market value of a product. This action will send a clear signal to consumers and investors about the real costs of the product. It may also make them think of and invest in alternatives.

But this idea has been hard to implement effectively over the last couple of decades. Hence many ecological economists are of the view that the combined challenges of resource scarcity and climate change require macro as well as microeconomic responses.

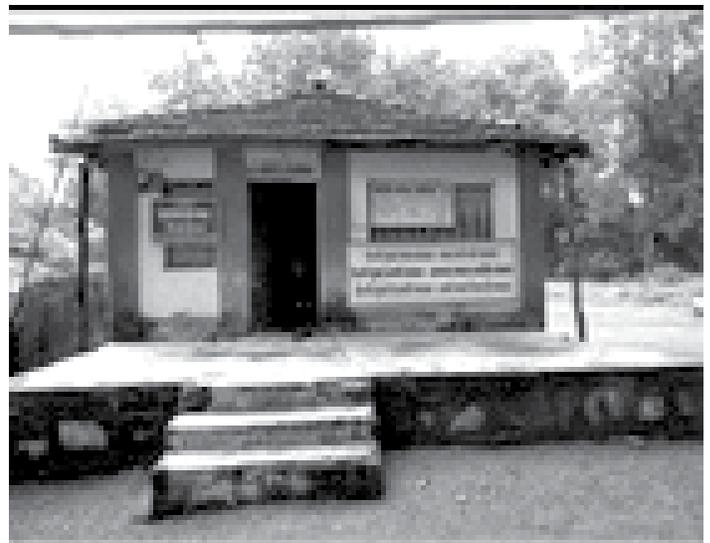
Criteria for Green Enterprise

Resource-efficient technology alone is not sufficient to categorize an enterprise as a green economy enterprise; it should also encompass social, political, environmental, and psychological dimensions. A green economy enterprise should be based on shared (socially just), and lasting (ecologically sustainable) prosperity. It should not just deliver goods and services, but should also maintain and enhance social and environmental well-being. Besides, it should help people to thrive and communities to flourish by providing stability in markets, security in employments, ecological integrity, sustainability in

supply chains, and fairness.

The *khadi* industry, a cloth production industry that was developed indigenously, is being considered at a community scale in India in this light.

Source: This is an excerpt from **Khadi Production in India - A Way Forward to Green Economy?** By **Sumanas Koulagi (k.sumanas@yahoo.in)** who is an independent scholar working on cotton. The complete article along with references can be accessed at <http://www.epw.in/commentary/khadi-production-india.html>



Confluence

Vikalp Sangam

Vikalp Sangam or the Alternatives Confluence is a process launched last year which attempts to move beyond critiquing the present day disruptive and exploitative systems, and focuses on **alternatives** which can challenge such a system. This process involves the coming together of various initiatives, organizations and concerned individuals in these Sangams - at some location in India (co-organized by a number of organizations, both local and those constituting the Vikalp Sangam core group) to celebrate, share and learn from each others' inspiring work and also to collaborate across domains and different regions to move towards a holistic vision of alternative to the current model of development.

The second⁹ Vikalp Sangam was co-organized by Re-Store and ACCORD along with Kalpavriksh, at CESCOI (Centre for Socio-Cultural Interaction) near Madurai, Tamil Nadu from 14th to 17th February 2015.

The Sangam had a wide participation of initiatives from Tamil Nadu from different sectors- groups working on alternative economic models, anti-corruption movement, gender issues, waste management, disability issues, sustainable agriculture, tribal rights, etc. The Sangam was planned in such a way that it provided space to present and explore new ideas and possibilities. The semi-structured framework which evolved through the days paved the way for discussions on issues such as local and regional economies, participative capital, alternative models of health, urban planning and waste management, alternative politics, and nonviolent communication. There was also reflection on issues like politics of shame, perceptions about disability vis-à-vis normalcy and rights of trans-genders and sex workers. Along with the discussions and sharing of experiences, a session on art and expression got everyone to explore and bring out some creativity in the Sangam through dance, music, theatre, painting and clay modeling. The photo exhibition and the stalls of various organizations added a festive flavor to the event.

The note on a conceptual framework for an alternative vision was further evolved [see box below] through discussions and constructive suggestions during the Sangam. As a follow up to the Sangam, there was a decision by the regional groups to take this process forward by organizing further local and thematic Sangams within Tamil Nadu.

9. Information on the first Vikalpa Sangam can be found at: <http://www.vikalpsangam.org/article/all-the-way-to-timbaktu/#.VWMUNK-qkko>

Author: Rashi Mishra (rashi.mish@gmail.com) is a member of Kalpavriksh working on Sangam processes and on the "Good Food for all" campaign.

Principles or tenets of Radical Ecological Democracy¹⁰

Practical and conceptual alternatives vary widely and given the diversity of local situations, few are replicable in precise form from one place to the other. However, it may be possible to derive the crucial, commonly held principles underlying these initiatives. Here is an initial list of such principles.

We note here that there can be a list of even more fundamental human ethical values that should be the bedrock of the principles below, including compassion, empathy, honesty, tolerance, generosity, caring, and others. These are espoused by most spiritual traditions and secular ethics, and are certainly worth keeping central to a discussion on the principles described below.

Ecological integrity and the rights of nature:

The functional integrity of the ecological processes (especially the global freshwater cycle), ecosystems, and biological diversity that is the basis of all life on earth.

The rights of nature and all species (wild and domesticated) to survive and thrive in the conditions, in which they have evolved, and respect for and celebration of the 'community of life' as a whole.

Equity, justice, and inclusion: Equitable access and inclusion of all human beings, in current and future generations, to the conditions needed for human well-being (socio-cultural, economic, political, ecological, and psychological), without endangering any other person's access; equity between humans and other elements of nature; and social, economic, and environmental justice for all, with special focus on the inclusion of those currently left out for reasons of physical/mental/social 'disability'.

Right to and responsibility of meaningful participation:

The right of each citizen and community to meaningfully participate in crucial decisions affecting her/his/its life, and to the conditions which provide the ability for such participation, as part of a radical, participatory democracy.

10. This has been excerpted from a document that was prepared for an evolving dialogue as a part of the ongoing Vikalp Sangam process. For comments and correspondence: Ashish Kothari, chikikothari@gmail.com.

Corresponding to such rights, the responsibility of each citizen and community to ensure meaningful decision-making that is based on the twin principles of ecological sustainability and socio-economic equity.

Diversity and pluralism: The integrity of the diversity of environments and ecologies, species and genes (wild and domesticated), cultures, ways of living, knowledge systems, values, livelihoods, and politics (including those of indigenous peoples and local communities), in so far as they are in consonance with the principles of sustainability and equity.

Collective commons and solidarity with individual freedoms: Collective and co-operative thinking and working founded on the socio-cultural, economic, and ecological commons, respecting both common custodianship and individual freedoms and choices (including the right to be 'different' such as in sexual orientation) and innovations within such collectivities, with inter-personal and intercommunity solidarity, relationships of caring and sharing as fulcrums.

Resilience and adaptability: The ability of communities and humanity as a whole, to respond, adapt and sustain the resilience needed to maintain ecological sustainability and equity in the face of external and internal forces of change, including through respecting the conditions enabling the resilience of nature.

Subsidiarity, self-reliance and ecoregionalism: Local rural and urban communities (small enough for all members to take part in decision-making) as the fundamental unit of governance, self-reliant for basic needs including health and learning/education, linked with each other at bioregional and eco-regional levels into landscape, regional, national and international institutions that are answerable to these basic units. (The term 'self-reliant' here means self-sufficiency for basic needs as far as possible, and the right to access what it is not possible to provide locally, from more centralized systems guaranteed by the state). (Swayam-samruddhi)

Simplicity and sufficiency: The ethic of living on and being satisfied with what is adequate for life and livelihood, rather than hankering for more and more. (Aparigraha)

Dignity and creativity of labor and work: Respect for all kinds of labor, physical and intellectual, with no occupation or work being inherently superior to another; giving manual labor and family/women's 'unpaid' work and processes of sharing/caring their rightful place, but

with no inherent attachment of any occupation with particular castes or genders; the need for all work to be dignified, safe, and free from exploitation; reducing work hours; and moving towards removing the artificial dichotomy between 'work' and 'leisure' by enabling more creative engagement.

Non-violence, harmony, peace: Attitudes and behavior towards others that respect their physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being; the motivation not to harm others in ways that one would wish others not to harm oneself; conditions that engender harmony and peace amongst and between peoples.



वो सुबह कभी तो आयेगी

वो सुबह कभी तो आयेगी, वो सुबह कभी तो आयेगी
इन काली सदियों के सर से, जब रात का आँचल ढलकेगा
जब दुःख के बादल पिघलेंगे, जब सुख का सागर छलकेगा
जब अंबर झूम के नाचेगा, जब धरती नममें गायेगी
वो सुबह कभी तो आयेगी

जिस सुबह की खातिर जुग जुग से,
हम सब मर मर कर जीते हैं

जिस सुबह के अमृत की धून में, हम जहर के प्याले पीते हैं
इन भूखी प्यासी रूहों पर, एक दिन तो करम फर्मायेगी
वो सुबह कभी तो आयेगी

माना के अभी तेरे मेरे अरमानों की किमत कुछ भी नहीं
मिट्टी का भी हैं कुछ मोल मगर, इन्सानों की किमत कुछ भी नहीं
इन्सानों की इज्जत जब झूठे सिक्कों में ना तोली जायेगी
वो सुबह कभी तो आयेगी

- साहिर लुधियानवी



Keeping Quiet

*Now we will count to twelve
and we will all keep still.*

*For once on the face of the earth
let's not speak in any language,
let's stop for one second,
and not move our arms so much.*

*It would be an exotic moment
without rush, without engines,
we would all be together
in a sudden strangeness.*

*Fishermen in the cold sea
would not harm whales
and the man gathering salt
would look at his hurt hands.*

*Those who prepare green wars,
wars with gas, wars with fire,
victory with no survivors,
would put on clean clothes
and walk about with their brothers
in the shade, doing nothing.*

*What I want should not be confused
with total inactivity.
Life is what it is about;
I want no truck with death.*

*If we were not so single-minded
about keeping our lives moving,
and for once could do nothing,
perhaps a huge silence
might interrupt this sadness
of never understanding ourselves
and of threatening ourselves with death.
Perhaps the earth can teach us
as when everything seems dead
and later proves to be alive.*

*Now I'll count up to twelve
and you keep quiet and I will go.*

Pablo Neruda



Spaces of Hope

AMRUTDHARA - An initiative to provide affordable clean water with zero plastic waste

Three years ago, the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), Leh, proposed to impose a complete ban on mineral water bottles to reduce its environmental impact on Ladakh's fragile ecosystem as plastic bottles heavily contribute to the solid waste. The initiative was also meant to provide employment opportunities to the unemployed youth by establishing safe drinking water filling stations of their own. Despite LAHDC's best intention, the decision later had to be reconsidered as an alternative was not easily available then. 'Amrutdhara' could perhaps become one of the solutions to such initiatives which can gradually be expanded to the entire country in a phased manner.

Amrutdhara is an experiment being initiated as an alternative solution to replace mineral water bottles to reduce environmental impact associated with plastic as a delivery means for drinking water. The prototype drinking water vending machine of Amrutdhara was installed at a shop in Pondicherry. Recognizing the threat of polluted water and plastic waste to health and the environment



in India, Amrutdhara was formed to tackle these issues. According to Co-founder of Amrutdhara, Minhaj Ameen, the technological solution that could be implemented in the market was designed in the form of a water vending machine where users could refill their bottles. "When we cut out the bottle, we found we could cut costs, and offer what consumers had really wanted all along, clean water, at half the price per liter of bottled water, making safe drinking water more affordable for all," argued Ameen. Amrutdhara envisions a network of refill stations starting in the town of Pondicherry and expanding across India, making it easy to give up buying bottled water forever.

Another co-founder of this noble initiative is Akshay Roongta. They've designed and built a prototype for a vending machine that will enable shopkeepers in public spaces to sell drinking water to consumers with refillable bottles. "We needed a cheaper, simpler, and more mobile idea that could fit in any common shop so users could refill anywhere, thus maximizing convenience," explained Ameen while recounting some earlier experiments. After Amrutdhara overcomes limited resources, co-founders are planning to launch a pilot in Pondicherry soon. They are confident that implementing a pilot over the next few months will prove to interested organizations that, with long term funding, Amrutdhara can change the face of water in India.

Amrutdhara is now raising money through indiegogo, an international crowd funding platform, to help them conduct the pilot rigorously and possibly expand the size, they have set up a small office as its headquarters in Auroville, double its man power by hiring junior engineers, designers and a Sales and Marketing Director and bringing its co-founder Akshay, who will sacrifice pursuit of his master's programme, to come on-board full-time and bringing on partners for product design and developing the next version of electronics.

The prototype water vending machine is attached to a 20-litre water tank that can be refilled. The technicians and the co-founders claim that machine can be attached to a drinking water tap also.

Author: Tsewang Rigzin

Source: <http://news.statetimes.in/amrutdhara-an-initiative-to-provide-affordable-clean-water-with-zero-plastic-waste/>

Community-Based Healthcare

The Foundation for Research in Community Health (FRCH), based in Maharashtra state, is attempting to develop new health service programs for rural populations in India.

This NGO works toward the training and engagement of community health workers (CHWs) in villages where health professionals are limited in number; the ones that are present have tight schedules to meet the medical needs of an entire village. According to the experiences and studies of FRCH, 85% of all health services can be provided by community health workers. Therefore, FRCH's training allows health workers to provide services to their own community, allowing for improved participation in rural healthcare systems.

It is critical for rural communities to gain a sense of self-sufficiency, as health policies and efforts fail to fill the gap in quality healthcare in these regions. While the government continues to route a disproportionate amount of money towards urban health expenditures, rural populations lack accessibility to basic wellbeing needs. Along with a general shortage of doctors in the country, a lack of basic amenities, resources, and infrastructure in rural government hospitals forces the available health professionals to prefer to work in urban areas. 75% of health infrastructure occurs in urban areas, where only 27% of the population lives and rural populations are forced to travel great distances to receive medical treatment. The FRCH community health worker initiative will allow for cheaper and more accessible healthcare for these areas, especially as the main goal for the organization is to supply a ratio of 1 health worker per 250 people as opposed to the national average of 1 doctor per 1,700 people.

The first step in implementing this initiative is the selection of the community health workers. All CHWs are chosen at the local level, as members of the rural community they will work in. The vast majority of the selected are women without children or mothers with children old enough so that they maintain independence; this assures a level of family and community support for the woman that is critical for their success as a CHW. These home-grown women fully understand the values, lifestyles, and mindsets of the rural areas they will work in, therefore resulting in an easier transition for the community to trust this woman as a health practitioner.

After selection comes the training of the community health workers - nearby hospitals act as training centers, and offer community reverse-referral services. These selected people are often educated to a minimal degree, yet unconventional training methods have been implemented by FRCH in order to allow the women to obtain the most effective training tailored to their perspectives and interests. While technical skills for a role in health services are of course taught thoroughly, the FRCH additionally uses stories, mythology, and participatory methods to culturally relate to their

educational structure. Most importantly, the CHWs are informed of harmful cultural values and social inequalities so that these skills provide a wide-ranging positive effect on their communities and to put their CHW roles in the perspective of the overall mission of the program.

In the current system where decisions relating to the health and welfare of rural communities are increasingly made at the distant administrative level, the FRCH works diligently to divert this trend. In addition to creating CHWs, FRCH helps to structure the creation of other community-based solutions including rural health committees in each involved village to discuss and implement ways of increasing health and sanitation awareness and community participation in health monitoring. The establishment of such programs greatly increases accessibility of health services in these rural areas in an effort that minimizes intrusive, hegemonic action. Having implementing community health workers that are native to the area allows for increased trust and cultural understanding between a health practitioner and the patient. Incorporating common people of the village as integral members of an alternative healthcare system provides populations the opportunity to decide on the type and quality of healthcare that they desire. Being a vital part of a solution empowers these communities, giving rise to a sense of self-sufficiency and creating a democratic, decentralized, people-owned health model.

Author: Sarah Chapel (scchapell@gmail.com).



International Focus

Cycling Cities

In a majority of developing urbanized spaces, infrastructure revolves around cars, not people. Walking and cycling are often pushed to the backburner as municipal planners design new roads, highways, and parking spaces, thus encouraging and increasing the number of personal vehicles used by urban commuters and travelers. Yet using non-motorized transportation, while often overlooked, holds several key economic, social, and environmental benefits that improve the quality of life for all urban inhabitants. These include decreased air pollution and carbon emissions, cheaper options of mobility, improvement in daily physical exercise patterns, and safer, more connected communities.

In Bogota, Colombia, the city, in cohesion with a state of the art public transit system, has developed a new pedestrian and cycling infrastructure over the last few decades. Just a few of several examples include:

- Sidewalks have been widened and nearly 300 km of cycling paths were added to the roadways, encouraging a culture of walking and cycling that advances these modes of transportation beyond the perception of mere recreational activities.
- Downtown pedestrian zones have been introduced as well as sidewalk barriers which prevent cars from parking on and obstructing pedestrian and cycling lanes.
- The world-renowned "TransMilenio" is a bus rapid transport system (BRT) that allows faster, more efficient public transportation, and has become central to all planning and development of the city.

Due to the socioeconomic background of Bogota, as well as the implementation of these policies, only 20% of its city-dwellers use personal vehicles as their primary mode of transportation to work.

In order to encourage cycling and social justice on the roadways, the city holds a *Ciclovía* event every Sunday, blocking off over 100 km of roads to motorized vehicles so that two million participants such as pedestrians, cyclists, roller bladers, and runners can freely utilize the streets. Over 200 cities around the world have recognized such a *Ciclovía* as a means to create increased equity of public spaces into their own municipalities, including Jakarta, Lagos, Brussels and Mexico City. The global

coalition for improved cycling infrastructure continues to grow at a rapid pace.

If cycling, walking, and public transport are so beneficial to urban settings, why are these policies not prioritized accordingly? In industrializing countries, as well as plenty of “developed” countries, a stigma is attached to non-motorized modes of transportation; the poor are often the ones cycling and walking places rather than using motorized vehicles. Most cities around the world have been planned in the last few decades around private vehicles such as cars and two-wheelers, thus causing infrastructure for non-motorized transportation to suffer. Governance in urban areas favors those who can afford motorized vehicles, causing social exclusion to those who walk or bike on the unsafe margins of congested roads.

Public transport can be a mode of social equity if made available for those who cannot afford personal vehicles. When considering all factions of an urban society, the impoverished populations deserve the right of access to safe, reliable, and inexpensive ways to move around the city whether for professional, personal, or recreational purposes. For marginalized groups such as children and the elderly of all classes who cannot legally use cars and two-wheelers, infrastructure for cycling and walking can increase their mobility greatly, especially for short-distance travel.

Most inhabitants of urban settings would likely use cycling and public transport more often if infrastructure was appropriately provided for, regardless of the users’ socioeconomic class. This is especially true in the context of India, where a large subgroup of people already cycle regularly. Bicycle use in India varies from 7–15 % in large cities to 13–21% in medium and small cities, despite the poor current cycling infrastructure. Moreover, most daily travel is less than 5 km away from home, making cycling a practical, inexpensive, and environmentally sound method of transportation, though only if the infrastructure is put in place to provide for these commuters. If municipal governments make decisions in collaboration with its citizens, policies can become much more effective by prioritizing problems and solutions through the local knowledge of the city’s residents, in addition to a naturally increased public approval of these policies. Perhaps if urban officials across the globe start listening to their city residents, they may realize that non-motorized transportation in combination with an effective public transit system is the key to urban sustainability and a higher quality of life for city residents.

Author: Sarah Chapel (scchapell@gmail.com).



Imagine

Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people living for today
Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too
Imagine all the people living life in peace,
You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope some day you'll join us
And the world will be as one
Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people sharing all the world,
You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope some day you'll join us
And the world will be as one

John Lennon



Cyclonomia: a participative and convivial bicycle repair workshop

Cyclonomia is a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) bike workshop developed within the framework of a bigger project of opening a Degrowth and Transition Centre in Budapest. Based upon concrete alternatives and places and a young trans-disciplinary researchers' collective, the objective is to experiment a transition towards more autonomy.

Cyclonomia is based on Cornelius Castoriadis' notion of autonomy. In the spirit of Degrowth, transition and DIY movements, Cyclonomia is a self-managed workshop where every member can repair his-her bike for free. The main goal is to support biking, autonomy in tools, re-appropriation of know-how of bicycles making, recycling, and repairing in accordance with DIY philosophy: but also to meet and have a good time together. Cyclonomia is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3 pm to 8 pm and every Saturday from 11 am to 6 pm. Cyclonomia provides tools. At least one expert is always there to help and advise its members.

Cyclonomia opened its doors in Budapest on June 15, 2013. Since then more than 200 users have participated in its functioning by coming to repair their bicycles.



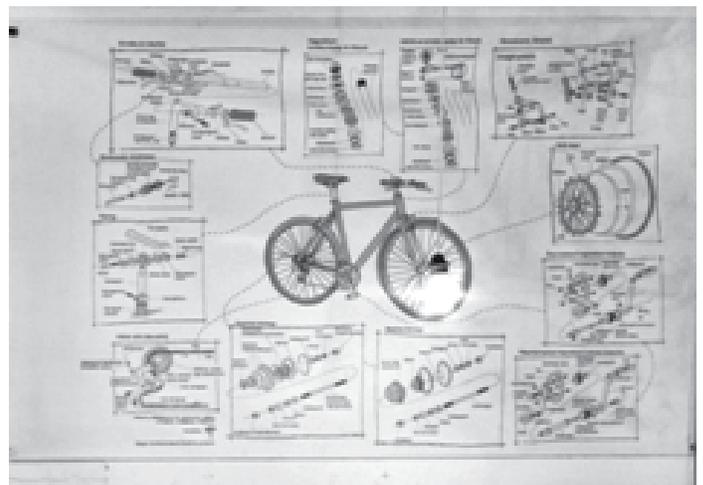
Cyclonomia has also been invited to participate in a few bicycle awareness-raising events: for example at the Central European University, in collegiums at Budapest Eötvös Loránd University, to MagNet Hungarian Civic Bank and in Zagreb urban cyclists' AGM.

Cyclonomia is located within Noha Studios, an Alternative place in Budapest. The 10 Euros membership allows you to repair your bike(s) in a participative and convivial atmosphere and to learn, meet, help and support others... Comfortable armchairs and drinks greet members. One

can also support the project through donations in kind: money, bikes, parts, tyres, inner tubes, tools, food, etc. Recycling, repairs, as well as pottery are some of the activities offered. Most importantly it is the selling point for Szatyor, the network of local food production in Budapest. Every week seasonal local fruits and veggies are distributed in a convivial atmosphere.

Cyclonomia has also hosted students' workshops that aim to spread the know-how for the engineering and building of bicycle trailers and cargo-bicycles and to test new uses for them.

In partnership with other groups, cyclonomia participated in the making of a paper shredder and a paper-bricks press to heat the poorest people's houses.



In Budapest as in many other places around the world, transition is well underway and Cyclonomia intends to be part of the network of alternatives by offering new ways of living, producing and sharing.





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Kalpavriksh,
Documentation and Outreach Centre,
Apt.5, Shree Dutta Krupa, 908, Deccan Gymkhana,
Pune 411 004, Maharashtra, India.
Website: www.kalpavriksh.org

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Compilation and Editing: Milind Wani

Support: Sarah Chapel

Advisor and Editorial help: Neema Pathak

Editorial Assistance: Anuradha Arjunwadkar, Sharmila Deo, Pankaj Sekhsaria, Seema Bhat.

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Apt. 5 Shree Dutta Krupa, 908 Deccan Gymkhana, Pune 411004

Phone: 91-20-25675450, Tel/Fax: 91-20-25654239

Email: kvoutreach@gmail.com

Website: www.kalpavriksh.org

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