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Special Issue on Radical Ecological Democracy

Opening Words

The year 2018 marked the 200th and 150th birth anniversaries of two giant visionaries of the 20th century - Karl Marx and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi aka Mahatma Gandhi. One was of European descent, the other Asian. One was born in Prussia to an ethnically Jewish family which later joined the Evangelical Church, the other into a Hindu Bania family in Gujarat. Both were trained in Law. One wore many hats, that of a philosopher, economist, historian, sociologist, political theorist, journalist, and socialist revolutionary; the other led a nation to its freedom from a colonial yoke. Both wrote prolifically, but the one is largely known for his political pamphlet entitled the Communist Manifesto and his critique of capitalism entitled Capital where the exploitative and extractive workings of an ethically indefensible system are laid bare; the other for his autobiography My Experiments with Truth and his philosophical creed called Hind Swaraj.

Along with his comrade-in-arms Frederick Engles, Karl Marx, through his political, sociological and economic writings, gave us a profound analysis of the ills of class-based society, and of capitalism in particular. He wrote angrily about its de-humanizing effect on the majority of people. He laid bare its predatory logic which enriches a few by causing permanent harm to many, including destruction of nature and other sentient life. Through his notion of metabolic rift, he spoke about how capitalism engenders alienation that humankind suffers from itself as well as from nature. Through his dialectical analysis, we gain a method of understanding the workings of society. Through his economic studies we learn how the capitalist system extracts surplus profit by exploiting the working people. He shows how dead capital rules over living labor. He left behind a rich vocabulary of theoretical concepts which remain useful for understanding the functioning of the world, even today. He gave us a theory of history, highlighting how society evolves through class struggle. Above all, he was a militant political activist who gave a call for revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, if necessary by violence. Throughout the previous century his teachings inspired idealists from across the globe to take the revolutionary road for social, political and economic justice by establishing socialism. By the middle of the last century, half of all the countries on the globe had declared themselves as socialist regimes, even though, eventually, most of them failed to deliver on promises. In fact most succumbed to distortions by becoming brutal totalitarian regimes with a privileged bureaucracy, and eventually collapsed. However, for a brief period they gave hope to the oppressed of the world. More importantly, Marx has left an indelible mark on how society is thought about and spawned a rich literature in the field of politics, sociology, anthropology, history, economics, literature and literary theory, art and cinema, science and technology, psychoanalysis, etc.

Mahatma Gandhi, who led India to freedom, was a person of no mean achievement. After his stint in South Africa, where he refined his method of resistance which he christened Satyagraha (stressing the Truth), he returned to India in the wake of the death of the great nationalist leader Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, to take over the leadership of the Indian National Congress and thereafter led from the front the Indian freedom struggle to overthrow British colonial rule. He proved to be an able General in an unequal battle even though his weapons of choice for resistance were inspired by India's civilizational values truth (Satya) and non-violence (Ahimsa). Arguably, he embodied the soul of India like none other. According to many, he was a deserving heir to sages like Gautam Buddha and Mahavira. At heart, he was deeply spiritual and committed to Hinduism, and yet he sought to reform it of its ills and distortion. While trying to spiritualize politics, he was clear that free India was to be a secular country which would respect and tolerate all religions on an equal basis without discriminating against any. The idea of a majoritarian India would have been abhorrent to his sensitive spiritual soul and he worked tirelessly for communal harmony during the freedom struggle as well as the horrendous blood bath that was partition. The greatness of his leadership was that he demonstrated that it was possible to resist without succumbing to hate and that a political adversary was not an enemy. His method was not one of confrontation, but of persuasion - for he truly believed that by showing an adversary the wrongness of his ways, it was possible to reform him and make him mend his oppressive ways. Arguably, his greatest offering to the Indian struggle, which continues to be relevant to our present times, is the idea of Swaraj (Self rule). At heart he was an anarchist who wanted to disband standing armies and questioned the relevance of the nation state. His ideal was that of a society of self-sustaining village republics. His methods have continued to be considered relevant and have inspired great leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela.

In a manner of speaking, both of the above were as different from each other as chalk and cheese. It is true that both have blind followers as well as prejudiced detractors, and that the teachings of both have been grossly misunderstood or reductively simplified. While the one is simplistically condemned as a propounder of violent social revolutions, the other is blamed for turning a blind eye to the violence of Hindu Varnashram. While the one is designated as an uncritical modernist, the other is called an anti-modern, and so on. One is then asked to choose between the Mahatma and the dark Moor as Marx was fondly called. If you are for the one, then you are necessarily against the other. On the other hand, there is no dearth of people who would simplistically try to graft these two great personalities as one yin-yang unit. Either way, it is forgotten that both were complex human beings, responding to difficult times, at different historical junctures.

Love them or hate them, you cannot ignore them and still call yourself a radical. To these two colossuses of recent history we dedicate this special edition of People in Conservation.

- Milind Wani

1. Stories

The politics of environment and the battles for livelihood become a microcosm for the democratic struggles today

Politics in India celebrates democracy but rarely looks critically at it. The concept of democracy has been narrowing over time and getting reduced to the electoral dimension. The shadow of majoritarian politics hangs over democratic theory discouraging any focus on dissent, alternatives or the fate of minorities and marginalized.

Just as one wonders if one has reached a dead end, a new wave of environmental politics is emerging in Tamil Nadu. Thoothukudi stands as one of the major symbols of these movements. It has a many-layered story involving complicity between the state, its agencies of governance and a rapacious company, which attempted to reduce the whole area into a company town of lies and servility. What prevented this was the rise of the community itself and the realization that the environment, or rather nature, is the common language and ecology for a lot of political struggles in India. The politics of environment and the battles for livelihood become a microcosm for the democratic struggles today.

Source: http://vikalpsangam.org/article/an-emerging-wave-of-environmental-politics/#.XIddhSIzaM8

Bhovi - Traditional Well-Diggers

Today, 40% of Bengaluru is dependent on groundwater. As per the regulations of the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike and the water supply and sewerage board, all new and old buildings of a given size must harvest rainwater or face penalties. So, recharge wells that collect rainwater and pump it into the ground, are becoming popular.

The Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore has over 60 recharge wells. And it is the Bhovi community that is helping dig, clean and maintain all these wells across Bengaluru.

As Karnataka faces its second consecutive year of drought — the government has declared 156 of the 176 talukas or 88% of the State drought hit — the well-diggers have been brought back to the centre stage of water management.

Source: http://vikalpsangam.org/article/bhovi-traditional-well-diggers-in-bengaluru/#.XIdasCIzaM8

IIT alumnus develops Bamboo bottles

An eco-friendly bottle developed by a former student of IIT-Dhanbad, hailing from Assam, has stormed the internet since it made its debut on Friday, October 5 last. Made entirely of bamboo, this natural-material-based bottle that comes in various sizes falls in the Rs. 400 to Rs. 600 bandwidth. It has a cork stopper and is leak proof. The contents remain cool and hygienic and it is handy to carry around.

Source: http://vikalpsangam.org/article/iit-alumnus-from-assam-develops-bottles-made-of-bamboo/#.XIdc5iIzaM8

Using technology to reduce Elephant Human Conflict

In India, few animals posses the kind of cultural symbolism that elephants do. Human-elephant interaction boasts a rich history dating back centuries. It is but natural that such a long association would also involve encounters that do not end happily.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in Hassan in Karnataka, the state which is home to India's largest population of Asian elephants. The Hassan region, however, has been beset by human-elephant conflict for years with a number of these encounters resulting in fatalities. But, thanks to resilient conservation efforts and smart application of technology in recent months, Hassan could soon be at peace with its elephants.

- Hassan has been a hotbed of human-elephant encounters for years and a challenge for forest authorities, who have been translocating crop-raiding elephants for decades.
- An integrated warning system has been replicated from a similar one in the elephant corridors of Tamil Nadu's Valparai region.
- Fatalities from elephant-human conflict have reduced to nearly zero in the region.

Source: http://vikalpsangam.org/article/ping-elephants-ahead-reducing-human-elephant-conflict-one-sms-at-a-time/#.XIdb7yIzaM8

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2. Visionaries

Gandhiji and Svaraj

Kishore Saint

'In my opinion, we have used the term Svaraj without understanding its real significance.'

<div align="right">M. K. Gandhi, 'Hind Swaraj'</div>

Introduction

Swaraj or Svaraj, like other ideas and experiments of Gandhi, has been understood and applied in many ways and for purposes not always consistent with Gandhi's own intent. It has been linked to Home Rule or self-rule, self-determination, political autonomy, local self-government and Panchayat Raj. All these notions are set within the politics of nation-state. This has led to obscuring the key idea of Sva or Self as the agency, light and locus of responsibility and effort in personal, social and ecological domains. It has also occluded Gandhi's other seminal concept of Gram or Village Svaraj as the basic building block of national and world order based on truth and non-violence.

The purpose of this note is to recover these two root meanings of Gandhi's Svaraj through the examination of Gandhi's writings in his key texts, especially 'Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule'.

Svaraj in Hind Swaraj

To begin with let us remember that the text of Hind Swaraj is at its core a dialogue between reader and editor about the meaning of Svaraj. Right at the start the 'reader' states his position on Svaraj as people's demand for Home Rule or national independence for India and asks Gandhi the editor about his views. Throughout the text questions about Svaraj are posed and answered in terms of its means as well as ends. In Chapter 4, 'What is Swaraj?' the question is posed explicitly and the reader's position, that India should have English rule and institutions without the English, stated. Gandhi's views, which are radically different, are not stated here but are expected to 'develop of themselves in the course of this discourse', because, 'It is as difficult for me (Gandhi) to understand the true nature of Swaraj as it seems to you (reader) so easy'. This illustrates Gandhi's approach that dialogue is the way to arrive at mutually meaningful truth.

Gandhi's views on Svaraj are developed in subsequent chapters of Hind Swaraj dealing with the pitiable 'plight of England' resulting from the reader's idea of Swaraj and wretched 'condition of India' ruled by England. In the case of England and Europe the malaise is traced to their civilization. For the source of his own idea of Svaraj Gandhi turns to Indian civilization and enunciates his concept of true civilization as '....*that mode of conduct ...which points out to man the path of duty. Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms. To observe morality is to gain mastery over our mind and passions. So doing we know ourselves.'* (Italics added)

Here, the idea of Svaraj is linked to life's purpose that is performance of duty which, for Gandhi, was securing freedom from foreign rule for India and service to God's creation. For this, gaining mastery over our mind and passions is a sine qua non. Herein lies the meaning of Svaraj as self-realization through self-control or self-discipline.

Svaraj as self-realization through self-control

The idea of Svaraj as self-control is elaborated in other writings and talks by Gandhi, notably 'Key to Health', 'Self-restraint vs. Self-indulgence' and 1926 Discourses on Gita at Sabarmati Ashram. Here the focus is on Sva- or self. Self for Gandhi extends from individual mind-soul-body, manas-atma-pind, to Cosmos, Paramatman-Brahmand, composed of five elements or Panchtatava - Earth or Prithvi, Water or Pani, Air or Vayu, Light or Tejas, Aether or Aakash. In Gandhiji's words, 'Aakash is a difficult word to translate as are indeed other four elements so called. For pani is not mere water in the original, nor vayu wind or prithvi earth, or Tejas light..... All the five in the original are as living as life.' In this pursuit of Svaraj the purpose is self-realization through self-recovery, self-purification and self-overcoming. This is based on recognition of higher and lower selves with their attributes of good and evil, divinity and mundaneness. Self-realization is achieved through control of desires and passions and through disciplines of fasting, silence, meditation, prayer and worshipful work as service to humanity and nature.

Svaraj as village based Constructive work

In the context of the freedom struggle and social reform in pre-independence India worshipful work as service to humanity and nature was formulated as Constructive Programme. This included communal harmony, removal of untouchability, promotion of khadi and village industries as a basis for swadeshi, Gram Svaraj or village self-reliance, shunning intoxicants, uplift of the oppressed and the deprived, gender equality et al. For Gandhi, constructive work combined with effort for self-realization outside politics is both the means and end of Svaraj. As Anuradha Veeravalli has pointed out 'His (Gandhi's) 'Constructive Programme' for poorna swaraj

was....conceived to render....structure of state power and empowerment redundant.' In this the guiding principle is the sovereignty of people as distinct from the sovereignty of state.

Reaffirmation of village-based Svaraj by Gandhi before and after independence

Gandhi's position in Hind Svaraj is reaffirmed in his 1945 correspondence with his political heir Jawaharlal Nehru in which he also outlines his vision of Gram Svaraj. In his first letter, written in Hindustani, Gandhi outlines his vision of Svaraj in independent India in these words, 'I am convinced that if India is to attain true freedom and through India the world, then sooner or later the fact must be recognized that people will have to live in villages not in towns, in huts, not in palaces. Crores of people will never be able to live at peace with each other in towns and palaces. They will then have no recourse but to resort to both violence and untruth. 'I hold that without truth and non-violence there can be nothing but destruction for humanity. We can realize truth and non-violence only in the simplicity of village life and this simplicity can best be found in Charkha and all that Charkha connotes. I must not fear if the whole world today is going the wrong way. It may be that India too will go that way and like the proverbial moth burn itself eventually in the flame round which it dances more and more fiercely. But it is my bounded duty up to my last breath to try to protect India and through India the entire world from such a doom.'

Further on, Gandhi clarifies that he is not referring to villages as they are at present but to villages as he imagines them in future. 'My ideal village will contain intelligent human beings. They will not live in dirt and darkness as animals. Men and women will be free and to hold their own against anyone in the world. There will be neither plague nor cholera, nor small pox; no one will be idle, no one will wallow in luxury. Everyone will have to contribute his quota of manual labor...It is possible to envisage railways, post and telegraph ......and the like.'

This is not the place to go into Gandhi-Nehru differences. Suffice it to say that Nehru disagrees with Gandhi's basic contention regarding potential of village life as the abode of truth and non-violence, even as he grants that present course of development is likely to lead to destruction. In his words, 'You are right in saying that the world or at least a large part of it appears to be bent on committing suicide. That may be an inevitable development of an evil seed in civilization that has grown. I think it is so. How to get rid of this evil and yet how to keep the good in the present as in the past, that is our problem.'

Gandhi's vision for village Svaraj is reiterated and a strategy proposed for its realization in a brief note known as his 'Last Will and Testament' drafted during the night before his assassination on 30 January 1948. In this he recognizes that 'India having attained political independence......has still to attain social, moral and economic independence in terms of its seven hundred thousand villages as distinguished from its cities and towns. The struggle for ascendency of civil over military power is bound to take place in India's progress towards its democratic goal. It must be kept out of unhealthy competition with political parties and communal bodies.'

Here, in a few sharp sentences, are laid out the task and strategy for Svaraj for villages. To get this under way, Gandhi suggests the dissolution of Congress as a political party and its conversion into Lok Sevak Sangh with a mandate to form panchayats beginning with the basic unit of five adults, affiliating with other similar units and electing representatives for broader level governance, progressively covering the whole nation. Certain rules of conduct and duties are given for Lok Sevaks: to habitually wear Khadi, be a teetotaler, abjure untouchability, believe in communal harmony and have equal respect for all religions, and believe in equality of opportunity and status for all irrespective of race, creed or gender. Duties include enrolling and training of village workers, organising villagers to become self-sustaining through agriculture and crafts, training villagers in sanitation and hygiene, organising villagers for lifelong education on the lines of Nai Talim, and ensuring inclusion of all eligible in voters' lists for getting the right of franchise. For its work the Sangh would raise finances from the villagers and others, especially ensuring contribution of 'poor man's pice'.

Village Svaraj after independence

Given the global geopolitical reality of mid-20th century, it was inevitable that Svaraj or self-rule be cast in terms of sovereignty of the nation-state. Gandhi recognized this as indicated by his inclusion of registration of adults as voters as one of the duties of the Lok Sevak.However, the main duty of Lok Sevaks was to undertake activities conducive to village Svaraj. Thus, Svaraj as self-realization and as village Svaraj, based on theprinciple of sovereignty of people, were to be seeded and nurtured in the womb of existing post-colonial polity. Although, contrary to Gandhi's advice, Congress was not dissolved, Gandhian Constructive workers, on their own, set up Sarva Seva Sangh to give shape to his vision. The major thrust for village Svaraj that emerged under its aegis was the Bhoodan-Gramdan movement, led literally on foot by Vinoba Bhave. It attracted dedicated stalwarts like Jayaprakash Narayan, Annasaheb Sahasrabuddhe,

Dada Dharmadhikari, Dhiren Majumdar, Vimla Thakkar, Manmohan Chaudhry, Thakurdas Bang, Govindrao Deshpande, and Sidhhraj Dhadda. Hundreds of thousands of acres of land donated by big landlords was distributed to the landless. However, after the initial successes, the hard ground work needed to consolidate the land and communities was not done on a significant scale and the movement failed to have any impact on the main course of rural development.

At national policy level, after heated debates in the Constituent Assembly, promotion of Panchayat Raj as an expression of village Svaraj was included in the Constitution as one of its Directive Principles. Legislation was enacted to give it practical shape on the ground. In this the principle of subsidiarity, rather than village autonomy in accordance with Gandhi's vision, has been the guiding consideration. More significantly for the alternatives movement, as pointed out by Surinder S. Jodhka, '....Gandhi's critiques of science and his ideas of alternative living have ...been popular...with environmentalists....and many of the action groups....'

Finally, a word about Svaraj in relation to alternatives framework derived from the basic structure of Radical Ecological Democracy. At the Vikalp Sangam in Udaipur in November 2017, Jai Sen mooted the suggestion that Svaraj be highlighted as the core value in the Alternatives Framework. At that time I supported the idea. Now, having delved deeper into Gandhi's view of Svaraj, I am inclined to feel that the matter should be debated further taking into consideration Gandhi's as well other views of Svaraj. These could include statist, techno-managerial, commercial and communitarian perspectives, with their underlying assumptions about intra-human, human-nature as well as human-divine relationships.

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Further reading:

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Marx and Political Ecology

Omar Dahbour

Marxian theory is usually connected to environmental concerns through the attempt to provide an explanation for the historical origins of climate change, species extinction, and other facets of the contemporary ecological crisis [e.g. Foster 2000, Moore2015, and Malm 2016]. However trenchant such attempts are, they leave open the nature of alternatives to regimes of capital accumulation that despoil and devastate natural habitats. This is because Marx's own work, while innovative in its reaffirmation of the intimate connections between nature and humanity (through labor), still relied on a rationalistic and humanistic conception of emancipation derived from his philosophical predecessors (especially Feuerbach and Hegel). Clearly, socialism/communism was meant to address particular social ills (e.g. the exploitation of wage labor), not to change the relation of humanity to nature instantiated in an industrial capitalist society (at least not directly).

Here, I leave aside explanations for the advent of climate change and other environmental ills affecting the planet as a whole (i.e. the biosphere), and consider what political ecologists might learn from revisiting certain Marxian ideas about labor, capital, and nature. By political ecology, I mean the study of humans in their connection to particular ecosystems, and the environmental goods and services needed to maintain human life (Robbins 2004). While political ecologists have tended to study peoples in the Global South who are still intimately connected to ecosystems for their sustenance (e.g. peasants, hunter-gatherers, nomadic peoples), the approach need not be limited to that. In general, it concerns conflicts over resources, and the equitable and sustainable (i.e. just) resolution of these conflicts. One aspect of this comparison, then, is to ask what Marxian theory might have to say about environmental justice, in general. I conclude that, while Marx's ideas clearly inspire some new work in this field, it is also important to note that an understanding of environmental justice based on

political-ecological research would diverge in some important ways from what is usually regarded as Marxian theory.

Marx and Environmental Justice

Probably, the most important contribution that Marx has made to environmental justice movements is the simple idea of entitlement to, or ownership of, the means of production by the producers. While Marx did not make a normative argument that this was the right of workers and other producers, he showed how the threatened loss of control over such means of production is a continual spur to working people to resist that loss, or to reclaim their control. This idea differs from most conceptions of justice, which concentrate on determining an overall just scheme of distribution, based on certain moral principles. The idea of entitlement justifies a more intrinsic connection between producers and the goods that they produce—in Marx, as an entitlement of the working class, based on their labor power.

The idea of just entitlement has its origins in John Locke's justification of private property, where it is the individual's actions in "mixing" their labor with nature that "begins" or creates the property (right). But Marx makes a crucial innovation in the entitlement idea—that, since labor is a fundamentally social interaction with nature, any proper entitlement is a communal, not individual, one. It is the class, group, or community that labors and produces that is entitled to ownership of what they work upon.

photo by Ashish Kothari

Political ecology advocates for the recognition of the legitimate claims of communities to the natural resources found on the land that sustains them.

Of course, while Marx focused on industrial workers as the entitled class, contemporary political ecologists focus on peasants, agricultural laborers, tribal peoples, and nomadic and/or hunter-gatherer groups as the peoples who have legitimate claims to natural resources. But the idea of entitlement is similar in both instances. This difference indicates, however, how political ecology, while drawing on some Marxian notions, nevertheless departs significantly from Marxian conceptions of social labor and class struggle.

This Marxian idea of the ownership of production is important today especially (though not exclusively) in the "Global South," where a massive land and resource grab by corporations and states is under way, that has been referred to as "accumulation by dispossession" [Harvey 2003]. In Marx's work, this process was regarded as "primitive accumulation," in the sense of an original acquisition of materials (and labor) necessary to start capital accumulation. Initially, Marx regarded this process as occurring largely in the European countries. But he eventually came to see how this process was extending itself in the Americas, in India, and in other regions of the world.

Ideas from Political Ecology

Several ideas in political ecology have set the context of struggles for environmental justice in the contemporary period. These ideas both draw on the Marxian heritage of critical theory, and challenge it in other ways. They are concerned with three things—the very ideas of society and nature/ecology, the understanding of property relations, and the nature of conflicts arising out of these. First, in political ecology, the idea of society is often replaced by a notion of socio-ecological systems, particular ecosystems that involve distinctive adaptations of human groups to physical environments [Berkes and Folke 1998]. Another similar concept sometimes used is that of the natural economy–the idea that human economies are embedded in natural systems that enable goods and services necessary for human life to be produced. To some extent, these notions are normative ones, inasmuch as they suggest a sustainable form of human production and consumption of goods that preserves biomass and the ability of ecosystems to replenish resources as they are used. But environmentally unsustainable economic systems that overuse natural resources by generating waste through non-cyclical processes, carbon-based rather than solar-based energy production, and chemical-intensive agricultural practices that result in soil depletion are also socioecological systems. They are simply ones that engage in irrational and unsustainable uses of resources.

Second, the related notions of the commons, common pool resources, and common property designate resources (as well as the means for managing them) that are hard to parcel out to individuals and therefore seem to require non-private forms of use and ownership. Examples include forests, fisheries, and other types of land and water resources. The existence of these resources has historically resulted in forms of property that are separate from both individual/private and state/public forms. The commons is itself an institution found historically in many countries and regions. Its existence suggests that markets and states do not exhaust the options for the management of resources, but that there are other practices that may provide more sustainable maintenance of natural economies [Ostrom 1990]. Third, political ecologists refer to struggles over the allocation of resources as ecological distribution conflicts [Martinez-Alier2002]. These conflicts are the result of the tremendous variability that human beings have in using resources for the maintenance of life. This variability leads to conflict, not only between humans and other species, but also between human communities themselves. Such conflicts are the result of the fact that humans have no set patterns for using energy and other material resources. Consequently, differences between forms of use, and struggles over which should prevail, have been characteristic of human history for millennia. With the tremendous increase in human populations in the last two hundred years, and the corresponding resource depletion that certain forms of use entail, such conflicts are occurring at an accelerating rate.

Marxian Themes in Political Ecology

Political ecology has, at least in part, been based on an application of some ideas from historical materialism to contemporary struggles for environmental justice. Each of the three central concepts mentioned above has some connection to central themes in the materialist approach to historical struggles over wealth and resources. First, the idea of socioecological systems echoes the Marxian idea of a necessary and continual connection between human social systems and nonhuman life and resources. This connection, elaborated in a number of texts from the "German Ideology" onward, was claimed as a fundamental feature of all forms of human social life. The mediation between humans and nonhumans was, of course, the human labor necessary to transform materials into means for the satisfaction of needs, basic and otherwise. But this mediation, as Marx emphasized, was neither one that could be assumed, or transcended, in more industrialized societies, nor one that was stable and ongoing. On the contrary, the design and maintenance of systems of resource extraction, based on

human laboring on nonhuman materials, was subject to continual change. As new forms of labor (often in relation to new technologies) and of resource use emerged, the social systems that organized labor for maximally efficient production of needs satisfaction also changed. Consequently, there could be no "post-material" economy or society, for the reason that an ongoing connection to the sources of human life and health was always necessary.

Second, the idea of common pool resources—resources owned and maintained by non-market and non-state collectives—is similar to Marx's concept of communal ownership in pre-capitalist societies. In the "Grundrisse" and elsewhere, he wrote of the importance of studying historical forms of non-capitalist ownership as intimations of future, post-capitalist forms. While the fact that such "commons" institutions would have survived into the 21stcentury would no doubt have seemed strange to him, Marx nevertheless emphasized the importance of realizing that what appears to be a simple binary opposition within capitalist societies, between private (capitalist) or public (state-owned) enterprises, is in fact historically exceptional.

Third, the idea of conflicts over the distribution of environmental goods and services bears a resemblance to Marx's concept of "primitive accumulation." The latter constituted the consolidation of land ownership for non-subsistence production (i.e. commercial crops), plus the separation of the land-holding population from their holdings, thereby creating a supply of unskilled labor. Both served as spurs to the development of capitalist enterprises, with the acquisition of natural materials, and the employment of available labor power. Today, the process of primitive accumulation continues, with conflicts between small holding peoples, often subsistence farmers (and fishing peoples), and businesses intent on acquiring new lands for plantation agriculture, commercial fisheries, and so on. The inevitable accompaniment of this is the expansion of an impoverished landless population, which in turn provides labor power for expanding urban construction and for industrial enterprises of all sorts.

Limitations of the Marxian Paradigm for Environmental Justice

Despite these similarities between Marx's description of the capital accumulation process and contemporary processes of environmental exploitation and resistance to it, there are important limitations to viewing today's environmental distribution conflicts as straightforwardly anti-capitalist struggles, such

as Marx advocated. Specifically, there are four major limitations to the use of Marxian theory—differences between class struggles and environmental conflicts, changes in productive processes and the value of labor, the distinction between workers' and peoples' ownership of productive resources, and the importance of (environmental) justice claims as an antidote to the "domination of nature."

While ownership of the means of production was a basic demand of workers' movements and, in very different contexts today, ecological resistance movements, the differences are almost as great as the similarities. For the working class, in Marx's view, ownership enabled them to take control of the products and proceeds from industrial processes in which they were the creators of value. Of course, many questions were left unanswered in the articulation of this view; among others, how, in an industrial economy, workers could primarily produce for themselves, or whether markets would in fact continue to play an important role in the distribution of goods and services. Furthermore, with the increasing mechanization of industrial technologies, it became less apparent that workers were the primary creators of value—and if not, why they were still entitled to ownership of firms. With the increasing role of advanced technology in many industries, the role of scientists and engineers seemed to take on a much more important one in the creation of value (as compared to abstract labor power). In addition, the professional-managerial class that partly maintained the technical plants (as well as "managing" the labor force) experienced tremendous growth in numbers and as a percentage of the workforce apart from owners and workers. These changes in the composition of the labor force and in the character of industrial production have made the classical Marxian view more difficult to justify.

But the problem for environmental struggles is a somewhat different one. It is often the case that the producers in agricultural and extractive enterprises do have a primary—though perhaps not exclusive—role in the production of goods and services. Their claim to ownership seems to be a good one. But, from Marx's point of view, they are otherwise unqualified to own because they are supposedly incapable of joint actions to take power over the productive process. Their location at dispersed rural, often solitary, worksites suggests that peasants, farmers, fishery workers, miners, forestry workers, and so on do not work in a socially cooperative enough way to enable them to own and manage their enterprises—or at least that's what Marxian's have claimed. It is only, in this view, the workers in industrial firms that have this ability to cooperate in workplaces and therefore to organize politically as well.

photo by Ashish Kothari

Local communities have traditionally taken the lead in planning for the conservation of their commons. View of a village council meeting under way in Mendha Lekha, Maharashtra, India.

This conclusion is contradicted, first, by the investigations of informal management of commons land and resources that has occurred and continues to occur in many parts of the world. Such management involves cooperative enforcement of rules and other norms within rural, small village, and agricultural settings. It is the supposedly atomized peasant populations of such environments that have played a crucial role in the sustainable and resilient maintenance of ecosystem goods and services in many such locations. The rural history of many world regions has also documented that, from the great peasant revolts of past centuries to the environmental struggles of the present, it has been "ecosystem peoples"— those with a direct and personal relation to "natural" resources who have most successfully challenged regimes of capital accumulation [Wolf 1982, Gadgil and Guha 2000]. Industrial workers, after all, are frequently enmeshed in a social system that does not enable them to envisage their own independence from regimes of labor control and exploitation. As individuals, they have no direct connection to the means of sustenance, but are dependent upon a wage-oriented economy. Today, it is those who are still, to one degree or another, outside this economy that can see most clearly what is at stake in struggles for control of resources.

This is reflective of a second problem with applying Marxian theory to environmental conflicts. Recent work on the process of primitive accumulation has shown that value in the productive process lies just as much in the acquisition of inexpensive natural materials as inputs into production, as it does in the exploitation of labor itself. Raw materials, energy, water, and other inputs must be procured cheaply in order for production to "take off"—and it is this, as much as the use of cheap labor, that is the source of profit. This perhaps is the underlying reason that struggles to procure such "cheap nature" have

been as important for capital as the struggles to keep the cost of labor down [Mies and Bennholdt-Thomsen 1999, Moore 2015]. Furthermore, it is opposition to such despoliation of nature for capital accumulation that appears to hold the greatest promise for halting both such destructive uses and reducing the exploitation inherent in capitalist economies.

What this means, as a third limitation of the Marxian view, is that, just as the opposition to environmental destruction will come, not from the working class but from peoples who have a stake in maintaining nonindustrial socioecological systems, so these systems will not necessarily benefit from workers' control over industrial societies. Though the Soviet Union was in no real sense a "workers' state," it was an attempt, through the creation of a state-bureaucratic class, to organize an industrial society without a capitalist class of owners. Surely it was indicative that eliminating such a class is no guarantee that environmental destruction will not proceed apace with the industrialization of society, whatever its structure of ownership [Bahro1982]. "Socialism" means different things; but there is little reason to think that in any of its guises—as long as it remains just a different way of organizing industrialization processes—it will be any less destructive of what remains of the natural world than capitalist markets have been. The need is for a socio-ecological system that does not depend on the industrial manufacture of products to satisfy the needs of an expanding consumer class—and "state capitalism", "market socialism," and the other hybrids on offer will all continue to do this.

Finally, there is the matter of justice—a concept that Marx thought was limited to a juridical codification of existing social relations. Of course, there has been a lively debate over the last generation or more about whether or not there could be a concept of justice implicit in Marxian theory that goes beyond the juridical one. But it is fair to say that, even if there is, the critique of capitalist society by Marx was not (at least principally) that it was unjust. Marx was more concerned to specify the possible sources of political opposition to capital accumulation, rather than the ethical problems with it.

Reimagining Resistance – From Class Struggle to Climate Justice

Yet, this approach has not worked well, as critical theorists in the mid-twentieth century such as Adorno and Marcuse pointed out. If there was a moment when the industrial working class could have opted for an alternative to industrial capitalism, that moment is probably past. Today, it is under the "sign of nature" that opposition to

capital is building. From the "climate justice" movement in the North to the peasant and ecological resistance movements in the South, hopes for a break with capital accumulation come from a critique of and resistance to, "progress," "development," and other economic growth projects. But this opposition does not have as its basis any clear "subject position" (e.g. the working class), but rather a principled rejection of a certain conception of the good life, even if this rejection is rooted in alternative life-worlds and practices. It is pretty clear that none of this was anticipated by Marx or other Marxists.

It is now the case that, to paraphrase Adorno, the moment to "realize philosophy" has passed; now is the moment to think again about what a socio-ecological system that does not destroy the bases for continued life on the planet would be. Philosophy—and in particular, the meaning of (environmental) justice—has an important role to play in this rethinking. It is not at all clear that the overcoming of capitalism—if that does not involve a further halt to the industrialized production of everything—will mean a move to a more environmentally just world.

Certainly, to reiterate, the primary lesson to learn from the Marxian project is that peoples who need to sustain themselves directly from the ecosystems in which they live—and this is virtually all peoples, at least potentially—have a claim to ownership of the resources in those ecosystems. But it is also the case that, unless peoples engage in environmental stewardship of their ecosystems, they will forfeit a legitimate claim to them (or deplete the resources to an extent that there will be little left to claim). Environmental justice involves both claims of equity in the ownership and management of natural resources, and of sustainability in the maintenance and health of the ecosystems in which such resources are located. Despite the lack of attention in traditional Marxian theory to these considerations, it seems clear that a quasi-Marxian theory provides a better beginning for developing an adequate theory of environmental justice than other environmental philosophies on offer today (e.g. sustainable development, environmental pragmatism, "hybridism"— see J. Sachs 2015, Norton2005, Latour 2017).

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Source: https://www.radicalecologicaldemocracy.org/redweb-anniversary-series-marx-and-political-ecology/

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3. Debate

The Mahatma and the Pandit
Aseem Shrivastava

"Do not consider this Swaraj to be like a dream."
- Mahatma Gandhi

As a concept, swaraj was first thought of in a classical Indian language, or perhaps in an Indian vernacular. In this sense, it is (unlike democracy, derived from the Greek 'demos') indigenous to India.

Let us contemplate the word 'swaraj'. Its etymological origins in Sanskrit are simple and obvious: swa (self) + rajya (rule) = swaraj (self-rule). The adjective 'prakritik' can be understood as 'natural', or as expressing human nature so as to remain in rhythm with the natural world around us.

Speaking of swaraj in the 21st century, one feels assured that one is aiming to recover and revitalize a vision which belongs to a strong indigenous stream of Indian philosophical thought, culture and political practice. The important thing to remember is that these notions (in Sanskrit or Pali) - from which some of the vocabulary of modern Indian democracy is drawn - predate the colonial era by centuries, often by millennia, and are, by no means, translations of concepts imported into India from the Western world. It means that these were notions in use in one period of Indian history or another and became substantially dormant, often with the coming of colonial rule in the modern period.

Politically, self-rule, as Mahatma Gandhi understands it, is anything but modern parliamentary democracy. He mocks modern parliaments as "emblems of slavery"; it is unfortunate that swaraj is frequently translated as 'democracy'. In fact, their cognitive premises could not be more different.

Firstly, swaraj is inconsistent with mass politics, an everyday fact of democracies today. Secondly, modern democracy is focused on the individual's direct, unmediated relationship to a state that guarantees her rights of citizenship by law. Thirdly, in a modern democracy, an individual is, almost indifferently, and in the name of 'freedom', left to his tastes and desires (all of modern economics rests on this assumption).

Gandhi's idea of swaraj could not be more different. It has to do with an individual's or a community's autonomy to create their choices, rather than passively accepting the menu from which they must choose.

Given the frenzied pace of change in the modern world, 70 years is a very long time in the life of an independent nation. It should have been more than enough time to banish poverty from a country even as large as India, given the enormous economic growth that has happened. Several countries have done just that. However, the truth is that today, in 2017, the number of the 'officially' poor, a severely conservative estimate in itself, is still much greater than the entire population of undivided India at the time of independence in 1947. Economic development was supposed to have tackled the challenge of poverty. Why has this not happened? Could it be that we have been nationally deceived about the nature and character of development? Was it always perhaps a form of disguised warfare, rather than the 'freedom' some eminent economists have claimed for it, a fact now ever more apparent every month, every week, with what is euphemistically described as 'displacement', and by the systemic ecological plunder of the Subcontinent, all on account precisely of the process of development?

Development was, from the start, a colonial idea. To grasp this hitherto hidden reality, it is worth going back to the 1940s, when the idea of development was first crafted by an imperial power, but also because it was in the 1940s that its primary contender Gandhi's idea of Swaraj was summarily dismissed by the country's first Prime Minister. It is well-known that Jawaharlal Nehru diverged significantly from the Mahatma when it came to the question of how Independent India was to give shape to its destiny. As a committed modernizer, Nehru rejected outright Gandhi's idea of Swaraj even before Independence.

In a statement that continues to prove eerily prophetic about life in metropolitan India in recent times, Gandhi elaborated the substance of his vision in the following words: 'I am convinced that if India is to attain true freedom, and through India the world also, then sooner or later the fact must be recognized that people will have to live in villages, not in towns, in huts not in palaces. Crores of people will never be able to live at peace with one another in towns and palaces. They will then have no recourse but to resort to both violence and untruth. I hold that without truth and non-violence there can be nothing but destruction for humanity.'

Jawaharlal Nehru felt that India had to urbanize and industrialize and expressed a degree of urgency with respect to the need to achieve 'sufficiency of food, clothing, housing, education, sanitation...for everyone.' 'It is with these objectives in view,' he said, 'that we must find out specifically how to attain them speedily.' He also felt it 'inevitable that modern means of transport as well as many other modern developments must continue and be developed. There is no way out of it except to have them. Inevitably, under the circumstances, a measure of heavy industry must exist.' Nehru wondered 'how far that will fit in with a purely village society'. He hoped that 'heavy or light industries' would 'be decentralized as far as possible'. But at the same time he justly feared that 'if two types of economy exist in the country there should be either conflict between the two or one will overwhelm the other. As a modern socialist—though sounding virtually as a gentle, euphemistic forerunner to a builder's billboard from an airport expressway to 21st century India—Nehru wanted a tempered urbanization.

Nehru explicitly rejected Gandhi's vision as expressed in Hind Swaraj: 'It is many years ago since I read Hind Swaraj and I have only a vague picture in my mind. But even when I read it 20 or more years ago it seemed to me completely unreal.' Despite Gandhi's own statement to the contrary, Nehru felt that the former's own writings and speeches since the time that Hind Swaraj was published were 'an advance on that old position and an appreciation of modern trends'. He was 'therefore surprised' when Gandhi wrote to him saying how little his views had changed since the book was first written and said that Gandhi's 'old picture' was never considered seriously by the Congress, nor had Gandhi asked for it to be 'adopted except for certain relatively minor aspects'.

Gandhi did not dream up the idea of "village republics", of gram swaraj, out of thin air. In 1909, he published his most important work Hind Swaraj. The associations of the word swaraj change quite dramatically when deployed by Tilak during the early phase of the Indian freedom struggle in the 1890s. It seems to become virtually equivalent to the modern Western notion of liberty and independence. When Dadabhai Naoroji, as President of the Indian National Congress declares swaraj, in 1906, to be the goal of the national movement he has this very limited meaning in mind. Gandhi's vision went well beyond this. Nehru inadvertently expressed his preference for collective clarity over sustainable justice, never suspecting that the path (India's no less than the world's) could be altogether wrong. More justly stated - with sustainability never a thought in Nehru's mind, nor modernity a matter of moral doubt, despite its obvious inevitable concomitants of conquest and imperialism— he thought that what he was expressing and wished for, uniquely combined justice with clarity. He feared that the path the Mahatma was suggesting, on the other hand, would hurl India against the momentum of modern history. Nehru thought that Gandhi's ideas about Swaraj were anachronistically dated.

In retrospect, Nehru's grand illusion was to imagine that the 'good' in the modern world could somehow, magically be preserved, while allowing the 'evil seed' (gluttony of power?) to flourish into a ravishing rainforest of destructive avarice, an inevitability our times on the 21st century globe are having to face, as barbarism knocks on every door. Gandhi's fears are globally vindicated today.

As an idea, 'development' originated on the home grounds of the new inheritors of Western, Anglo-Saxon imperialism, the United States. That the idea of development took birth not in the hearts and souls of our freedom-fighters but in Washington DC and Bretton-Woods, New Hampshire, even before India's independence in 1947, is not something readily acknowledged (thanks perhaps to national vanity) among most intellectuals and scholars. That 'development' was an idea 'whose time had come', an idea that the new rulers of the world, after the Allied victory in World War II, found handy to re-draw and extend the boundaries of their new global empire across the whole wide earth, that it was (along with 'democracy' and 'human rights') the newer, upgraded version of 'the White Man's Burden' and the 'Christian Mission' (both having run their course), entitling them to rule the world in the latter's own interest (thus saving them and themselves from the fear of communism), is acknowledged even less. It would perilously expose our shared national hypocrisies to admit all this. So we still need the smiling Mahatma on our new (post-demonetization) Rs. 2,000 currency notes to hide our lies and sins.

The starkest evidence that our freedom-fighters under Gandhi's leadership did not think about our people's challenges and problems primarily in terms of the American notion of 'development' is to be found by the virtual absence of the word from India's 1949 Constitution. What is more important than the above is the timing of the entry of the word 'development' into global public discourse. While the word itself had been in usage in a variety of scientific and other specialized contexts for a long time, it made its first big appearance in the discourse of global public policy at the all-important conference at Bretton-Woods, New Hampshire, in July 1944. It was in these beautiful mountains of the US north-east that the present-day world economy was first crafted towards the end of World War II, initiating the global era which came into its own only after official communism had withdrawn from the Cold War by 1990. It is noteworthy that we hardly ever hear Western leaders speak of poverty and underdevelopment in the decades preceding World War II.

In his last years, there were some signs that Nehru regretted the grand idea of development, and perhaps secretly longed for the Mahatma's foresight. Here is what he told a bunch of irrigation engineers in 1958: "For some time past, however, I have been beginning to think that we are suffering from what we may call, 'disease of gigantism'. We want to show that we can build big dams and do big things... the idea of having big undertakings and doing big tasks for the sake of showing that we can do big things is not a good outlook at all...We have to realize that we can also meet our problems much more rapidly and efficiently by taking up a large number of small schemes, especially when the time involved in a small scheme is much less and the results obtained are rapid. Further, in those small schemes you can get a good deal of what is called public co-operation, and therefore, there is that social value in associating people with such small schemes."

This was long before vast shopping malls, expressways and airports came to dominate India's visual metropolitan landscape. But Nehru was already too late in 1958. His own words and actions of the previous decade-and-a-half had already set the powerful initial conditions which continue to shape India's cultural, political and economic destiny in profound respects. For the failure of the first Prime Minister of the nation to see that development was the latest, well-masked imperial idea, millions—from hundreds of thousands of farmers who have committed suicide to tens of millions whose lives, livelihoods and cultures have been eviscerated and uprooted to make room for 'development' projects in the 'national interest' —have been paying the price for seven decades.

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Note: The above article has been put together by Surhud Gokhale by bringing together commonalities between two separate articles written by Aseem Shrivastava, namely "Prakritik Swaraj" and "Who killed Swaraj". Prior permission had been sought from the author.

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4. Perspective

Tyranny of the majority

K. P. Shankaran

It is a little known fact that democracy, which is today celebrated worldwide, was anathema to Mahatma Gandhi. His disdain for the institution of parliament was evident when in 1909, writing in the Hind Swaraj, he described it "a costly toy of the nation". Gandhi was, of course, referring to the British parliament of the day. But his unequivocal belief that the parliamentary form of democracy was ill-suited for India was clearly evident when he wrote in the Hind Swaraj, "I pray to God that India may never be in that plight". Gandhi was undoubtedly a thoroughbred democrat. Throughout his life he remained a champion of democratic rights and lent his voice and support to democratic associations, wherever he happened to be. But the democracy that Gandhi supported wholeheartedly was the direct form of democracy as opposed to the representative one.

Representative democracy is a product of an idea of a nation state that developed after the French Revolution. It certainly looks dignified in comparison with the alternative — dictatorship that could potentially lead to fascism. However, for Gandhi, the idea of a nation state was itself a trap and he feared that once India adopted it, it would forever be forced to run a representative form of government in order to avoid the menace of a possible dictatorship. This dislike for representative democracy sprang from his conviction that it would in no time degenerate into an anti-people institution in a multicultural and multi-religious context like India. Gandhi was the first theoretician of democracy to foresee this danger.

It was to forestall such a possibility that Gandhi envisaged the creation of interrelated self-sufficient non-hierarchical socialist village communities called "swaraj", with each of them functioning as a direct democracy. Gandhi devised his constructive programme for the implementation of "swaraj". He believed that "swaraj", if implemented through the constructive programme, would help people conceive development as freedoms instead of economic advancement. He also needed a non-violent interim arrangement during the transition from a capitalist state to a stateless socialist society. Gandhi's idea of trusteeship, like Marx's idea of dictatorship of the proletariat, was intended for that purpose. He believed that this was the only way India could escape the threat of becoming a nation state and being forced to choose between the two evils.

Was this a reasonable proposal? Or was Gandhi's proposal reactionary and unintelligible, as Nehru said in a letter to Gandhi on January 11, 1928? One of the persons who thought it would have been wonderful if India had paid heed to Gandhi was Noam Chomsky. In an interview Chomsky said: "There were some positive things — for example, his (Gandhi's) emphasis on village development, self-help and communal projects. That would have been very healthy for India. Implicitly, he was suggesting a model of development that could have been more successful and humane than the Stalinist model that was adopted (which emphasized the development of heavy industry, etc.)."

In the democracy index of 2017, India has been categorized as a flawed democracy. To most of us this may not have come as a surprise. The dark underbelly of representative democracy is out there in the open for everyone to see. Like American democracy, this is also a managed democracy. Money, other incentives and the presence of criminals play a significant role in the elections. Except for the left parties, all other political groups are either owned by an individual, a family or an institution for all practical purposes. Intra party democracy thus stands seriously compromised. This tendency first manifested in the Congress with the ascent of Indira Gandhi. Gradually this had a domino effect on the other parties as well. This resulted in parties working for the private interests of the person(s) "owning" the party and in the process; the interest of the masses often got ignored.

Moreover, in a multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious society like India, representative democracy has the inherent propensity to generate "vote banks". It is inevitable that in such societies, different groups would vote for the parties/candidates who they think are most likely to protect their interests. This tendency is, as the logic of the system demands, exploited by all political parties. But the Hindutva movement and its ascendency that is feeding on this tendency, is now threatening to convert Indian representative democracy into a majoritarian democracy. The Hindutva movement is poised to create a unified "Hindu religious group" and a consolidated "Hindu vote bank". In the upcoming parliamentary elections, the fate of India would be sealed quickly and decisively if the Hindutva parties are returned to power. Even if this possibility is averted this time by the combined effort of the opposition parties, given the logic of electoral politics, this threat will become more acute after five years.

The consequence if India should become a majoritarian democracy and a "Hindu Rashtra" will be serious. If we

do not wish India to become another Syria because of electoral logic of a representative democratic system, we have to pay heed to the Gandhian option. This would require us to find ways of getting direct democracy into our system in all significant areas. One possible way is to experiment with deliberative polling. Deliberative polling has been successfully experimented with, in many contexts, even in China. Along with direct democracy introduced through deliberative polling, we should simultaneously convert the parliament and the legislative assemblies into institutions of deliberative democracy. That is, the members of these institutions should have the freedom to decide their preferences independently of their party affiliations, after a thorough deliberation of the matters at hand.

About the author: K. P. Shankaran taught philosophy at St. Stephen's College, Delhi University.

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5. Mind and Society

A mad world: capitalism and the rise of mental illness

Rod Tweedy

Mental illness is now recognized as one of the biggest causes of individual distress and misery in our societies and cities, comparable to poverty and unemployment. One in four adults in the UK today has been diagnosed with a mental illness, and four million people take antidepressants every year. 'What greater indictment of a system could there be, George Monbiot has asked, 'than an epidemic of mental illness?'

The shocking extent of this 'epidemic' is made all the more disturbing by the knowledge that so much of it is preventable. This is due to the significant correlation between social and environmental conditions and the prevalence of mental disorders. Richard Bentall, professor of clinical psychology at the University of Liverpool, and Peter Kinderman, president of the British Psychological Society, have written compellingly about this connection

in recent years, drawing powerful attention to 'the social determinants of our psychological wellbeing'. 'The evidence is overwhelming,' notes Kinderman, 'it's not just that there exist social determinants, they are overwhelmingly important.'

A sick society
Experiences of social isolation, inequality, feelings of alienation and dissociation, and even the basic assumptions and ideology of materialism and neoliberalism itself are seen today to be significant drivers – reflected in the titles of a number of recent articles and talks on this subject, such as those of consultant psychotherapist David Morgan's ground-breaking Frontier Psychoanalyst podcasts, which have included discussions on whether 'Neoliberalism is dangerous for your mental health', and 'Is neoliberalism making us sick?'

Clinical psychologist and psychotherapist Jay Watts observes in the Guardian that 'psychological and social factors are at least as significant and, for many, the main cause of suffering. Poverty, relative inequality, being subject to racism, sexism, displacement and a competitive culture all increase the likelihood of mental suffering. Governments and pharmaceutical companies are not as interested in these results, throwing funding at studies looking at genetics and physical biomarkers as opposed to the environmental causes of distress. Similarly, there is little political will to combine increasing mental distress with structural inequalities, though the association is robust and many professionals think this would be the best way to tackle the current mental health epidemic'.

There are clearly very powerful and entrenched interests and agendas here, which consciously or unconsciously act to conceal or try to deny this relationship, and which also makes the recent willingness amongst so many psychoanalysts and therapists to embrace this wider context so exciting and moving.

Commentators often talk about society, social context, group thinking, and environmental determinants in connection with mental distress and disorders, but we can, I think, actually be a bit more precise about that aspect of society which is mainly driving it, is mainly responsible for it. And in this context it's probably time we talk about the c word – capitalism.

Many of the contemporary forms of illness and individual distress that we treat and engage with certainly seem to be correlated with and amplified by the processes and byproducts of capitalism. In fact, you might say that capitalism is in many respects a mental illness generating

system – and if we are serious about tackling not only the effects of mental distress and illness, but also their causes and origins, we need to look moreclosely, more precisely, and more analytically at the nature of the political and economic womb out of which they emerge, and how psychology is fundamentally interwoven with every aspect of it.

Ubiquitous neurosis
Perhaps one of the most obvious examples of this intimate connection between capitalism and mental distress is the prevalence of neurosis. As Joel Kovel, a former psychiatrist and professor of political science, notes: 'A most striking feature of neurosis within capitalism is its ubiquity.' In his classic essay 'Therapy in late capitalism' (reprinted in The Political self), Kovel refers to the 'colossal burden of neurotic misery in the population, a weight that continually and palpably betrays the capitalist ideology, which maintains that commodity civilization promotes human happiness': 'If, given all this rationalization, comfort, fun and choice, people are still wretched, unable to love, believe or feel some integrity to their lives, they might also begin to draw the conclusion that something was seriously wrong with their social order.'

There's also been some more recent, fascinating work done on this by Eli Zaretsky (Political Freud), and Bruce Cohen (author of Psychiatric Hegemony), who have both written on the relations between the family, sexuality and capitalism in the generation of neuroses.

It is significant, for example, that one of the most prominent features of the psychological landscape that Freud encountered in late nineteenth-century Vienna were the neuroses – which, as Kovel notes, Freud saw as being entirely continuous with 'normal' development in modern societies – with much of these, he adds, being rooted in our modern experience of alienation. 'Neurosis,' Kovel says, 'is the self-alienation of a subject who has been readied for freedom but runs afoul of personal history.'

It was of course Marx who was the great analyst of alienation, showing how capitalist economics generates alienation as part of its very fabric or structure – showing how, for instance, alienation gets 'lost' or 'trapped', embodied, in products, commodities – from the obvious examples (such as Nikes made in sweatshops, and sweatshops embodied in Nikes) – to a wider and much more pervasive sense that the whole system of production and creation is somehow alienating. As Pavon Cuellar remarks, 'Marx was the first to realize that this alienation actually gets contained and

incarnated in things – in "commodities"'(Marxism and Psychoanalysis). These 'fetishised' commodities, he adds, seem to retain and promise to return, when consumed, the subjective-social part lost by those alienated while producing them: 'the alienated have lost what they imagine [or hope] to find in what is fetishised.'

This understanding of alienation is really the core issue for Marx. People probably know him today for his theories of capital – how issues of exploitation, profit, and control continually characterize and resurface in capitalism – but for me the key concern of Marx, and one that is constantly neglected, or misunderstood, is his view on the centrality and importance of human creativity and productivity – man's 'colossal productive power' as he calls it – exactly as it was in fact for William Blake, slightly earlier in the century.

Marx refers to this extraordinary world-transformative energy and agency as our 'active species-life', our 'species-being' – our 'physical and spiritual energies'. But these immense creative energies and transformative capacities are, he notes, under the present system, immediately taken from us and converted into something alien, objective, enslaving, fetishised.

Restructuring desire
The image he evokes is of mothers giving birth – another form of labor perhaps – with the baby immediately being taken away and converted into something alien, something doll-like — a commodity. He considers what effect that must have on the mother's spirit. This, for Marx, is the source of the alienation and unease, the sort of profound dislocation of the human spirit that characterizes industrial capitalism. And as Pavon Cuellar shows, we can't buy our way out of this alienation – by producing more toys, more dolls – because that's where the alienation occurs, and is embodied and generated. Indeed, consumerism and materialism are themselves widely recognized today as key drivers of a whole raft of mental health problems, from addiction to depression. As George Monbiot notes, 'Buying more stuff is associated with depression, anxiety and broken relationships. It is socially destructive and self-destructive'. Psychoanalytic psychotherapist Sue Gerhardt has written very compellingly on this association, suggesting that in modern societies we often 'confuse material well-being with psychological well-being'. In her book The Selfish Society she shows how successfully and relentlessly consumer capitalism reshapes our brains and reworks our nervous systems in its own image. For 'we would miss much of what capitalism is about,' she notes, 'if we overlook its role in restructuring and marketing desire and impulse themselves.'

Another key aspect of capitalism and its impact on mental illness we could talk about is, of course, inequality. Capitalism is as much an inequality-generating system as it is a mental illness producing system. As a Royal College of Psychiatrists report noted: 'Inequality is a major determinant of mental illness: the greater the level of inequality, the worse the health outcomes. Children from the poorest households have a three-fold greater risk of mental ill health than children from the richest households. Mental illness is consistently associated with deprivation, low income, unemployment, poor education, poorer physical health and increased health-risk behavior.'

Some commentators have even suggested that capitalism itself, as a way of being or way of thinking about the world, might be seen as a rather 'psychopathic' or pathological system. There are certainly some striking correspondences between modern financial and corporate systems and individuals diagnosed with clinical psychopathy, as a number of analysts have noticed.

Robert Hare for instance, one of the world's leading authorities on psychopathy and the originator of the widely accepted 'Hare Checklist' used to test for psychopathy, remarked to Jon Ronson: 'I shouldn't have done my research just in prisons. I should have spent some time inside the Stock Exchange as well.' 'But surely stock-market psychopaths can't be as bad as serial-killer psychopaths?' the interviewer asks. '"Serial killers ruin families," shrugged Bob. "Corporate and political … psychopaths ruin economies. They ruin societies."'

Pathological institutions
These traits, as Joel Bakan brilliantly suggested in his book The Corporation, are encrypted into the very fabric of modern corporations – part of its basic DNA and modus operandi. 'The corporation's legally defined mandate,' he notes, 'is to pursue, relentlessly and without exception, its own self-interest, regardless of the often harmful consequences it might cause to others.' By its own legal definition, therefore, the corporation is 'a pathological institution', and Bakan helpfully lists the diagnostic features of its default pathology (lack of empathy, pursuit of self-interest, grandiosity, shallow affect, aggression, social indifference) to show what a reliably disturbed patient the corporation is.

Why should all of these contemporary social and economic practices and processes generate so much illness, so many disorders? To answer this I think we need to look back at the wider Enlightenment project, and the psychological models of human nature out of which they emerged. Modern capitalism grew out of seventeenth century concepts of man as some sort of

disconnected, discontinuous, disengaged self – one driven by competition and a narrow, 'rational' self-interest – the concept of homo economicus that drove and underwrote much of the whole Enlightenment project, including its economic models. Aslain McGilchrist notes, 'Capitalism and consumerism, ways of conceiving human relationships based on little more than utility, greed, and competition, came to supplant those based on felt connection and cultural continuity.'

We now know how mistaken, and destructive, this model of the self is. Recent neuro-scientific research into the 'social brain', together with exciting developments in modern attachment theory, developmental psychology, and interpersonal neurobiology, are significantly revising, and upgrading, this rather quaint, old-fashioned view of the isolated, 'rational' individual – and also revealing a far richer and more sophisticated understanding of human development and identity, through increased knowledge of 'right hemisphere' intersubjectivity, unconscious processes, group behavior, the role of empathy and mentallization in brain development, and the significance of context and socialization in emotional and cognitive development.

As neuroscientist David Eagleman observes, the human brain itself relies on other brains for its very existence and growth—the concept of 'me', he notes, is dependent on the reality of 'we':

We are a single vast super organism, a neural network embedded in a far larger web of neural networks. Our brains are so fundamentally wired to interact that it's not even clear where each of us begins and ends. Who you are has everything to do with who we are. There's no avoiding the truth that's etched into our neural circuitry: we need each other.

Dependency is therefore built into the fabric of who we are as social and biological beings, hardwired into our mainframe: it is 'how love becomes flesh', in Louis Cozolino's striking phrase 'There are no single brains,' Cozolino observes, echoing Winnicott, 'brains only exist within networks of other brains.' Some people have termed this new neurological and scientific understanding of the deep patterns of interdependency, mutual cooperation, and the social brain 'neuro-Marxism' because of the implications involved.

Capitalism is, it seems, rooted in a fundamentally flawed, naive, and old-fashioned seventeenth-century model of who we are – it tries to make us think that we're isolated, autonomous, disengaged, competitive, de-contextualized – an ultimately rather ruthless and dissociated entity. The

harm that this view of the self has done to us, and our children, is incalculable.

Many people believe, and are encouraged to believe, that these problems and disorders – psychosis, schizophrenia, anxiety, depression, self-harm – these symptoms of a 'sick world' (to use James Hillman's terrific description) are theirs, rather than the worlds. 'But what if your emotional problems weren't merely your own?' asks Tom Syverson. 'What if they were our problems? What if the real problem is that we're living in wrong society? Perhaps Adorno was correct when he said, "wrong life cannot be lived rightly".'

The root of this 'living wrongly' seems to be because we live in a social and economic system at odds with both our psychology and our neurology, with who we are as social beings. As I suggest in my book, we need to realize that our inner and outer worlds constantly and profoundly interact and shape each other and that therefore rather than separating our understanding of economic and social practices from our understanding of psychology and human development, we need to bring them together, to align them. And for this to happen, we need a new dialogue between the political and personal worlds, a new integrated model for mental health, and a new politics.

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Subjects of History

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6. Agency

The Precariat: Today's Transformative Class?
Guy Standing

Since 1980, the global economy has undergone a dramatic transformation, with the globalization of the labor force, the rise of automation, and—above all—the growth of Big Finance, Big Pharma, and Big Tech. The social democratic consensus of the immediate postwar years has given way to a new phase of capitalism that is leaving workers further behind and reshaping the class structure. The precariat, a mass class defined by unstable labor arrangements, lack of identity, and erosion of rights, is emerging as today's "dangerous class." As its demands cannot be met within the current system, the precariat carries transformative potential. To realize that potential, however, the precariat must awaken to its status as a class and fight for a radically changed income distribution that reclaims the commons and guarantees a livable income for all. Without transformative action, a dark political era looms.

Introduction
We are living in a painful time of turbulent economic change. A global market system continues to take shape as the United States petulantly threatens the international order that it helped to create and from which it has gained disproportionately. This era, which began around 1980, has been dominated institutionally by American finance and ideologically by the economic orthodoxy of "neoliberalism." A hallmark of this transformation has been the increasing redistribution of wealth upwards as rents to those owning property—physical, financial, and "intellectual." As "rentier capitalism" has risen, working classes have foundered, as those relying on labor have been losing ground in both relative and absolute terms.

In brief, during the past forty years, the global economy has been shaped by neoliberal economics, which, accentuated by the digital revolution, has generated two linked phenomena: global rentier capitalism and a global class structure in which the precariat is the new mass class. Rentier capitalism is making the hardships borne by the precariat much worse.

Industrial capitalism produced a property-owning bourgeoisie and the proletariat; contemporary capitalism is roiling this class structure. Today, the mass class is the precariat, characterized by unstable labor, low and unpredictable incomes, and loss of citizenship rights. It is the new "dangerous class," partly because its insecurities induce the bitterness, ill-health, and anger that can be the

fodder of right-wing populism. But it is also dangerous in the progressive sense that many in it reject old center-left and center-right politics. They are looking for the root-and-branch change of a new "politics of paradise," rather than a return to a "politics of laborism" that seeks amelioration within dominant institutions and power structures.

The precariat's needs cannot be met by modest reforms to the existing social and economic system. It is the only transformative class because, intuitively, it wants to become strong enough to abolish the conditions that define its existence and, as such, abolish itself. All others want merely to improve their position in the social hierarchy. This emergent class is thus well-placed to become the agent of radical social transformation—if it can organize and become sufficiently united around a shared identity, alternative vision, and viable political agenda.

The key to understanding the precariat's transformational position lies in the breakdown of the income distribution system of the mid-twentieth century. To succeed, a new progressive politics must offer a pathway to an ecologically sustainable system that reduces inequalities and insecurities in the context of an open, globalizing economy.

The Rise of Rentier Capitalism
Between 1945 and 1980, the dominant socio-economic paradigm in industrialized countries outside the Communist Bloc was social democratic, defined by the creation of welfare states and labor-based entitlements. Although there were modest falls in inequality coupled with labor-based economic security, this was no "golden age," as some historians label it. The period was stultifying and sexist. Putting as many people as possible (mainly men) in full-time jobs under the banner of Full Employment was hardly an emancipatory vision worthy of the Enlightenment values of Egalité, Liberté, and Solidarité.

As the social democratic era collapsed in the 1970s, an economic model emerged, now known as "neoliberalism." Its advocates preached "free markets," strong private property rights, financial market liberalization, free trade, commodification, privatization, and the dismantling of all institutions and mechanisms of social solidarity, which, in their view, were "rigidities" holding back the market. While the neoliberals were largely successful in implementing their program, what transpired was very different from what they had promised.

The initial outcome was financial domination. The income generated by US finance, which equaled 100% the size of the US economy in 1975, grew to 350% in 2015. Similarly, in the UK, finance went from 100% to 300% of GDP. Both countries experienced rapid deindustrialization as the strength of finance led to an overvalued exchange rate that, by making exports uncompetitive and imports cheaper, destroyed high-productivity manufacturing jobs. Financial institutions, most notably Goldman Sachs, became masters of the universe, their executives slotted into top political positions in the US and around the world.[1]

Finance linked up with Big Pharma and Big Tech to forge a global architecture of institutions strengthening rentier capitalism, maximizing monopolistic income from intellectual property. The pivotal moment came in 1995 with implementation of the World Trade Organization (WTO)'s Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), in which US multinational corporations helped secure the globalization of the US intellectual property rights system. This shift gave unprecedented rent-extracting capacity to multinationals and financial institutions.

Patents, copyright, protection of industrial designs, and trademarked brands have multiplied as sources of monopolistic profit. In 1994, fewer than one million patents were filed worldwide; in 2011, over two million were filed; in 2016, over three million. By then, twelve million were in force, and licensing income from patents had multiplied sevenfold. Growth was similar with other forms of intellectual property.

The rent-extracting system was enforced by over 3,000 trade and investment agreements, all entrenching property rights, topped by a mechanism (Investor-State Dispute Settlement) that empowers multinationals to sue governments for any policy changes that, in their view, negatively affect their future profits. This has had a chilling effect on policy reform efforts, notably those seeking to protect health and the environment.

Rentier capitalism has also been bolstered by subsidies, a financial system designed to increase private debt, privatization of public services, and a plunder of the commons. But it contains two possibly fatal flaws. First, the rentiers have been winning too much by rigging the system, raising questions about social and political sustainability. Second, the architects proved mistaken in thinking this framework would bolster the US economy, along with other advanced industrial economies to a lesser extent, at the expense of the rest of the world.

In particular, they underestimated China. When TRIPS was passed, China was inconsequential as a rentier economy.

After it joined the WTO in 2001, it started to catch up fast. In 2011, China overtook the US in patent applications; by 2013, it accounted for nearly a third of global filings, well ahead of the US (22%). In 2016, it accounted for 98% of the increase over 2015, filing more than the US, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the European Patent Office combined.

The main outcome of rentier capitalism, exacerbated by globalization and the digital revolution, is an inexorable erosion of the income distribution system of the twentieth century—the implicit sharing of income between capital and labor that emerged after the Second World War, epitomized by the 1950 pact between the United Auto Workers union and General Motors known as the Treaty of Detroit. Now, all over the world, the share of income going to capital has been rising; the share going to labor, falling. Within both, the share going to forms of rent has been rising.

The social democratic consensus was based on implicit rules. When productivity rose, so did wages. When profits rose, so did wages. When employment rose, so did wages. Today, productivity and employment are rising, but wages remain stagnant or falling.

One factor that is depressing wages has been the growth of the global labor force, which has expanded by two billion during the past three decades, many of whom have a living standard that is a tiny fraction of what Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development (OECD) workers were obtaining. Downward pressure on real wages will continue, especially as productivity can rise faster in emerging market economies and the technological revolution makes relocation of production and employment so much easier. Meanwhile, the rentiers will be protected. Antitrust legislation will not be strengthened to cut monopolistic rent-seeking, since governments will continue to protect national corporate champions.

Without transformative changes, those relying on labor will continue to lose; no amount of tinkering will do. Average real wages in OECD countries will stagnate, and social income inequalities will grow. Progressives must stop deluding themselves. Unless globalization goes into reverse, which is unlikely, trying to remedy inequality by forcing up wages, however desirable, will not do much. Raising wages substantially would merely accelerate the displacement of labor by automation.

A Global Class Structure
Just as industrial capitalism ushered in a new class structure, so, too, has rentier capitalism. The emerging structure, superimposed on old structures, is topped by a plutocracy, made up of a small group of billionaires who wield corruptive power. Although mostly in the West, a growing proportion of plutocrats are in Asia and other emerging market economies. Under them is an elite, who serve the plutocracy's interests while making substantial rental income themselves. Together, these comprise what is colloquially known as the 1%, but, in fact, is much smaller than that.

Below them in the income spectrum is asalariat, a shrinking number of people with labor-based security and robust benefits, from health care to stock ownership. In the post-1945 era, economists predicted that by the end of the twentieth century, the vast majority in rich countries would be in the salariat, with growing numbers in developing countries joining them. Instead, the salariat is shrinking. It will not disappear, but its members are increasingly detached from those below them in the class spectrum, largely because they too gain more in rentier incomes than in wages. Still, their politics may be shaped by what they see happening to their sons and daughters, as well as their grandchildren.

Alongside the salariat is a smaller group of proficians, freelance professionals, such as software engineers, stock traders, lawyers, and medical specialists operating independently. They earn high incomes selling themselves frenetically, but risk early burnout and moral corrosion through excessive opportunism. This group will grow and are influential beyond their number, conveying an image of autonomy. But for the health of this untethered, hard-driving group—and society's—they need social structures to enforce moral codes.

Below them in income terms is the proletariat, the epitome of the "working class" in the European sense, the "middle class" in the American sense. In the twentieth century, welfare states, labor law, collective bargaining, trade unions, and labor and social democratic parties were built by and for this group. However, it is dwindling everywhere and has lost progressive energy and direction.

Those who pine for the proletariat should reflect on the downside of the proletarian life and what most had to do just to survive. There should be respect for what it achieved in its heyday, but nostalgia is delusional. In reality, many are falling into the emerging mass class, the precariat, which is also being fed by college graduates and dropouts, women, migrants, and others.

Understanding the Precariat
The precariat consists of millions of people in every advanced industrial country and in emerging market economies as well.[2] It can be defined in three dimensions:

distinctive relations of production (patterns of labor and work), distinctive relations of distribution (sources of social income), and distinctive relations to the state (loss of citizenship rights). It is still a "class-in-the-making" in that it is internally divided by different senses of relative deprivation and consciousness. But in Europe at least, it is becoming conscious of itself as a coherent group opposed to the dominant power structure (a "class-for-itself").

The distinctive relations of production start with the fact that the precariat is being forced to accept, and is being habituated to, a life of unstable labor, through temporary work assignments ("casualization"), agency labor, "tasking" in Internet-based "platform capitalism," flexible scheduling, on-call and zero-hour contracts, and so on. Even more important is that those in the precariat have no occupational narrative or identity, no sense of themselves as having a career trajectory. They also learn they must do a lot of work-for-labor, work-for-the-state, and work-for-reproduction of themselves.[3] The need to adapt capabilities in a context of uncertainty leads to the precariatized mind, not knowing how best to allocate one's time and thus being under almost constant stress.

The precariat is also the first mass class in history in which their typical level of education exceeds that required for the kind of labor they can expect to obtain. And it must work and labor outside fixed workplaces and standard labor hours as well as within them.

The precariat exists in most occupations and at most levels within corporations. For example, within the legal professions, there are elites, a squeezed salariat, and a precariat of paralegals. Similar fragmentation exists in the medical and teaching professions, with paramedics and "fractionals" (i.e., those remunerated for only a fraction of full-time). The precariat is even spreading into corporate management with a concept of "interim managers," some of whom are well-paid proficians (depicted by George Clooney in Up in the Air), others of whom fall in the precariat.

Along with the rise of unstable labor, the second dimension is distinctive relations of distribution, or structures of social income.[4] The precariat relies mainly on money wages, which have been stagnant or falling in real terms for three decades, and which are increasingly volatile. The precariat's income security has fallen correspondingly. Also, as many must do much unpaid work, the wage rate is lower than it appears if only paid labor time is taken into account. This trend will only intensify with the spread of "tasking" through online platforms.

Further, the precariat has been losing non-wage forms of remuneration, while the salariat and elite have been gaining them, making the growth of social income inequality greater than it appears in conventional income statistics. The precariat rarely receives paid holidays, paid medical leave, subsidized transport or accommodation, paid maternity leave, and so on. And it lacks the occupational benefits that came with belonging to a professional or craft guild.

The precariat has also lost entitlement to rights-based state benefits (welfare). The international trend towards means-testing and behavior-testing has hit them hard and engulfed many in regimes of workfare. Means-testing creates poverty traps, since benefits are withdrawn when earned income rises. Going from low state benefits into low-wage jobs on offer thus involves very high marginal "tax" rates, often over 80%. The precariat also faces "precariat traps": obtaining benefits takes time, so if you succeed in obtaining them, it would be financially irrational to leave for a low-paying short-term job alternative.

The precariat has also been losing access to family and community support, as well as to commons resources and amenities, all of which have been underestimated sources of income security for low-income groups throughout the ages. For the precariat, they are just not there. Instead, many are driven to food banks and charities.

Key to the precariat's income insecurity is uncertainty. Uncertainty differs from contingency risks, such as unemployment, maternity, and sicknesses, which were core focuses of welfare states. For those, one can calculate the probability of such events and develop an insurance scheme. Uncertainty cannot be insured against; it is about "unknown unknowns." The social security part of the distribution system has also broken down, and social democrats should stop pretending it could be restored.

The precariat also suffers from an above-average cost of living. They live on the edge of unsustainable debt, knowing that one illness, accident, or mistake could render them homeless. Needing loans and credit, they pay much higher interest rates than richer folk.

The third defining dimension consists of the precariat's distinctive relations to the state. The proletariat went from having few rights to having a rising number—cultural, civil, social, political, and economic. By contrast, the precariat is losing such rights, often not realizing so until need for their protection arises. For instance, they usually lack cultural rights because they cannot belong to

communities such as occupational guilds that would give them security and identity. They lack civil rights because of the erosion of due process and inability to afford adequate defense in court; they often lose entitlement to state benefits on the whim of unaccountable bureaucrats. They lose economic rights because they cannot work in occupations they are qualified to perform.

The loss of rights goes with the most defining feature of the class: the precariat consists of supplicants. The original Latin meaning of precarious was "to obtain by prayer." That sums up what it is to be in the precariat: having to ask for favors, for help, for a break, for a discretionary judgment by some bureaucrat, agent, relative, or friend. This intensifies uncertainty. To be in the precariat, it has been said, is like running on sinking sand.

Experience of supplicant status leads to the precariat's growing consciousness. Chronic insecurity induces anxiety, but as with all emerging classes, there are different forms of relative deprivation. The precariat is split into three factions, which has hindered its becoming a class-for-itself and is challenging for those wishing to develop and organize a progressive response.

The first faction is the Atavists. They have fallen out of the proletariat, or come from old working-class families or communities whose members once depended on full-time jobs. Some are young; many are older, looking back wistfully. Their deprivation is about a lost Past, whether real or imagined. Having relatively little schooling or education in civics, history, or culture, they tend to listen to the sirens of neo-fascist populism.

They have been voting for the likes of Trump, Putin, Orban, Marine Le Pen, Farage and other Brexiteers, and the Lega in Italy. It is not correct to call them the "left behind," since they are expected to function inside a new labor market. But they are bitter, eager to blame others for their plight. Those they demonize comprise the second faction of the precariat, the Nostalgics. This group is composed of migrants and minorities, who feel deprived of a Present, with nowhere to call home. For the most part, they "keep their heads down," doing whatever they can to survive and move forward.

The third faction is best described as the Progressives, more educated and mainly young, although not exclusively so. Their defining sense of deprivation is loss of a Future. They went to university or college, promised by their parents and teachers that this would lead to a defining career. They emerge without that, often with debt stretching into that future. Beyond their own future, more

and more despair about the planet's ecological future. A challenge for aspiring politicians is to build a broad policy strategy for bringing all three factions together in common cause. That is beginning to happen, so it is unnecessarily pessimistic to think a new progressive politics cannot be forged for the precariat as a whole.

The Dangerous Class
The precariat is today's "dangerous class," because it is the part of the emerging class system that could carry forward social transformation. For Marxists, the term "dangerous class" is associated with the "lumpen-proletariat," those cut off from society, reduced to crime and social illness, having no function in production other than to put fear into the proletariat. But the precariat is not a lumpen. It is wanted by global capitalism, encapsulating new norms of labor and work.

The precariat is a "dangerous class" in a different sense too. In nineteenth-century England, the term was used to describe street traders, artisans, and craftsmen who identified neither with the bourgeoisie nor with the emerging proletariat. They were opposed to putting everybody in wage labor and to a doctrine of "laborism." Today, the Progressives in the precariat also see more "jobs" as a strange answer to a strange question.

The precariat is the new dangerous class in several ways. It is a danger to itself, because chronic insecurities lead to high morbidity and self-harm, including suicides. It is also dangerous because the Atavists support neo-fascism, unwittingly threatening to return us to the dark days of the 1930s. Further, it is dangerous because the Nostalgics are, for the most part, alienated from mainstream politics, which is scarcely healthy for democracy. Although not, like Atavists, drawn to neo-fascist populism, they tend to be politically quiescent, except on occasional "days of rage" when the pressures become too great or when some policy threatens their ability to get by.

The precariat is also dangerous in the positive sense of carrying the potential to drive social transformation. The Progressives will not support neo-fascist populists. But most are not drawn to either old center-left or center-right parties, particularly social democrats. They are looking for a new politics of paradise, something inspirational to revive a vision of a future better than today or yesterday. So far, in most countries, they have not found movements to get there, but this is changing. They have already broken the mold, shown by the Occupy movement and the success of Podemos in Spain, the Movimento Cinque Stelle (MS5) in Italy, Bernie Sanders in the US, and Jeremy Corbyn in Britain.

The bad news is that the Atavists have been strongest so far, ushering in unsavory characters and agendas. The good news is that their size has probably peaked (the ex-proletariat are aging), while the Nostalgics and Progressives are growing relatively and absolutely, with rising numbers of migrants and graduates entering the precariat every day. And the best news of all is that the Progressives are beginning to organize politically. They can be the vanguard of a new progressive politics, if political movements and leaders emerge to embrace and articulate their combination of insecurities and aspirations.

Transformative Policies
Historically, every progressive surge has been propelled by the demands of the emerging mass class. Today's progressive transformation must, therefore, be oriented to the precariat, driven by a strategy that appeals to enough of all its factions to garner adequate strength. Unlike the proletariat, which sought labor security, the Progressives in the precariat want a future based on existential security, with a high priority placed on ecology—environmental protection, the "landscape," and the commons. By contrast, when confronted by a policy choice between environmental degradation and "jobs," the proletariat, labor unions, and their political representatives have given "jobs" priority.

The precariat is a transformative class partly because, as it is not habituated to stable labor, it is less likely than the proletariat to suffer from false consciousness, a belief that the answer to insecurity is more labor, more jobs. In the twentieth century, mainstream commentators believed that putting more people into jobs, and for longer, was a progressive strategy—that doing so would provide social integration and offered the best route out of poverty. It was a trap into which many on the left fell. For hundreds of years, the idea of putting everybody in jobs would have been regarded as strange and contrary to the Enlightenment. The ancient Greeks saw labor as being unworthy of the citizen. Their society was hierarchical and sexist, but their distinctions between labor and work, and between leisure (schole) and recreation, are vital for defining the good life.

Being in a job is to be in a position of subordination, answering to a boss. That is neither a natural human condition nor an emancipatory one. In the nineteenth century, being "in employment" was a badge of shame, often referring to a woman reduced to being a domestic servant. In the early years of the United States, wage laborers were denied the vote on the grounds that they could not be independent if they were not property owners.

A transformative politics should promote work that is not resource-depleting and encourage leisure in the ancient Greek sense of schole, the pursuit of knowledge and meaning, rather than endless consumption. That points to the need to re-conceptualize work, to develop a new politics of time, and to decommodify education so that it revives its original purpose of preparing young adults for citizenship. Most fundamentally, such a politics must promote a new income distribution system because the reimagining of work depends on it.

Such a system should recognize that wages will not rise much and that other sources of income will be needed to reduce inequalities and to create economic security for the precariat. The new system must recognize planetary limits and, accordingly, promote ecologically sustainable lifestyles. The distribution system must also offer the precariat a Future, one that revives Enlightenment values. A Good Society would be one in which everybody, regardless of gender, age, race, religion, disability, and work status, has equal basic security. Basic security is a human need and a natural public good, since, unlike a typical commodity, one person's having it does not deprive others of it. Indeed, if others have security too, that should increase everyone's security, making it a superior public good.

Given that wages cannot be expected to provide the precariat with security, the system must find alternative ways of doing so. The secret lies in capturing rental income for society. We should want what Keynes predicted but which has yet to pass—"euthanasia of the rentier." One way of capturing rental income for society would be to bring the commons into policy discourse. In the neoliberal era, the commons—natural, social, civil, cultural, and intellectual—have been plundered via enclosure, commodification, privatization, and colonization. This rent-seeking is an injustice and should be reversed.

The income from using commons resources should belong to every commoner equally. Accordingly, the tax system should shift from earned income and consumption to taxing commercial uses of the commons, thereby helping in their preservation. Levies on income gained from using our commons should become major sources of public revenue. This means such measures as a land value tax, a wealth transfer tax, ecological taxes such as a carbon tax, a water use levy, levies on income from intellectual property and on use of our personal data, a "frequent flyer levy," and levies on all income generated by use of natural resources that should belong to us as commoners.

Fed by these levies, a Commons Fund could be set up as a democratic variant of the sovereign wealth funds that exist in over sixty countries. Then, the questions would become how to use the funds in a transformative way. The Fund should be operated on proper economic lines, adhering to investment rules geared to socially beneficial forms of capital, taking into account ecological principles and tax-paying propriety.

The Fund's governance must be democratic, and it must be separated from the government of the day to minimize the possibility of manipulation by politicians before elections. And every commoner should be an equal beneficiary, their stake in the Fund being an economic right, rather than dependent on contributions, as was the case with laborist welfare schemes. Everybody, regardless of taxpaying capacity, should gain, by virtue of being commoners.

The commons has been nurtured by many generations and exists for future generations. As Edmund Burke recognized, we are "temporary custodians of our commonwealth" and have the responsibility of passing on to the next generation our commons in at least as good a condition as we found it in. Thus, levies on exhaustible commons resources should be preserved for future generations as well as serve existing generations. To respect this principle, only revenue generated by the Fund's investments should be distributed to today's commoners—you and me. This rule is applied in the world's outstanding example, the Norwegian Pension Fund Global, which, drawing from Norway's share of North Sea oil, generates a net annual return of 4% that can be disbursed to the populace.[5]

What is proposed here is even more transformative. The levies would be placed on all forms of commons, including non-exhaustible commons resources. Land, water, air, wind, and ideas are among non-exhaustible resources, and part of our commons. Some commons resources are replenishable, such as forests. Including non-exhaustible commons resources in the financing of the Fund is key to the transformative strategy. The only equitable way of disbursing proceeds from the Commons Fund is to give equal amounts to everybody deemed to be a commoner, and the easiest way would be to distribute "social dividends" or "commons dividends."

Sharing the commons is one ethical rationale for basic incomes, which are justifiable for other ethical reasons as well, including ecological justice, freedom, and basic security.[6] A basic income would anchor the distribution system. Granted, it is not a panacea; there would have to be supplements for those with special needs or extra costs of living, and there would still be a need for a rich array of public and social services, as well as new forms of collective agency and voice.

Still, a basic income would enhance personal and "republican" freedom (the freedom from potential domination by spouses, bosses, bureaucrats, or others), provide the precariat with basic security, and strengthen social solidarity. Evidence and theory show it would increase work, not reduce it, and tilt time use towards reproductive, resource-conserving activity rather than resource-depleting activity. The basic income is a core feature of a Great Transition future. Getting there is up to us.

Conclusion

The precariat is becoming angrier, some supporting neo-fascism, others frustrated by lack of a progressive politics. The primary problem of the class is chronic insecurity and an associated inability to develop meaningful and ecologically sustainable lives. Unless progressives devise a transformative strategy, neo-fascist populists and their regressive agenda will continue to pose a threat to a civilized future. Promoting a new income distribution system will offer a viable and attractive alternative, which palliatives such as "job guarantees" and "tax credits" will not.

The redistribution scheme proposed here, rooted in a recovery of the commons, has the virtue of providing people with basic security, which in itself induces altruism, conviviality, tolerance, and social solidarity. And it would promote and reward ecologically desirable forms of work and leisure. That surely would be a Great Transition.

About the author: Guy Standingis a Professorial Research Associate at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London and the co-founder and now honorary co-president of the Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN). He is the author of such books as A Precariat Charter: from Denizens to Citizens, The Corruption of Capitalism: Why Rentiers Thrive and Work Does Not Pay, and the forthcoming Reviving the Commons: a Progressive Response to Austerity

Endnotes

1. For references, names, and data in this section, see Guy Standing,*The Corruption of Capitalism: Why Rentiers Thrive and Work Does Not Pay* (London: Bite back, 2017).
2. The description and characteristics outlined in this section are substantiated in Guy Standing,*The Precariat: the New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016, 4th edition); idem, *A Precariat Charter: from Denizens to Citizens* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015). On the Chinese precariat, see Caixia Du, "The Chinese Precariat on the Internet," PhD diss., Tilburg University, 2017.

3. "Work-for-reproduction" includes activities that the precariat must undertake to sell themselves in the labor market, such as retraining, learning new tricks, brushing up a resume, and networking. Work-for-state includes all the form-filling, queuing, and other activities they must do in order to obtain meager benefits or services. This time burden imposed on the precariat has been ignored by mainstream labor economists.
4. The term "social income" refers to all sources of income—own-production, wages, non-wage enterprise benefits, occupational benefits, community benefits, state benefits, and family transfers.
5. "Returns," Norges Bank Investment Management, accessed August 3, 2018, http://www.nbim.no/en/the-fund/return-on-the-fund.
6. Guy Standing, *Basic Income: A Guide for the Open-Minded* (New Haven: Yale University

Source: https://www.greattransition.org/publication/precariat-transformative-class

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7. In Conversation

Ecofeminism and Radical Ecological Democracy
A conversation between Ariel Salleh (AS) and Ashish Kothari (AK)

AK: How does feminism come together with ecological thinking to question 'development fundamentalism' in the global South?

AS: In North and South, ecofeminist politics is based on women's daily efforts to survive with their communities in an increasingly death-risking, profit-driven masculinist culture. From the start, ecological feminists rejected the model of economic globalization and stood apart from western liberal individualist feminism. Women and children are always the people most affected by development projects and war.

In the 70s and 80s, women's opposition to the nuclear industry was a catalyst for this consciousness, and many ecofeminist activists focused on the state and military industrial complex. Emblematic protests were held at the US Pentagon, at Greenham Common missile base UK, and in Australian cities over uranium mining on indigenous lands. 'Women-for-life-on-earth' would take both direct action and reflect critically on the poverty of patriarchal knowledge making.

AK: Is there a literature of ecofeminism?
AS: Yes, and it is still very much in process. Basically ecofeminists see deep cultural links between the Eurocentric exploitation of 'Mother Nature' so called, the domination of women, and by extension, domination of radicalized and species 'others'. Although the word 'eco-feminism' first appeared in print with Francoise D'Eaubonne's *Feminism or Death* (1974), grassroots women on every continent were coining the same hybrid term to describe their own movement resistance. Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature* (1980) deepened this critique of patriarchal entitlement by analyzing 'the scientific revolution' from Bacon to Descartes. In England, a state organized witch-hunt of women herbalists and midwives enabled the establishment of a Royal Society for men. Soon modern professional medicine would be treating the body not as an organism but as a machine manipulated by the measurement of indicators. The ecological costs of this reductionist and mechanistic science were spelled out by Vandana Shiva in *Staying Alive* (1989). Thus in 20th century India, 'development' technologies like petro-farming and genetically engineered seeds introduced as a 'green revolution' has had disastrous impacts on soils, water, forests, and people's livelihoods. I would say that the authors mentioned here offer foundational ecofeminist statements, while a younger generation of women creatively carried this politics forward.

AK: Does ecofeminism fit into a wider socialist formulation?
AS: Socialism is actually a narrower framework than ecofeminism! Women were not recognized by Marx as a 'class' or 'agents of history'. But women's free domestic labor is appropriated by husbands and subsidizes capital by reproducing society in both biological and cultural senses of that word. According to Mariarosa Dalla Costa in *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (1972), women birth each generation of workers unpaid and service the waged working men who produce surplus value for capitalism. Maria Mies' book *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* (1986) built on Rosa Luxemburg's idea of the colonies providing indispensible labor, resources, and markets for accumulation. Moreover, colonial trade destroyed West African women's economic independence while furthering German women's subjection as 'consumer housewives' in the domestic enclosure. There is no doubt that ecofeminism is a materialist politics, although given the problematic sex-gender dimension, I like to describe it as 'an embodied materialism'. Historically, masculinist institutions constitute 'the world's first political order' going back thousands of years – whereas capitalism is a mere 500 years old. Socialist explanations still prioritize capitalism,

treating sex-gender as an add-on. My book, *Ecofeminism as Politics* (1997) examines the effect of this error on the potential unity of political movements – worker's, women's, indigenous', and ecological. And the book calls for 'sex-gender reflexivity' among men comrades – just as women at a certain point, discovered that 'the personal is political'.

AK: In what ways does ecofeminism inform and support the struggle for social and ecological justice globally? And what about climate change?
AS: Women, whether identifying themselves with the label 'ecofeminist' or not, form the bulk of voluntary workers in environmental NGOs. They drive neighborhood initiatives opposing deforestation or toxic soil and water contamination. On the international political scene, women readily speak out – as the World Rainforest Movement in Uruguay; as Wo-Min against mining in Africa; or as Gender CC at UN climate negotiations. Ecofeminists argue that given a global political economy geared to men's competitive search for wealth and status, as well as masculinist decision-making institutions, climate crisis is inevitably a sex-gendered problem. Further, the use of reductionist scientific models combined with neoliberal market logic in policy has prioritized carbon counting to the neglect of a holistic hands-on ecological understanding of industrial impacts on the climate.

AK: Have ecofeminists faced resistance? What would be some successful interventions?
AS: The all but universal oppression of women influences ecofeminist politics in various ways. Successful women-led campaigns are often taken over by men moving in to up-front public spokesman roles. Marxists have dismissed ecofeminists as lacking 'a class analysis'. Postmodern and technocratic feminists reject any argument from women's reproductive labor as a reinforcement of traditional sex-gender roles. But feminist ecological economists are now coming to acknowledge the centrality of care work in the global economy. In Australia, a woman led Movement against Uranium Mining achieved a moratorium on the industry by successful lobbying of the Labor Party although this was rolled-back by a later government. One high profile ecofeminist mobilized parties to win a WTO Court action annulling corporate patenting of the Indian Neem tree. The now influential US Environmental Justice movement actually began with mothers whose families were affected by industrial pollution of the Mississippi River.

Ecofeminists pioneered the degrowth idea with a 'subsistence perspective' based on the principle of eco-sufficiency. Ecofeminist thinkers and writers continue to challenge the masculinist blind spots of neoliberalism, ecological economics, socialism, environmental ethics, and decolonial & degrowth movements. Since women make up half of humanity, there can be no global social justice if their/our experiences and skills are not heard respectfully and integrated into the worldwide struggle for an Earth Democracy.

*Ariel Salleh is a scholar and activist currently affiliated with Political Economy at the University of Sydney. Her books include Ecofeminism as Politics: Nature, Marx and the Postmodern (2017) and Eco-Sufficiency and Global Justice (2009). Her articles and chapters on social ecological thought, globalization, people's science, water and climate politics and can be found at – **www.arielsalleh.info**. Her 'embodied materialism' is seminal to political ecology as an emerging study of humanity-nature relations. Her latest book – "Ecofeminism As Politics" is available to RED readers with 40% off from www.zedbooks.net with promo code ECOFEMINISM.*

Ashish Kothari is a co-founder of Kalpavriksh Environmental Action Group.

Source: http://www.radicalecologicaldemocracy.org/ ecofeminism-and-radical-ecological-democracy/

The Emerging Idea of "Radical Well-Being"
A conversation between Ashish Kothari (AK) and Paul Robbins (PR)

> *This conversation is based on Paul Robbins' reading of Ashish Kothari's (AK) article "Radical Well-Being: Alternatives to Development" (forthcoming in Research Handbook of Law, Environment and Poverty, Philippe Cullet and Sujith Koonan (eds), Edward Elgar), and in response to the latter's keynote presentation on 'Eco-swaraj: Radical Ecological Democracy – Alternatives to Unsustainability and Inequity' at the 2nd Biennial Conference of the Political Ecology Network (POLLEN) held in Oslo, June 2018.*

PR: *First, I'd like to query the role of science and expertise in Kothari's utopia. As someone who has spent his career undermining scientific authority and its pernicious role relative to marginalized ways of knowing, I often get the question: "hey, Paul, in the post-truth era, don't you think undermining the authority of experts is a regressive project?" I certainly don't think so, and Kothari appears to agree, making his direct and delegated democracy one where the power of experts is balanced with other epistemologies. Even so, I think the explicit calling out of "modern science and technology and 'experts'" to be pretty provocative. You have called elsewhere in the essay*

for certain kinds of technological interventions, however, including those that "revolutionize energy and material efficiency" (you sound like an eco-modern there). So, who decides what technology is allowed or forbidden in a world of radical well-being, and if an autonomous community collectively chose, say GMOs and nuclear power – because I'm here to tell you that some will! Would this align with your thinking or oppose it?

AK: I think the role of *knowledge* is crucial for a just world, and is very much part of the key spheres of transformation that I put at the core of Eco-swaraj or Radical Ecological Democracy. However, as you also note, this cannot be the only form of knowledge; indeed, part of the transformation is to decolonize our minds, academics, education, and other aspects, to get away from the dogma that the only form of knowledge worth having or using is modern science. We need to bring back into respectful co-existence various forms of knowing; and of course with this the *wisdom* that we so often ignore or lack in our relationship with the rest of nature or with each other.

You raise two other issues here, which are crucial. One, are we falling into a trap if we discard modern science in an era where 'post-truth' politics is deliberately ignoring it or even demonizing it (e.g. in the discourse on Climate Change)? Yes, I think we are. I have no problems re-asserting the importance of modern science, fighting off the cynical manipulations of the 'post-truthians'; but even as we do this we must assert always the equally important role of other forms of knowledge.

Which leads to the second issue you've raised; what if a self-governing community decides to adopt GMOs, or set up a nuclear power or coal-fired power station? They could well assert that their knowledge base tells them its fine. I think this is where eco-swaraj / RED would say, OK! But does what you are proposing, meet the values of direct democracy, social justice, ecological resilience and sustainability, knowledge and cultural diversity, and economic democracy? Your decision may be based on the principle of autonomy, but does it meet the values of interconnectedness, responsibility, respect of the rest of nature, etc.? Are you sure that what you are proposing, will not negatively impact some other community of humans, and/or some other species? Where will you mine the materials you need for your power stations from, will this violate the rights of autonomy of a community, there? If you use GMOs, can you ensure that their genes will not travel across your boundaries and affect the crops of a neighboring community that believes in organic, non-GMO agriculture? Essentially, autonomy and direct democracy cannot be seen in isolation of other spheres and values of eco-swaraj.

Thirdly, your question raises the more general issue of who decides what 'sciences' (or more broadly, forms of knowledge) and 'technologies' are OK? Assuming that we are in agreement on the criteria for deciding what is OK (i.e. sustaining or furthering the goals of justice etc. laid out in the eco-swaraj framework); we still need to figure out how we will ensure that knowledge and technology, indeed, develop in this way. This is especially hard to conceive of in a world where technology appears to have taken a life of its own (and indeed may well do if we believe in *Black Mirror* or *I Robot* kind of scenarios … entirely plausible given what's happening in AI technologies). But like other aspects of human life, knowledge/technology is also subject to the social, political, cultural, economic forces that are dominant in society. So, if we can conceive of (and begin to practice at least in some of the 'nowtopias' existing around the world) fundamental systemic changes in these realms, we can also conceive of knowledge/technology being much more in the public or commons domain, much more subject to democratic assessments.

Technology has to be subject to democratic assessments and governance rather than continuing to serve the interest of the 1%. Governance, much more able to empower the currently marginalized, much less capable of being the slaves of capitalists, statists, patriarchs, and other holders of power in an unequal world. Wiki kind of platforms, open source software, books published with creative commons or 'copyleft' and so on, are examples of this. As more and more people also look for fulfilling work (more on this below), the realm of democratically governed knowledge/technology will, I think, grow. Not that these are not subject to capitalist and state take-over … they are, and it will take very vigilant peoples' movements to resist this.

PR: *Your vision of power is deeply decentralized, providing convivial autonomy from the violence of stateism. All, to the good! Do you think that highly localized power has any risks of its own? The history of the United States is fairly instructive on this front, especially during the era of Civil Rights struggles, where centralized power was wielded by minority communities to break the back of localities demanding "autonomy". Indeed 620,000 Americans died horribly in the 19th century, doing what you call: "facilitating the resolution of conflicting norms". Does localism have any risks and how are they mediated or ameliorated in "radical well-being"?*

AK: This ties in well with the question and my response above. For the same reason that autonomous governance or radical democracy cannot be seen in isolation in the case of a community wanting to use GMOs/nuclear power etc., exclusionary autonomy or localization which violates

another community's autonomy and well-being, or indeed violates the autonomy of its own members, becomes questionable - and hence the importance of other aspects of eco-swaraj, especially the stress on interconnectedness and responsibility, and on basic human rights and the rights of other species or the rest of nature. The argument of the resurgent right-wing in Europe, against immigrants, would not fit in a RED world. Nor would an approach in which local governance enables a few powerful amongst the community to violate the rights and well-being of others within the same community ... for instance in India, which is highly patriarchal and casteist, of women or the so-called 'lower' castes.

This raises, of course, the question of when does an intervention into a local self-governed collective's affairs, by 'outsiders', become justified, and how is such an intervention to be made? It would be difficult to provide any general approach to this, as local situations can be so diverse. But if we look at the possible approaches to democracy that are encompassed in the eco-swaraj or RED framework, we realize that locally autonomous collectives are also inextricably networked or linked into governance institutions at wider landscape level, and up the geographic scale to the entire globe. All such communities even as they practice autonomy, are or should also be part of these wider relationships, and therefore part of dialogues and agreements (or disagreements) on basic values and principles. And at various levels there would then also be institutional mechanisms for redressal and resolution, including possible interventions where a collective's actions are violating the fundamental rights and well-being of some other collective or of their own members. Note that such mechanisms are in themselves a concession to the need for some form of centralized power in a world where everyone has not yet internalized the values of eco-swaraj; as the latter happens more and more, the need for such regulations and interventions will also go down. I'm reminded of William Morris's *News from Nowhere* in which an elderly man explains to a befuddled time traveler who has woken up sometime in the future, how society has come to treat 'crime' and conflict ... with regulations becoming less and less necessary as more and more people live satisfactory lives, and as some crucial roots of conflict such as private property, are done away with.

I recognize, of course, that in actual practice all these things are messy and very, very difficult to argue and implement ... and we are still quite far from such scenarios ... but at least let's be clear on what our stand would be with regard to the limits of local autonomy, if we care for justice.

PR: *How big is too big and how would we know? Your vision of confederation is interesting. The new world begins with autonomous collectives that then aggregate through limited "ecoregional" trade and social relations. When is such aggregation in violation of anti-stateism? How can these be managed?*

AK: I think we need a lot more conceptualization and experimentation on this; I'm not sure anyone has completely figured out the relationship between direct democracy collectives on the ground, and the larger level governance mechanisms at landscape to global levels. And, indeed, the question of when these larger structures could assume the shape of a state looms large. This also rests a bit on our notion of state: are we talking of a governance mechanism (which all collectives, even anarchic ones, will have) which is meant for coordination and collective functions that individual communities cannot perform on their own).

The contours of direct democracy are still taking shape and will become more defined and detailed with experimentations at the grassroots level, and through interactions with larger governance structures. Talking of fixed institutions with centralized powers that ruleoverunits of direct democracy (including the current form of nation-states)? If it's the latter, then, indeed, we need to fight for statelessness, actively encouraging the state 'to wither away'. If it's the former, however, then it should be possible to conceive of mechanisms and institutions, which are fluid in terms of their composition (e.g. where the delegates or representatives from on-ground communities and collectives are constantly rotating), and subject to methods of ensuring accountability (e.g. delegates/representatives being recallable, having to report back to their communities, having to keep all records and documents in the public realm, etc.), that adhere to the principles of eco-swaraj or radical democracy.

Even as we struggle towards such a future, of course, in the here and now we are confronted with the 'state' in its various manifestations of centralized power, and will have to be part of movements to make them more democratic, accountable, and capable of performing the crucial functions of coordination and safeguarding the interests of those currently marginalized or exploited.

PR: *Your notion of democratic participation includes a strong dependency on something you refer to as "maturity", "needed to overcome other distortions, such as majoritariansm". Now, I live, for reasons that escape reasonable explanation, in the United States, where such maturity is currently in short supply. Does depending on*

maturity to foster democracy, as you see it, undermine the project to any degree? And, if an autonomous local collective behaved in an immature way.... say, undermining minority rights, how would our world of radical wellbeing correct this very likely aberration?

AK:I think these are 'learning by doing' and 'doing by learning' processes. The maturity to take decisions that are ecologically sensitive, socially just, and so on, cannot be a pre-requisite to experimenting with radical ecological democracy, but should certainly be something crucial to strive for through this experimentation. For instance in India, processes of self-governance have started as assertions of a community vis-à-vis the state, but have realized over time that there are internal fault-lines that disable some sections of the community, e.g. women, from participating. The community may then forge corrective pathways, e.g. establishing special forums to facilitate women's empowerment eventually leading to their being able to participate on equal terms with the community's self-governance institution. This kind of evolution, of course, also requires the other 3 ingredients of radical democracy: rights of participation, accessible forums for participation, and the capacity to participate meaningfully. An initiative may take off based on one or two of these, and gradually build in the others (or not, in which case it will fail or only partially succeed in creating a truly emancipatory democratic process). The question of what should be one's response if a community (or country!) does not display such maturity is similar to the one above about a community that uses its autonomous powers to accept GMOs or nuclear power. The community is not isolated, it is networked into larger processes, and these processes need to have mechanisms of dialogue and facilitation to enable the community to realize mistakes it may be making. I've already mentioned some elements and challenges with this approach, above.

PR: *The vision forwarded here heavily assumes some things about labor. Time-sharing and labor equivalence have been called for since Marx' time and certainly help us imagine a world of use values rather than exchange values (though Marx directly critiques time currency efforts as insufficient). All to the good! But you go farther, actually calling for a "renewed emphasis on labor-intensive industries and infrastructure". Even Kropotkin imagined a move away from such an economy, with technology offsetting drudgery in fields, factories and workshops. Is this an essential, or merely a good-feeling-swadeshi part of this economic matrix? Does this model work in a world where machines and energy do the work formerly assigned to laborers? Because, if it doesn't, then the model runs not only against the state and capital (which is awesome), but also against the tilt of history. Hand-made cane furniture could, in*

theory, be the foundation of a 22nd century economy? But why – from an economic theoretical point of view – should it be?

AK:I'm afraid I have no idea why this would be needed from a "theoretical economics' point of view ... unless one takes a radically different economics than the one in sway right now, such as the 'economy of permanence' propounded by JC Kumarappa, following Gandhian principles. As an aside, it's surprising that no one has yet come up with a comprehensive alternative macro-economics to challenge the currently dominant neoliberal one, though of course there are brilliant contributions to the making of one by several ecological economists. Coming back to your question, earlier this year, I was at Schumacher College in UK, and noticed a sticker about an initiative in the town of Totnes whose slogan was: "The Future is Handmade". In 2008, I went to a community fair in Maine in the USA, and was happily surprised to see stall after stall of people doing things with their hands (or feet) ... stitching clothes, making furniture, cycling to produce electricity, and more. IT industry folks in so many parts of the world, including India, are eager to get into farming. Of course, these are still small numbers of people compared to those who've succumbed to the 'remote control' world where machines do everything for us except eat and make love. But I think these numbers are growing. Now, if people in the most mechanized societies and sectors on earth are getting back into producing things with their hands ... with human labor ... when they have all the machinery around them to produce these things, what does that tell us? That, perhaps there is an urge in us to take back control over production from machines (or in effect, though this may not be an explicit goal for many such people, from those who design, make and control the machines). If the need to work, to labor (in its positive sense, not its connotation of drudgery), to have meaningful *livelihoods,* to use not only our heads but also our *hands and feet,* are basic human needs, why be shy of asserting that labor-intensive production has to be a crucial part of eco-swaraj?

This does not mean that this is a future without machines, not at all. For the vast majority of people in countries like India, labor-intensive production processes are a matter of sheer survival, just being able to hold on to some livelihood. Gandhi was clear when he said that he was not against machines per se, but against machines, or mechanization, that displaces livelihoods. Most of the capitalist-led mechanization we are seeing in recent times has been at the cost of livelihoods and jobs; hence the infamous 'jobless growth' that economies like India (growing at an average of 5-6% per annum for the last couple of decades) has seen.

Machines that allow people to escape dehumanizing and degrading work will always be necessary and welcome. Machines that reduce meaningless drudgery, or that free exploited sections like Dalits in India from doing degrading and abusive jobs like cleaning up human waste, are welcome. So, for me, human labor is as important as the dignity we attach to it.

Ultimately, what we do with our own hands and what we do through machines are choices society will make. My bet is that the more democratic our decision-making processes and our economies become, and the more our educational institutions are able to create learning environments in which there is a balance between head, hand, and heart, the less likely it is that people will give over to a predominantly mechanical, robot-run world.

PR: *Finally, you dedicate a single paragraph to policy, consigning it a less important role than the "social contract". I get that. Two questions: One – what policies do you need now to get from here to there, in concrete terms. The case of the Forest Rights Act in India is an interesting one, which cuts both ways, I'd say – where central authority is needed to assure autonomy. We could spend all day on the FRA. And two – to what degree does dispute resolution without the rule of law exist in the myriad excellent examples you have provided, currently?*

AK: People's movements have this constant tension between struggling for fundamental, systemic change in which the notion of the state itself needs to be challenged, and fighting for greater spaces within the existing system. I've, myself, had to straddle the two, and I'm not sure I've succeeded! But while I deeply believe in the need for revolution, and try to join movements that are pushing for transformations, I also have been involved in advocacy for policy changes. The tricky part is when do the latter lose sight of the former, and end up lending further legitimacy to the state or to other structures of domination?

You mention the Forest Rights Act (FRA) in India, and I can add the Right to Information Act. Both are 'progressive', as they provide considerable powers to citizens and communities towards reducing the hegemony of the state on issues like people's relationship with nature and access to information. The FRA has the potential to reverse 200+ years of centralized forest governance and for a few hundred million people the potential for secure, sustainable livelihoods.

photo by Ashish Kothari

Officials conducting spot verification of "Individual Forest Rights".

We certainly need more policies and laws of this kind; and I would include here, on top of my wish-list, a law that gives all of us the right to participate in any decision that affects our lives (reference, above, the ingredients of radical democracy I laid out). Or policies and laws facilitating organic agriculture, moving us towards sustainable consumption patterns, putting a ceiling on salary levels, radically redistributing land, making all nature and natural resources a part of the commons, and so on … the wish-list is long!

But, there are limits to what all this can achieve. The two laws mentioned above require having to apply to the state for getting the information one needs, or the recognition of forest rights. We are therefore legitimizing the nation-state, even as we are trying to make it more accountable. To my mind a movement on the right to information needs to go beyond the right to access information in government files, to a regime where all information (other than that which is strictly personal or private relating, e.g., to our bodies) is automatically in the commons. Or in the case of forests, the struggle for rights to forest land has to be deepened to a struggle for autonomous self-governance in general. And, eventually all this would lead to questioning the nation-state itself … but I guess we'll have to wait for another conversation to go deeper into that!

On the 2nd part of your question above: indeed many of the initiatives that we have documented in India, and I know of many in other parts of the world, do have strong mechanisms of dispute resolution (or to use a stronger term I recently learnt from colleagues in Venezuela and Bolivia, "conflict transformation"). They use either traditional customary law, or newly established rules

governing the community and its commons. Institutions of self-governance like village assemblies (or in an example I recently visited, Christiania Freetown in Copenhagen, neighborhood assemblies), are regularly tackling disputes and conflicts within and between collectives. We have even come across communities who impose a fine on members who go to the police before first coming to the local institution! Of course, and I emphasize this, not all of these mechanisms are equitable and fair, many can be the locus of hierarchical power dynamics, and this relates to the earlier question about the limits of autonomy. But they do exist, and in many cases are much faster and fairer at achieving resolutions or transformations than are statutory processes. Currently, I suppose we need a balance of these different forums, but in an eco-swaraj future, the principles of anarchy would mean the absence of the state as we know it now, and therefore the absence of centralized statutory law. And I'm going to leave it at this tantalizing thought, before you ask the 7th question: 'how do we get there'?!

Ashish Kothari is a co-founder of Kalpavriksh Environmental Action Group.

Paul Robbins is Director, Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, University of Wisconsin – Madison, USA.

The interviews in the RED Conversation series are not an exact transcription of the recorded interview. They are an approximation based on an interpretation as well as a summation of the original interview. A video of the POLLEN presentation by Ashish and a part of Paul's remarks as a discussant are available at https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=RAyRVvU89BY&t=45s).

Source: https://www.radicalecologicaldemocracy.org/
red-conversations-series-the-emerging-idea-of-
radical-well-being/

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8. Signs of Hope

Community-based Tourism in Pawalgarh
A Case Study by Seema Bhatt

Introduction
Tourism has from time immemorial been promoted as a benevolent, non-consumptive activity that provides enjoyment and entertainment to the traveler. It has also brought to many communities and countries substantial revenue; helped conserve endangered species; and rejuvenated and revived cultural heritage. However, this is only one side of the coin and what many have now seen coming for several decades is the fact that tourism can cause inordinate harm when it goes beyond the carrying capacity of a place. In the summer of 2017, the media and the travel industry finally acknowledged the negative impacts of tourism and thus came into existence the term 'overtourism'. Very simply 'overtourism' takes place when there are far too many visitors at a particular destination. However, the term 'too many' itself is site-specific and would be defined by local residents, travel entrepreneurs and tourists themselves. In terms of protected areas, it is determined by the health of the ecosystem and species therein. The signs of overtourism are many. When local communities are forced to sell their land to hoteliers; when forest roads get jammed by tourist vehicles; when tourists cannot view wildlife because of the crowds, subsequently disturbing wildlife, and when fragile ecosystems get degraded is when 'overtourism' is taking place. Corbett Tiger Reserve is showing all signs of 'overtourism'. It is in this context that this case study becomes significant. There is a need to look at more innovative approaches to tourism, particularly in the larger Corbett landscape. This case study looks at the ecological significance of this landscape and highlights the Eco Harryman's initiative and describes how this initiative along with the declaration of the Pawalgarh Conservation Reserve are catalyzing the creation of an alternative model of tourism in the landscape. Taking the lead in this direction is the Pawalgarh Prakriti Prahari (PPP), a local youth group. PPP provides a unique platform where individual homestay owners will sign an agreement obliging them to follow the terms and conditions laid down by PPP and in turn avail of the benefits of the PPP agreement. This is indeed an innovation in community-based tourism in India.

The Larger Corbett Landscape
Spread across the region between the river Yamuna in India and the river Bagmati in Nepal, encompassing the Shivalik hills, is the landscape that covers some of India's well known Tiger Reserves and Protected Areas. Perhaps

one of the most celebrated parks in this landscape and in all of India is the Corbett National Park that spreads across the Nainital, Pauri and Almora districts. The landscape is an amazing blend of high hills, the mighty Ramganga, riverside belts, and grasslands. It is a unique blend of *Bhabar*[1] that is characterized by boulders and Sal (*Shorea robusta*) and other mixed vegetation and the *Terai* characterized by clay rich swamps which support a mosaic of tall grasslands, wetlands and mixed deciduous forests.

Corbett is one of India's best-preserved parks with 164 tigers and over 600 elephants. A recent survey revealed that Corbett has the highest density of tiger population in the country at 20/100sq km. More than 600 species of trees, shrubs, herbs, bamboos, grasses, climbers and ferns have been identified in the Park. The Corbett and the adjoining Rajaji National Parks between them hold India's northwestern-most population of tigers and one of the world's most significant populations of Asian Elephants. With approximately 550 recorded species of birds, this landscape is one of the Important Bird Areas (IBAs).

photo by Seema Bhatt

The Corbett Landscape

photo by Seema Bhatt

The Corbett Landscape

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1. Bhabar band of land north (east) of Terai and the gangetic plain, along Himalaya foothills is named for a kind of tall growing grass, *Eulaliopsis binata* that dominates the area and is used for the manufacture of paper and rope.

These forests were the private property of local rulers prior to the arrival of the British between 1815-20. In 1820, once the ownership was passed onto the British, these forests were ruthlessly felled for timber. Sal (*Shorea robusta*) for which these forests are known was the favored timber. Teak, the more precious of the timbers, was planted on the periphery and was used for making railway sleepers in later times.

It was in 1858 that the first comprehensive plan to protect these forests was drawn up by Major Ramsey and after over 36 years of careful vigilance, the condition of these forests improved. In 1879, these forests were declared as reserved forests and in 1907 an attempt was made by Michael Kent, a dedicated officer, to declare this a game sanctuary. Unfortunately, his proposal was turned down by the then governor John Hewett. Again in 1916, E.R. Stevens, the then Divisional Forest Officer, and Smythies, his successor, tried to get this area declared a sanctuary, and yet again their proposal was rejected by the Area Commissioner Wyndham. It was during this time that Colonel Jim Corbett roamed these forests in his quest for man-eaters and his knowledge about the area was commendable. In 1934 Malcolm Hailey, the Governor of the United Provinces (later Uttar Pradesh and now Uttarakhand), supported the idea of declaring a game sanctuary in this area. Subsequently, Smythies attempted to have a national park in this area, through legislation. Smythies, in consultation with Jim Corbett, demarcated the boundaries of the proposed national park with adequate room for expansion. In 1936 was enacted the United Provinces National Parks Act and as a result, Hailey National Park became the India's first National park and the world's third. In 1952 the park's name was changed to Ramganga National Park after the famed river that forms the lifeline for the park and its inhabitants. However, in 1957, subsequent to the death of Jim Corbett in 1955, it was renamed Corbett National Park after the man who played a significant role in demarcating its boundaries and whose name remains synonymous with this area.

The year 1973 was a landmark year for India in the context of wildlife conservation as the country launched its pioneering overarching conservation project, Project Tiger. Corbett National Park became the venue of this momentous launch and in 1973, this park became the first Tiger Reserve in the country. Corbett National Park and Tiger Reserve today has an area of 1288.31 sq. km, and is a part of the greater Corbett landscape. It has long been referred to as the 'land of roar trumpet and song'. These attributes refer to the roar of tigers, the trumpet-like calls of elephants and the melodious song of birds.

photo by Seema Bhatt

The Pawalgarh Conservation Reserve

At a distance of less than half hour from the Corbett Tiger Reserve lies the Pawalgarh Conservation Reserve, a part of the larger tiger landscape. Jim Corbett made Pawalgarh famous for having hunted the largest ever tiger in these forests. Titled "The Bachelor of Pawalgarh," Corbett recounted his tale of tracking and killing this tiger that took him over a decade, in his famous book, "Man-eaters of Kumaon".

The amendments made to the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 in 2002 provided for the formation of two new categories of Protected Areas. One category was that of Conservation Reserves, which the state government may declare after consultations with relevant local communities. Areas adjacent to existing protected areas or those connecting one protected area to another are priority. Pursuant to this, the Pawalgarh Conservation Reserve was established in 2012. The landscape is criss-crossed by three rivers. It is flanked by the river Kosi in the west and river Buar in the east. The river Dabka flows from east to west in the northern area and flows south towards the Terai region, bifurcating the landscape. The Conservation Reserve has large tracts of undisturbed forests. With sightings of 365 species of birds on record, this 58.25 sq km reserve is a bird watcher's paradise. Unlike Corbett Tiger Reserve, the trails here can be traversed on foot. The reserve also has 32 species of mammals and more than 125 species of butterflies.

Eco Harryman's Resort
In close proximity to the Pawalgarh Conservation Reserve is a unique homestay called Eco Harryman's (Eco Harryman's is actually an acronym based on the names of all the people who were part of the first coordinating

committee). It is owned and managed by the dynamic Manral ji. Manral ji belongs to a family, several members of which were part of the Indian Army. He too wanted to join the Army, but his family wanted him to look at other options. He got a diploma in electronics from Delhi and was exploring employment opportunities when a chain of events brought him back to Uttarakhand. This was the time when Uttarakhand was struggling for independent statehood. He wanted to be part of the movement and also in some ways promote the natural beauty of the state. He decided to then start a tourism initiative from his family house in Pawalgarh. In the year 2000, the State Forest Department started looking at ecotourism in earnest and Manral ji's place was best suited for this.

This resort has three rooms on the ground floor and three on the first, with a varying number of beds. The rooms themselves are comfortable and clean. There is a common set of toilets and bathrooms at the back. Across from this is another building that has on the first floor an outdoor venue for meetings. A look at the vast collection of books and the wildlife related artwork on the walls indicates that one is in the company of a true naturalist. One walks across a beautiful fruit orchard to get to the dining hall that can also accommodate quite a few people, if additional dormitory space is required. The walls throughout the resort are adorned with nature-related paintings by local artists, making the place vibrant and attractive. This is an ideal venue for school/college camps. Manral ji's wife supervises the cooking based on delicious, local, organic cuisine for the guests.

Eco Harryman's offers a range of activities to travelers that include nature walks, camping on the campus, adventure activities and also some traditional games. There are many who come just to relax in the wonderful surroundings, eat healthy food and enjoy the tranquility. This includes several who come on a regular basis just to get away from bustling/stressful city life. There are naturalists who make the resort their base and then go and explore the Conservation Reserve. At any given time, there are also a few youngsters who come here to volunteer and help in a range of activities at the resort. The resort also hosts many conservation-related meetings and events. With an annual turnover of Rs. 3-5 lakhs, the resort is economically sustainable and is able to support other relevant activities.

photo by Seema Bhatt

Eco Harryman's Resort

photo by Seema Bhatt

Board indicating traditional games at the resort

Birding Festivals in Uttarakhand: A Unique Endeavour
Recognising the amazing bird diversity in Uttarakhand and the need to conserve it, the Uttarakhand Forest Department in 2011 started Bird watching Camps across the state. Between 2011 and 2016, the Ecotourism Wing of the Forest Department supported 25-30 such camps. These camps culminated in birding festivals, the first of which was held in Asan in 2014. This commendable initiative to promote birding in the state and subsequently create awareness was the brainchild of the then Chief Conservator of Forests in charge of Ecotourism, Rajiv Bhartari. There has been an overwhelming response to these and in collaboration with other groups that include Titli Trust, Kalpavriksh and Himal Prakriti, birding festivals have become a regular feature in the state. These festivals are opportunities where forest staff, local community members, tour guides and others learn the basics of birding and also become conservation ambassadors.

The second birding festival was held in Pawalgarh in 2015. From a workshop on community-based tourism convened during the festival emerged the need for more trained nature guides, particularly with the delineation of the Pawalgarh Conservation Reserve. Titli Trust[2], a non-government organization, urged the Forest Department to support a Nature Guide Training Programme that would help link rural youth to conservation. It was this need that the led to the establishment of the PPP. PPP was registered as a not-for-profit nature conservation society in December 2015. The main objective of the Society is to support nature conservation, environment protection and sustainable living by promoting alternate livelihoods such as ecotourism through village homestays, nature tours with experienced guides and promoting local produce and cuisine in the landscape of the Pawalgarh Conservation Reserve. PPP also supports the sale of nature interpretation products such as books, brochures, handicrafts, paintings, etc. The Society focuses its efforts mainly in the Pawalgarh Conservation Reserve landscape and its members are from the villages around Pawalgarh. These include: Pawalgarh, Mankanthpur, Kyari, Kotabagh, Syat, Ramnagar, Gabua, Chhoi and Amtoli.

photo by Seema Bhatt

Pawalgarh Prakriti Prahari

Once established, there began an intensive training of nature guides through the Titli Trust for over 70 work-days. This included training on basic skills of bird watching followed by bi-monthly practice sessions; first aid; soft skills such as communication; and storytelling. There were also other training sessions conducted by organizations such as the Wildlife Trust of India and the Uttarakhand Forest Department. These trainings included ones for advanced nature guides and a course

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2.   TITLI TRUST is a not-for-profit nature conservation organization based in Dehradun, India. It is primarily focused on conservation and livelihoods in the Himalayas.

for trekking leaders. A four-day test was conducted at the end of 2016. 65 youth took the test out of which 30 were selected as requested by the Forest Department. It was at this point that the Forest Department seemed to go back on is word and did not employ the trained nature guides as agreed upon earlier. There was no clarity on why this happened. A lot of expectations had been raised and this led to considerable disappointment for the trained youth. Nearly two years after the initial agreement, recently, there has been a move to register guides as part of the nature guide programme. Unfortunately, many of the youth trained as nature guides have taken to other occupations. There are few that remain.

Towards more Community-based Tourism
In the wake of the delay in taking trained youth as nature guides, the PPP, with the help of organizations and persons such as the Titli Trust and Manral ji, are attempting to move towards a model of community-based tourism in the Pawalgarh region. Specific to this PPP hopes to:

- Provide livelihoods to local youth in the Pawalgarh Conservation Reserve landscape by offering a range of 'products' for tourists which include nature guiding for vehicle safaris and on designated walking trails, local homestays, local cuisine and other local produce.
- Ensure that the tourism at Pawalgarh Conservation Reserve is eco-friendly, sustainable and equitable with benefits flowing to local community.
- Support nature conservation activities in Pawalgarh Conservation Reserve, as determined by and in consultation with the Pawalgarh Conservation Reserve management.

On this background, PPP now intends to begin Homestay services, both community homestays and individual homestays, for visits in the Pawalgarh Conservation Reserve landscape.

To take this forward, in a rather unique way, PPP will sign an agreement with individual homestay owners who will then comply with the terms and conditions laid down by PPP and in turn avail of the benefits of the PPP agreement.

As part of the agreement, PPP will be responsible for marketing of homestays; customer engagement; planning of schedules and itineraries; managing bookings and financial transactions; registration of homestays; and ongoing training and capacity building. PPP retains the right to conduct annual performance assessments of the Homestays based on pre-determined standards. These standards may be revised from time to time based on customer feedback.

Homestay owners will be responsible for all onsite customer management that includes boarding and lodging, nature guiding, etc.; upkeep of homestay property; payment of bills for all utilities used; and sharing onsite customer feedback. Homestay Owners will inform PPP in case it is directly engaging in any marketing activity and also inform PPP in case it is engaging with large groups/schools/institutions. Homestay owners should be geared to provide to the visitors guides for bird watching and nature and heritage walks and introduction to other activities such as traditional games.

Manral ji has indeed been a trailblazer in the context of ecotourism in this region. His resort has now become the hub of activities related to ecotourism. Besides his own guests, Manral ji has nurtured the local youth and is taking the PPP along the path of ecotourism. Eco-Harryman's is the venue for many of the trainings and capacity building exercises for members of the PPP. Manral ji is spearheading the movement for ecotourism in the region and he does so by example.

photo by Seema Bhatt

Capacity Building for Local Communities

Responsible Tourism: The Larger Context

'Overtourism' in Corbett Tiger Reserve

The growing popularity of wildlife tourism is resulting in a heavy influx of visitors, particularly during the holiday season. Protected areas such as Corbett are facing an issue of 'overtourism' that is causing degradation of the habitat as also disturbance to wildlife. Corbett Tiger Reserve, due to its proximity to Delhi and its immense popularity, is a classic case of the emerging 'five star' culture where people from more affluent sections of society are frequenting these areas, but still want their luxuries and can pay for them. The eastern

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boundary of the reserve near the town of Ramnagar has seen a phenomenal growth in luxury resorts that are inundated with tourists the year round. The Corbett Tiger Reserve (CTR) is one of the most popular protected areas in the country. The reserve records over 200,000 visitors annually. Authorities state that over 150 vehicles with about 600 people are permitted in on a daily basis during the season. There is accommodation for over 3000 visitors around the reserve[3]. The Wildlife Institute of India carried out a study in the village of Dhikuli, situated just outside the eastern edge of the Corbett National Park to look at tourism related impacts. The study found that tourism is resulting in social disruption in the villages surrounding the park by creating islands of prosperity resulting in financial disparity, resentment and conflict. Luxury resorts in the area are also resulting in water scarcity in villages because of the high extraction level of water by these resorts[4] to meet customer demands.

The Corbett landscape is in a crisis situation in terms of tourism. Given the popularity of the Corbett Tiger Reserve, and the alarming growth of luxury resorts in the buffer zone, the landscape is in danger of being smothered by mass tourism. It is being loved to death. Often in the 'five star resort' culture of tourism, tourists care precious little about wildlife, and are there only to have a good time. There are others who care only about seeing the tiger and will go to any extreme to see it. Finally, there are the true nature lovers and conservationists who want to enjoy the peace and quiet of the wilderness and soak in nature. Ironically, while they are the greatest allies of the reserve, they now hesitate to visit it. Tourism in the Corbett landscape and many others needs to diversify and go beyond just the parks. In this context, the declaration of the Pawalgarh Conservation Reserve and the PPP initiative are indeed timely. There is a need to spread tourism activities beyond the Corbett Tiger Reserve and it is critical that tourism be promoted in other parts of the larger landscape. And for this, the Pawalgarh Conservation Reserve is ideally suited. Further, the PPP model supports the participation of local youth in tourism whereby giving them a larger scope as stakeholders in conservation. At present the Corbett authorities are under tremendous pressure to manage the reserve adequately, particularly in terms of the sheer number and kind of tourism demands being met. PPP is

the ally that can provide nature guides as also alternate accommodation. Further, the PPP Code of Conduct ensures that tourism in the Pawalgarh Conservation Reserve is sustainable and responsible.

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Tharangini - the oldest surviving hand-block printing studio in Bangalore
A case study by Sneha Gutgutia, Shruti Ragavan and Anmol Chowdhury.

Abstract
Started in 1977,Tharanginistudio is the oldest and one of the last surviving hand block print studio in Bangalore. Much thought is given to concerns of environmental sustainability and therefore natural dyes are predominantly used during the block printing process. The organisation also gives importance to matters related to recycling, waste management and fair-trade practices at work. Apart from this, they conduct free outreach programs, particularly with specially-abled artisans at various Autism centres across the city. Tharangini's mission therefore, is not only to uplift artisanal communities throughout the country, but also to provide vocational training to underprivileged groups. The organisation's extended family of artisans include: hand block printers, wood carvers, fabric dyers, embroidery artisans, colour mixing and fabric finishing experts.

Introduction
Tharangini is a block printing studio based in Bangalore. It has one of the largest collections of wooden blocks and some of the finest block print artisans. It was established in 1977 by Lakshmi Srivathsa and is now run and managed by her daughter Padmini Govind. Right from its inception, Tharangini was a place which valued and followed ethical labour practices, was passionate about uplifting artisanal communities and used eco-friendly dyes. Their commitment to the above still continues and today they are also a fair-trade certified organization.

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3. www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/corbett_tourism_report.pdf
4. http://www.sanctuaryasia.com/magazines/cover-story/10094-tourists-from-the-dark-side.html

History

In the first 30 years of their existence, Tharangini was primarily designing sarees along with the printing of some fabric, made into garments. They worked mostly with silk since the state of Karnataka is the largest producer of silk in the country. Also back then, everybody wore silk, even Lakshmi herself. Their mode of operation was entirely business to business (B2B). Some of their clients included airlines like Air India and Royal Nepal who would buy beautiful hand block printed sarees from Tharangini, to be worn by their air hostesses.

However, in 2007, when Lakshmi handed over the reins of Tharangini to her daughter Padmini, changing times called for a change in their business strategy as well. As the silk and sareemarket was barely able to hold the fort, Tharangini switched to fabrics for home furnishings in 2007 which continue to be exported till this day. Their mode of operation continues to run on B2B and the fabrics are exported to other businesses that make garments at their end. Locally, they have also tied up with a garment brand and a fair-trade certified garment unit based in Bangalore and this helps connecting Tharangini with other members of the community. "It's about bringing in community. It's not about profit margins", said Padmini. Another reason that Padmini gave for Tharangini to move into export was to be able to afford fair-trade wage standards for their artisans.

Structure and Governance

Tharangini is a sole proprietorship in the name of Padmini Govind's father. However, Padmini says that there are no titles in Tharangini and only roles that individuals fulfil. "I don't want to go and call myself the director. It doesn't belong in an artisan business at all", she says, "That's the way we've been structured since 77". Tharangini does not believe in the idea of titles, where people cannot engage in activities beyond their job position and description. But certain roles are defined, for instance they do have personnel for matters related to administration and accounts. Overall it's a small team consisting of around five block printers, two colour mixers, one block maker, two in admin and Padmini herself. However, the ethos of Tharangini is such that each helps the other out as and when required. For instance, Padmini will engage in the process of mixing colours, making tea for all the members and will also assist the admin - Mary - with computer based work, since she is not too tech savvy. Sathish, a young artisan who is adept with computers also helps Mary as and when he can. After preparation of the dye, mixing and achieving the shade as desired by the client becomes a challenging task. Tharangini currently has only one experienced colour mixer - Bhanuamma, who has been working here for over thirty four years now,

photo by Sneha Gutgutia

The Kutteeram or workshop hut at Tharangini

besides Yashodhara, a young apprentice. Krishnappa, who is an experienced block printer, helps Bhanuamma and Yashodhara, also handles all the post processing of the fabric which includes– rolling, steaming, curing, and washing. "We're very small and there is not one size that fits all; to say that this is the way it has to happen", says Padmini. The structure of Tharangini as an organization thus works on mutual understanding and cooperation.

So does the governance. "We run like a little village panchayat", says Padmini. Once a week or once in ten days, they have a round table where members discuss any issues faced – whether it is about something that was said or done, or something which does not feel right and so on. She says it is because they have such a strong team, for instance like Krishnappa, Govind anna and Bhanuamma who have been here for three decades, which makes it easier to discuss and eventually resolve issues. In the case of an issue which cannot resolve, the team tries to understand what they can do differently about it. Everyone will provide suggestions. Padmini believes that the senior team members have been at this a lot longer than her, and therefore she takes their feedback into consideration. And they too seek her suggestions because they realise they are in this together. She says, "It's a constant push to make Tharangini run and we all have to be a part of this constant push."

Environmental Sustainability

What distinguishes Tharangini most from other craft centres is probably the effort they take to ensure environmental sustainability and the sustainability of the craft itself. Tharangini being a printing studio benefits from not having the use for tons of water, electricity or generating fabric wastes such as leftover bits of cloth from cutting and sewing, which happens in most garment factories. They use **Ready for Printing/Dyeing (RDF)** fabric

that is made available to them from the businesses that place orders with them. In most cases these are printed and returned to the businesses that then do dry heat treatment of the fabric to fuse the colours with the fabric. Tharangini also uses natural yarns not only for printing but also for the padding used in colour trays during block printing, which is cotton gauze cloth and *mulmul*. These cloth pieces are washed and reused until they practically disintegrate. The dyes they use are mostly organic which are also carefully mixed in quantities that each order demands. Any leftover dyes are sent to be used at autism centres, an aspect which is discussed towards the end of this case study. For any steam treatment they have to do on their printed fabric, Tharangini uses Liquid Petroleum Gas for fuel and newspapers for insulation. The newspaper is returned to the same vendor from whom it was bought, for recycling. The effluents generated due to washing block prints, gum-arabic from fabric when discharge dye printing[5] has been done, and natural dye from sarees, are safe as the materials used are *natural* or *certified as safe* to use. However, as an added precaution the effluents are still treated in an effluent treatment plant. The plant was installed in the year 2000 and the water it discharges is potable. The pro-activeness that is seen in Tharangini towards sustainability of the environment is commendable and desirable in many other garment and dyeing factories across the country that generate lots of waste or are heavily dependent on water and electricity. However, whether this model can be replicated in such times is a question one has to consider.

Dye Making

The process of dye making that Tharangini follows is a long and intense. It is much longer for the preparation of natural dyes than for synthetic ones. The extraction of colour from the raw materials for natural dyes involves drying them in sunlight, and once dried, boiling them in water while simultaneously pressing them using a pestle and finally letting the concoction cool overnight. If a deeper shade of the colour is required, the entire process is repeated and the dye is collected in a separate container. Moreover for the dye to hold, the cloth is first dipped in Myrobalan[6] extract, then dried and this process is repeated all over again to give the cloth an off-white shade that provides "character" to the colour and binds it well to the cloth.

This process of preparation of natural dyes can take anywhere between one week and two to three months depending on the colour and the shade. For example, the

black dye made by fermenting a mixture of iron liquor[7] and palm jaggery[8] takes almost two months to make. The duration of fermentation can be increased or decreased depending solely on the shade of black that is desired. Once prepared and extracted, this organic dye has a shelf life of six to seven months and thus, it can be prepared in large batches that then lasts for months.

Given below is a list of some of the raw materials used for preparation of natural dyes.

Raw material source	Colour of dye extracted
Achiote seed	Orange
Alkanet root	Purple
Gum Arabic resin	Off white (mordant)
Indian Madder	Red
Myrobalan	Off white (mordant)
Pomegranate	Lime green
Turmeric	Yellow

On being asked whether they prepare all organic dyes from scratch at Tharangini, Padmini said that they also procured extracts available in powdered form from companies in different parts of India - Hyderabad, Kolhapur, Jaipur and Dindigul- that are easier to use than making the dye from scratch. "So you get the powdered version. It's like buying vanilla essence versus starting with vanilla bean for cooking", she explained. She also referred to the inconsistency in the shade of the colour used for block printing when they are prepared using naturally dyes. Sometimes they get a nice shade with their dyes but sometimes the colour doesn't really come out well, so they prefer using the powdered extract for making dyes for some projects.

Padmini also shared with us some information about the other kinds of dyes they use at Tharangini. Besides the organically prepared ones they also use synthetic dyes that are Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) certified. The GOTS mandates that the organic status of any textile be ensured: right from harvesting of raw materials involved in cloth making and dyeing, by following manufacturing processes that are environmentally responsible, to proper labelling of the product in order to provide assurance about its organic status. "I would love to use things that are only organic but I do know that from the production point of view, I have to be practical. So, I don't have any

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5. Discharge dye printing is a method of printing where a design is made on a dyed piece of cloth by applying a substance that bleaches the cloth hence leaving a pattern on it.
6. Myrobalan is a tree whose leaves and barks are widely used as a mordant and also produces yellow, brown or black coloured dyes.

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7. Also called black liquor it is a black liquid consisting of a solution of crude ferrous acetate $Fe(C_2H_3O_2)_2$ usually obtained by treating scrap iron with pyroligneous acid and used chiefly as a mordant in dyeing.
8. Palm jaggery is almost like a jaggery that is made out of sugarcane juice. Palm jaggery is made from the sap extract of Palm Trees in Southern India.

dilemma using something that is GOTS certified," said Padmini when asked about her selection of dyes if she faced a dilemma while using GOTS certified synthetic dyes over organic ones. "It depends on what the customer wants," she added.

After preparation of the dye, mixing and achieving the shade as desired by the client becomes a challenging task. Tharangini currently has one main colour mixer - Bhanuamma, who has been working here for over thirty four years now. She recalls that the first dyes she prepared at Tharangini were red using Indian madder[9], brown by mixing extracts from Indian madder and black Myrobalan and black using iron liquor & palm jaggery. She mixes the colours in a bucket using her hands, then immerses a small swatch[10] of cloth in it to approximate what the colour would look like when being printed on the finished fabric.

photo courtesy Tharangini website

photo by Anmol Chowdhury

Bhanuamma in the process of colour mixing and the various raw materials used to create dyes
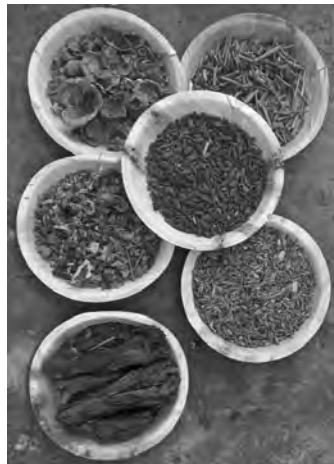
Bhanuamma is proud that she works with eco-friendly materials that minimize sustainability problems and safeguard health. When asked about the rate of procurement of raw materials for preparation of natural dyes, she said that it has been slow due to a general decline in forested areas where these raw materials are found.

Block making

A crucial aspect of the dyeing process at Tharangini is the making of wooden blocks used for printing designs on fabric. The wood carver at Tharangini – C.H. Sreeram- is apparently the only wood block maker in the whole of Karnataka. However, wood carving is not a traditional occupation for Sreeram. In fact he comes from a family of farmers and learnt wood carving out of pure interest and fascination when he moved to Bangalore about thirty-five years ago.

The wood for making blocks at Tharangini is sourced from vendor Timber Layout (Mysore Road), where there are usually two types of teak woods - Burma Teak and Ghana Teak. Burma Teak is what Tharangini uses because it is solid good quality wood, but is expensive and costs INR 8000 for a 1 ft by 1 ft piece. Ghana Teak on the other hand is sold for Rupees 5000 but has the tendency to bend. Local wood is not of adequate quality; it comes in smaller pieces and sometimes has holes in it...

Newly purchased wood is levelled and titanium white[11] is applied onto the piece of wood. After it dries, the block maker traces the design on the teak wood by marking the outline. With a set of hand tools, some of which curve and others are angular, the block maker keeps chipping off the wood until the final block is ready. The time taken for creating a block depends on the level of intricacy of the design. While a simple design might take between half a day and a day to create, an intricate design can take up to four days. Tharangini employs Sreeram to make blocks and he comes twice a week to their campus to understand the designs required for new orders. Today Sreeram does all the tracing on the wood, while he delegates the tasks of carving to other craftsmen he has employed for the purpose.

For Sreeram, Tharangini is his primary client. Design students also place smaller orders with him. Sreeram says that there is a general preference for traditional designs amongst the clientele. There are many challenges that this craft of wooden block making is facing. With the introduction of screen prints which is a faster way of producing larger quantites, the overall value of block print has come down. Younger craftsmen also find sitting for long hours, which is usually the case while making wooden blocks, taxing. The compensation is hardly adequate. However, Sreeram is able to sustain his craft owing to the mix of orders he gets from Tharangini and the orders he receives from individual clients.

Block Printing and Printers

Block printing at Tharangini predominantly uses wooden blocks, carved with designs on them, to make an impression on the cloth. This is done by first dipping the block in the dye and then carefully placing it on the cloth. The procedure requires the cloth to be washed free of starch so that the colours can stick on it. The cloth is then stretched on a flat surface and fixed on it with pins. The dye that has been prepared is kept in a tray, beside the printing table, and contains glue and pigment binder. The block is not directly dipped in dye but pressed against a layer of wash

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9. Rubia cordifolia, often known as common madder or Indian madder, is a species of flowering plant in the coffee family, Rubiaceae. It has been cultivated for a red pigment derived from roots.
10. A small sample of fabric intended to demonstrate the look of a larger piece.

11. Titanium White is the more common of the whites used for painting. It's known for being bright white, almost bluish, and has excellent opacity

The process of wood carving and some wooden blocks on display at Tharangini

cloth soaked with this dye so that the block does not pick any extra colour. The teakwood blocks, once prepared, are also dipped in oil for a few days before being used. After printing has been done on the cloth, the block print is first allowed to dry, and then the cloth is covered in newspaper and is steamed. Only when the discharge printing is done, the cloth is washed to rinse off any resin (gum Arabic) that is sticking to it, dried again and finally ironed before it is ready. At Tharangini, skilled bock printers combine multiple overlapping blocks to arrive at complicated designs.

Tharangini has five skilled block printers producing some very exquisite designs on cloth. The youngest of them is Sathish who has been with Tharangini for ten years now and the eldest are Krishnappa Bhat and Mallikarjun who have been with Tharangini for forty-two years and forty-five years respectively. The names of the other block printers are Shankar and Govind Raju, who have also been with Tharangini for ten years and thirty years respectively. Interestingly, most of them are the first in their families to take up block printing. Sathish and Mallikarjun come from a family of farmers, while Krishnappa's father worked as a bank employee and ancestors were farmers. They all took up this profession of block printing out of sheer interest and have made it this far because of their skill and talent. Years ago, Krishnappa had left his job at Tharangini for five years during which he tried his hands at a small business of a newspaper and milk agency. But he soon gave that up and rejoined Tharangini. Though they all have had minimal formal education, their block-printing work they say, is the one which requires and demands precision and focus for long hours. Even a small mistake can lead to rejection of an entire fabric that has been printed on. The blocks too need to be handled with care so that it does not wear off or fall and break. They said it can sometimes take up to three hours to print an entire stretch of fabric, and this is dependent on whether it is a single block print or if it is multiple colours using multiple blocks.

All the block printers seemed satisfied and happy about their work at Tharangini. But they all have different reasons to be at Tharangini. For Sathish it is the awareness of the fact that Tharangini exports quality products to foreign countries, that there will always be a market for clothes and because his primary interest is in delivering good quality products. For others, such as the more experienced printers, it is the familiarity of Tharangini and the work that has kept them in this profession and ecosystem year after year. Apart from this, they all also seemed satisfied about their salaries and that it is fair wages. They don't work on Sundays and on government holidays. Additionally, they get twelve days of paid sick leave and also get paid

for overtime work. The work environment is healthy with mistakes not being pinned on individuals and issues being discussed every ten to fifteen days with all members. There are also tea breaks which give much relief to the artisans who have been working with full concentration standing at one place for hours. It also allows everyone to come out into the open space and relax over tea.

photo by Sneha Gutgutia

The process of block printing on fabric

The artisans take little interest in technology, except Sathish, and have little knowledge of what happens to the fabrics after they have been printed or who buys them or who is the end user. This is despite the fact that these details are shared with them from time to time and artisans interact with designers and interns coming from across the globe. None of their children or families has taken up block printing after them. "The attires that we wear are not fancy and the dyes we use to print, they (youngsters) feel are harmful. Most of the day we are in these clothes (spoiled due to dyes) working with dyes, this is not a sight that would appeal to a youngster", says Mallikarjun ruefully. Shankar says, "There is nothing beyond in this work... Children now gauge what are the perks and benefits of working". Sathish and Govind Raju agreed that the salary is also not enough to bring youngsters into this line of work. "Whoever is still doing this kind of work are older people like us", remarked Krishnappa. Neither Krishnappa nor Mallikarjun complain about this and have left their children to decide what they want to do in life. Only Sathish is keen to pass it on to the next generation, by insisting that he will teach this skill to his daughter as he believes that no knowledge should go waste.

Hand block printing is dying not just because the younger generation is not keen on learning the craft but also because of the introduction of screen prints. However, Krishnappa says that in screen prints, there is less freedom to manipulate the designs as the patterns are fixed. Plus, there is less scope for creativity. In comparison, in hand printing, one can create ten different designs using the same block. Such textiles, they said, were in high demand until thirty or forty years ago, but since then there has been a steady decline forcing many artisans to take up alternative careers or additional work on the side. In fact,

such artists are scarce to find now. Though they had little knowledge about how many block printers were left in the city, traditionally it used to be the Jangama community who practiced block printing. But there are very few who follow the tradition now. Under such circumstances, the importance of a space like Tharangini becomes of prime importance in sustaining a dying craft and artisanal livelihoods.

Fair-Trade Practices

An aspect which sets Tharangini apart is the practice of fair-trade. Fair-trade in institutional terms implies better working conditions, fairer deal for exporters like Tharangini, improved social and environmental standards, no child labour, freedom for workers to express themselves and so forth. For Tharangini, Padmini says, "It [fair-trade] really means to do justice to my team, financially. They should benefit from the success of Tharangini. That's the bottom line of fair-trade." There are multiple fair-trade bodies and the one that Tharangini is closely aligned with is Nest, based in New York. Nest does ethical certification for artisanal-clusters worldwide. What Padmini likes about their process is that they are artisan focused. Artisan businesses don't run like regular businesses, so when someone like Nest do ethical compliance evaluation it is focussed on to how the artisanal business is run. This they compare with big World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) bodies which analyse businesses in general. Tharangini signed up with Nest way back and Padmini says they were enlightened by them on a number of things which they had earlier taken for granted. For instance if they are outsourcing work to women who are working out of their house, how do they manage their wage conditions there? Similarly, she says, while they maintain proper wage records as well as advance records, they also need to ask themselves– "Are we harassing them to get the money back? Are we making them work more hours than they feel like? Are we giving them sick leave benefits? We should not in any way be exploiting them", she says.

Apart from keeping proper records and ensuring healthy working conditions, a crucial fair-trade practice followed by Tharangini, of their own accord, is that of profit sharing. Once a year during Dussera, the team calculates all the profits made during that year. And then depending on the seniority within the organisation, it is divided. She also adds that "...see there is the ecosystem of Tharangini that you see and then there is the ecosystem you don't see in Tharangini, and that is equally important." As an example of the latter, she was referring to Usman Bhai – who is the Saree polish person, or to those who do embroidery for them. There is a cosmos and ecosystem outside of Tharangini and profit sharing with those like Usman Bhai is how they show their appreciation to them. At the same

time she believes that being fair applies to Tharangini's clients as well; one cannot go charging the moon to be fair to the artisans. Therefore, in the practice of being fair, it becomes crucial to find that balance between the people supporting the vision and the producers behind it.

Outreach

One of Tharangini's missions is to provide vocational training to underprivileged groups, which they carry out through their outreach programmes. Through this, Tharangini engages with autism centres in Bangalore where they teach adolescent children or young persons enrolled in these centres the techniques of block printing. The goal is to develop an income-generating skill. Padmini feels that the outreach programme really helps them to achieve their objective of sustainability as well, which at Tharangini means numerous things, but most importantly implies sustaining the handicraft itself. At present, Tharangini engages with four to five centres for the young autistics in Bangalore. However, many more collaborations are in the pipeline as other centres are learning about the success Tharangini has had with autistic persons at these centres.

Tharangini, since the time of Lakshmi, had always been keen on outreach. During Lakhsmi's time Tharangini would do free workshops for Karnataka Women's Welfare Board, teaching women about natural dyes among other things. "She always had that giving or sharing personality", says Padmini and it inspires her. Padmini too organized workshops with the Association of Physically Disabled and the Spastic Society. But it all changed one fine day when Jayshree Ramesh, who is the founder for Asha foundation for Autism, asked Padmini to organise a day-long workshop for adolescent autistic children from four different centres. They never thought it could be a serious vocational training for these children, but the children seemed to just love the colours. Teachers at a centre, NavPrabhuti Trust (http://www.navprabhuti.org/), who were also mothers of the children in the centre said that their kids would do block printing for seven hours straight. It was almost therapeutic for them.

They realized that this could be an avenue for engaging young autistic children at these centres in some income generating in future. Besides, working with autistic children is different. They like to stick to a routine and don't like a change of environment. So, it was also great to have found something they could do in future for a living while enjoying the activity, in their own setting. However, it is only recently that the children have gained the skill level needed to do block printing of intricate designs. "In a centre of 20", says Padmini, "Only four would have gotten to that level of skill". However, the process engages many more children of the centre who do side jobs like aligning the paper to be lined with bags, pressing the block hard

once it has been placed on the fabric and sticking things. Although these children are also given a small share of the profit that is generated by selling of the products made, the idea is to help develop skill sets that can be useful in future. The silk stoles and pouches they make are being showcased and sold at a small scale at Tharangini itself. The response from customers has been very good though Padmini thinks it is still not time to open the floodgates and to give these children a large number of stoles to print. They are thus at a very nascent level with respect to marketing. "It's growing organically", says Padmini. At Tharangini, they are happy with the way they have been able to engage these children so far and to generate whatever little income they could out of it.

However, keeping in line with the quintessential spirit of Tharangini, the entire team at Tharangini is also a part of and a driving force behind the outreach programmes. Sathish and Krishnappa keep visiting these centres to teach the children the various methods and techniques involved. Bhanuamma and Yashodhara, who are the colour mixers, take extra care to ensure the shades that are being given to them for printing are right. The family of artisans and staff at Tharangini are proud of the fact that they are involved in such outreach programs. They are definitely behind Padmini. It needs to be accepted like a shared objective for it to work, explained Padmini with a smile.

photo by Sneha Gutgutia

Block printing on stoles of jacquard fabric done by autistic children as part of Tharangini's outreach programme

Reflections

Sustainability is at the heart of Tharangini. It has been sustaining the craft of hand block printing in the context of Bangalore, which does not have an ecosystem that supports crafts like one would find in Jaipur or Kolkata. In the last decade, a lot of the printing units have shut down in Bangalore. "Either they have converted into screen, or they are just gone...or owners have decided to move to digital format", explained Padmini. This leaves artisans to move out of this field into other fields to earn a livelihood. Considering the current state of this field, Tharangini has

indeed set an example by keeping the studio and the livelihoods of the artisans alive and intact. They have also, from the very beginning, recognised the importance of ensuring environmental sustainability of their enterprise. The dyes used are mostly natural or organic certified, water is recycled and other raw materials namely, paper and fuel is used responsibly. The studio also has the largest collection of hand blocks in India. Apart from the above, Tharangini also promotes fair-trade and fair wage standards for their artisans and values them and their skill as something beyond a mere commodity.

An important aspect to delve into is the scale and cost of production at Tharangini in comparison to that followed by majority of producers. Today there are a lot of small enterprises similar to Tharangini, operating on similar lines of natural dyes, promoting the art and so on. However, with the costs of raw material, labour and land increasing day by day, such sustainable products are typically a lot more expensive than mass-produced goods. How do such enterprises expect their wares to be affordable and accessible to the general populace? And can such a model be replicated across large scale garment factories? The scope of such line of thinking itself is limiting because Tharangini and the likes need to be looked at as producing for a niche market amidst the whole scale of producers.

Though we see an increase in the demand for these niche and sustainable products, how willing is the future generation to take this up as a career? Some of the older artisans themselves feel that there is not much scope for the next generation in this field. How will such a setup sustain in the long run? Though the artisans were happy about their work at Tharangini, they did not place as much importance to the fair wages and distribution of profits they received as much as the emphasis that is given to it in fair-trade by the world outside. Might

altering the structure of Tharangini from a proprietorship into a collective of artisans, such as a cooperative society, change this scenario? Will more responsibility bring more sense of ownership in the work and in turn more interest among the artisans? "I think it's a great thing if it can be well-run", remarked Padmini. However, she also pointed out that the crafts people do not want to engage in the hassle of managment. "They just want to come and stay engrossed in their work", she explained. This despite the fact that such a collective and association could bring in more tangible benefits to the artisans.

The trouble with such enterprises is that they are exoticized. And maybe such exoticizing works for the enterprise to bring in more customers and orders. However, one also needs to look at the work carried out by the artisans as work/employment which pays the house hold bills. This is a fine balance that Tharangini must maintain – for the art and craft as well as for the individuals creating them.

Padmini envisions a multitude of things for the ecosystem which is Tharangini; from thoughts on collectivization within the artist community, to promotion and benefits from the state, to understanding what artists at Tharangini do in their everyday life, to having an all-women run centre, her vision encompasses ideas and realities that need both exploration and reflection.

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