

Alternatives India
VIKALP sangam



In Search of
Alternatives...

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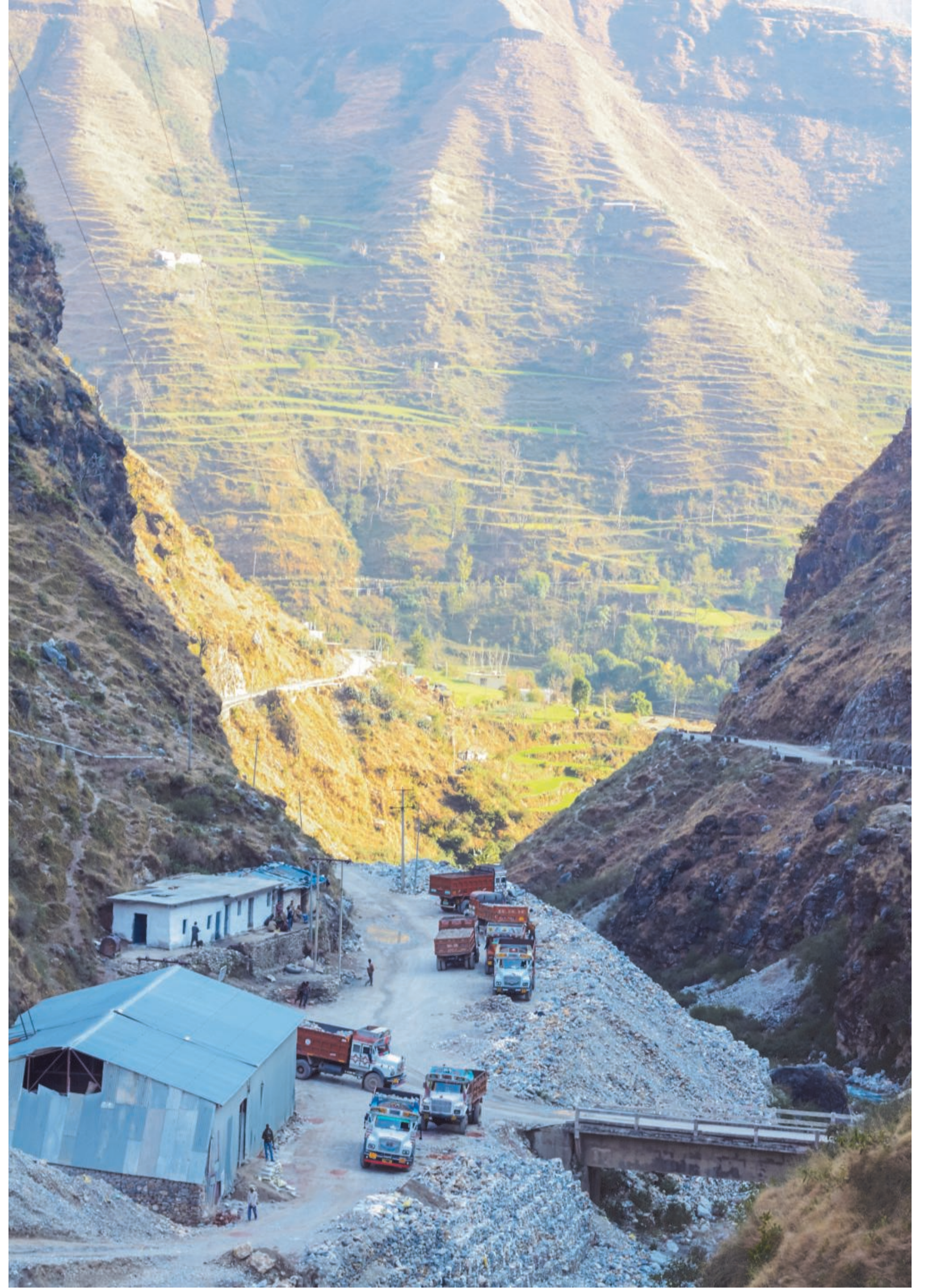
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Introduction



The severe negative impacts of the current model of ‘development’ and ‘globalisation’ include ecological destruction, displacement of communities, disruption of livelihoods on a mass scale, and growing socio-economic inequities. These impacts have been widely documented, written and talked about.

However, there are also myriad attempts at generating and practicing alternatives that provide viable pathways for human well-being that are ecologically sustainable and socio-economically equitable. But they are often small, scattered and unlinked, and thereby not documented enough to be widely known. They have certainly not been threaded together into comprehensive frameworks or visions of an alternative society and are far from reaching a ‘critical mass’ to challenge and change the dominant paradigm.

This is an exhibition from these practiced alternatives that hopes to illustrate the diversity and richness of our lands, rivers, forests, mountains, agriculture and the people who are taking care of them. These are just an initial set of examples and not the full set of themes; more will be added as the exhibition grows and travels. Also, the photographs come from a small group of people, but it is hoped that they are inspiring enough that other people involved with initiatives like these will want to contribute their own creativity – be it photographs drawings, audio or video – and in time create a viscerally compelling volume that captures the spirit of an alternative future.

Livelihoods



Top: A platoon of Rabaris and their camel herds on one of their migrations.

In **Kachchh**, a group of organisations are working together on matters as seemingly disparate as pastoralism, resource conservation, rain-fed agriculture and crafts.

They have come to realise that everything is connected to everything else.

One of these organisations, **Sahjeevan**, works with pastoral peoples like the Gujjars and Rabaris in the Banni, advocating for community & habitat rights and securing grassland and water resources on which they depend.



Left: A community meeting of the Gujjars in the Banni landscape, expanses of which have been taken over by invasives or have turned saline.

Middle: Sahjeevan is aiding in resource mapping to help secure grazing pastures and water holes.

Right: Grasslands and flood-plains still remain, home also to wildlife such as flamingoes and the great Indian bustard.



Elsewhere in Kachchh, Sahjeevan's efforts have conserved **local breeds** of cattle, allowing communities to earn an income through sale of milk, and to recycle cow-dung as an input in subsistence agriculture. In this it is being aided by the organisation **Satvik** that promotes organic farming (see page 7).



Left: Kankrej - a local breed of cattle long adapted to the harsh climate of Kachchh - has now been recognized as a unique breed.

Middle: A group of Rabaris in the Lakhpat region who returned home after 16 years following the coming of a dairy.

Right: An unfortunate shift however with the coming of dairies is increase in buffalo-keeping. Buffaloes require considerably more water and fodder.

Livelihoods (contd.)

A key dimension of these efforts is also the conservation of **local skills**, which are linked uniquely to a culture and a place, involving the use of local materials such as natural dyes, printing patterns and the cloth itself.

Khamir is a space for these ideas to come together. It markets rain-fed and organically grown cotton in Kachchh as ‘Kala’ (see page 7).



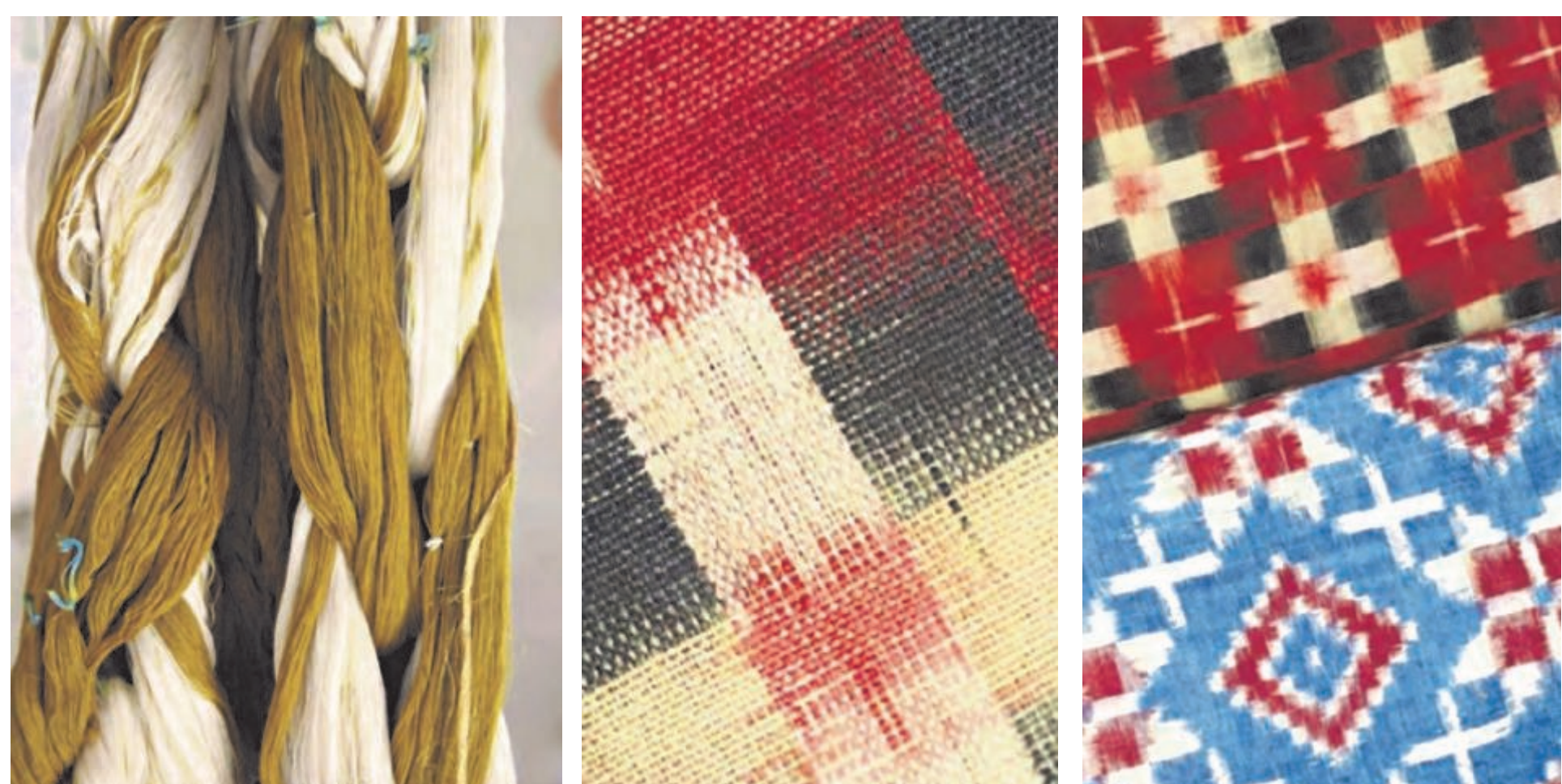
Obtaining indigo from natural dyes.



Khamir's shop in Bhuj.



Couple Narsimha and Manemma, preparing yarn to make telia rumal, a textile indigenous to Telangana.



Left: Dyed warp yarn waiting to be strung on the loom.

Middle & Right: Chitki sarees woven with naturally dyed yarn.

An initiative similar in spirit is **Dastkar Andhra** in the eastern state of Telengana, enabling artisans to pursue the creative use of their hands and minds, in their own homes and in their own time.

Livelihoods (contd.)



The Thar region in the western state of Rajasthan, similar to Kachchh in many ways, also has a family of organisations - together called URMUL - with shared beliefs of community-driven development through programmes that are devised, strengthened, sustained and finally owned by the communities.

Left: A weaver of Marusthali Bunkar Vikas Samiti - a livelihoods generating community based organisation of desert weavers and part of the URMUL network.

Such programmes are not limited to civil society. **Jharcraft** (below) - an initiative of the Jharkhand government - attempts to conserve tribal skills of working with bamboo, cane, mud, lac, jute, grass and metalwork among other art and craft forms. It has enhanced or created livelihoods for over 3 lakh families in just 10 years.



Mud artisans of Jharcraft.



'Dhokra' metalwork - a tribal art form in Jharkhand with a 4000-year-old history.

The ideas of localisation of both production and consumption, are not limited to the 'cottage industries', but also to products considered 'industrial-scale.' In Kuthambakkam village of Tamil Nadu, the former panchayat sarpanch Elango R. envisions a regional collection of villages to be self-sufficient in producing everything from soap to electric power.



Left to right: Youth working in a manufacturing unit in Kuthambakkam, Tamil Nadu; grain processing mills amongst other applications customarily considered reserved for large-scale industry.

Ecotourism

Ecotourism is a global industry that offers varied opportunities and contains characteristic risks. On the one hand it can contribute significantly to local communities' livelihoods, create an invaluable appreciation for their natural resources and offer opportunities for genuine cultural exchange; on the other, if the 'eco' component is superficial, as it often is, it can threaten the very foundations on which it depends, whether of culture or nature, and introduce the logic of profit-at-all-costs over time.

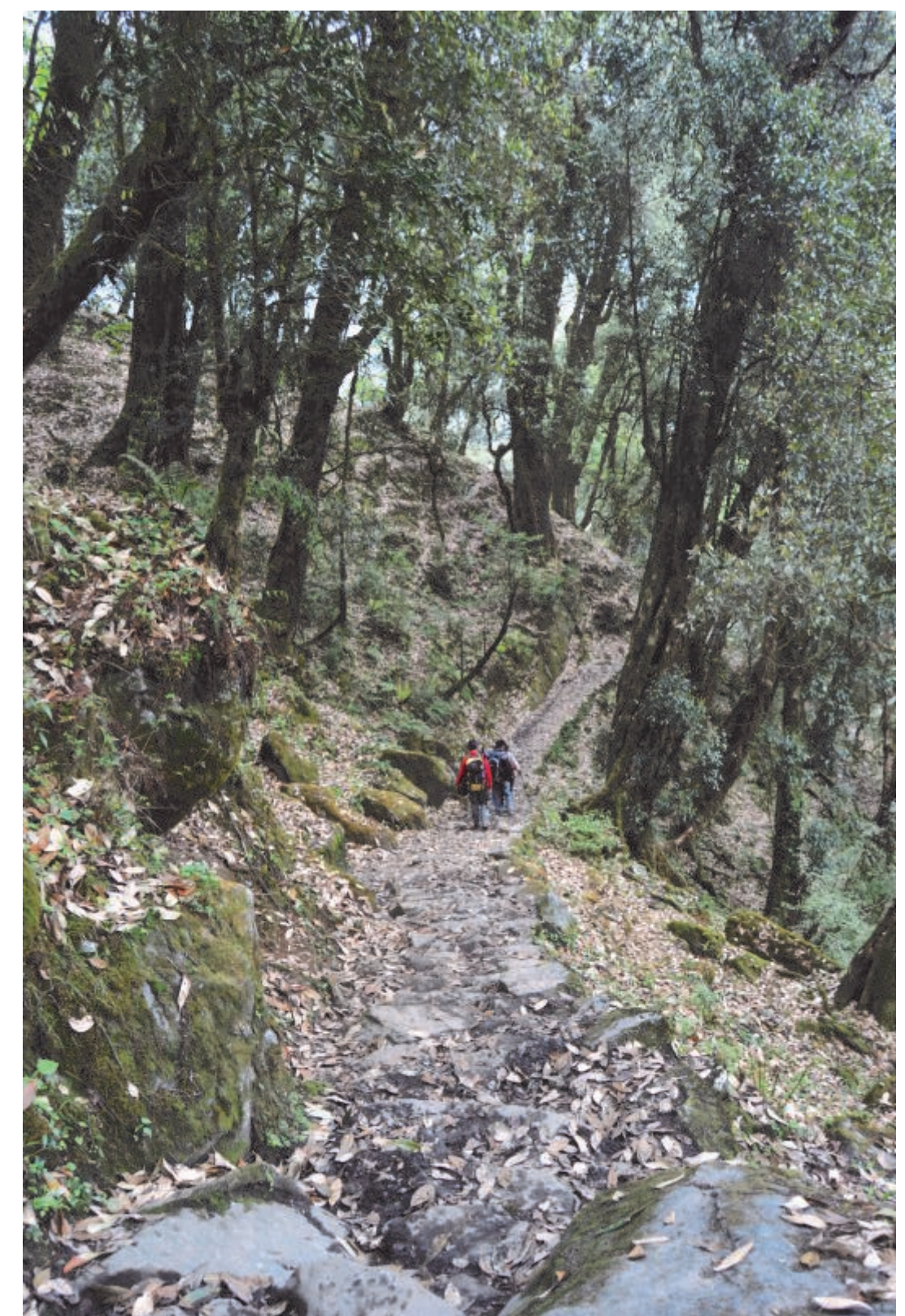


A homestay in Yuksom, Sikkim.



Garbage bins in Yuksom, which now also has a waste segregation center.

An example in Sikkim tells the story of a recovery from some of these less desirable traits of ecotourism. In 1996, local youth of Yuksom - the gateway village to Khangchengzonga National Park - set up the **Khangchengzonga Conservation Committee** (KCC) with a view to make treks into the park more sustainable. The committee introduced the idea of 'zero waste trekking' and organises homestays for visiting tourists. In conjunction with the Forest Department, it banned the use of firewood by trekking operators and instead provided kerosene stoves. In addition, plastic waste is recycled and sold as products at KCC's education center.



Trash-free trails in Khangchengzonga National Park.



Traditional art on Shaam-e-sarhad resort in Hodka, Gujarat, that uses mud and straw architecture.

In Kachchh, the village of Hodka is the gateway to the Banni landscape. Here Shaam-e-sarhad is a tourist camp built, owned and managed by the local community of **Maldharis**. Some of the guiding principles of the initiative are the use of traditional architecture and the conservation of local culture, including the arts, crafts and cuisine.

Food & Agriculture



Above: Traditional seed variety conserved by the women of Deccan Development Society (DDS).



Above: A mobile biodiversity festival organized by DDS in 2001.



Above: Reaching out through community radio, part of DDS's programmes.

Food is the essence of human well-being. There are innumerable examples in the country of initiatives that attempt not only the conservation of traditional seed and livestock variety, but also to secure all the links in the chain from production based on organic principles to consumption based on local markets.

One of the most creative efforts is of Deccan Development Society (DDS) in the eastern states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. In a globalising world, their objective has been to protect the autonomy of food, from seeds and crop production to the natural resource base on which it depends, and from creating a regional market to employing the media as an education tool. This autonomy is achieved through empowering women's sanghams or voluntary village level associations, mostly consisting of dalit women.

In Anantpur district of Andhra Pradesh, the Timbaktu Collective works with many of the same principles. It began in the early 90s by creating village level self-help groups based on thrift and credit, and since then has gone on to create cooperatives to deal with issues as wide ranging as food production to commons management.

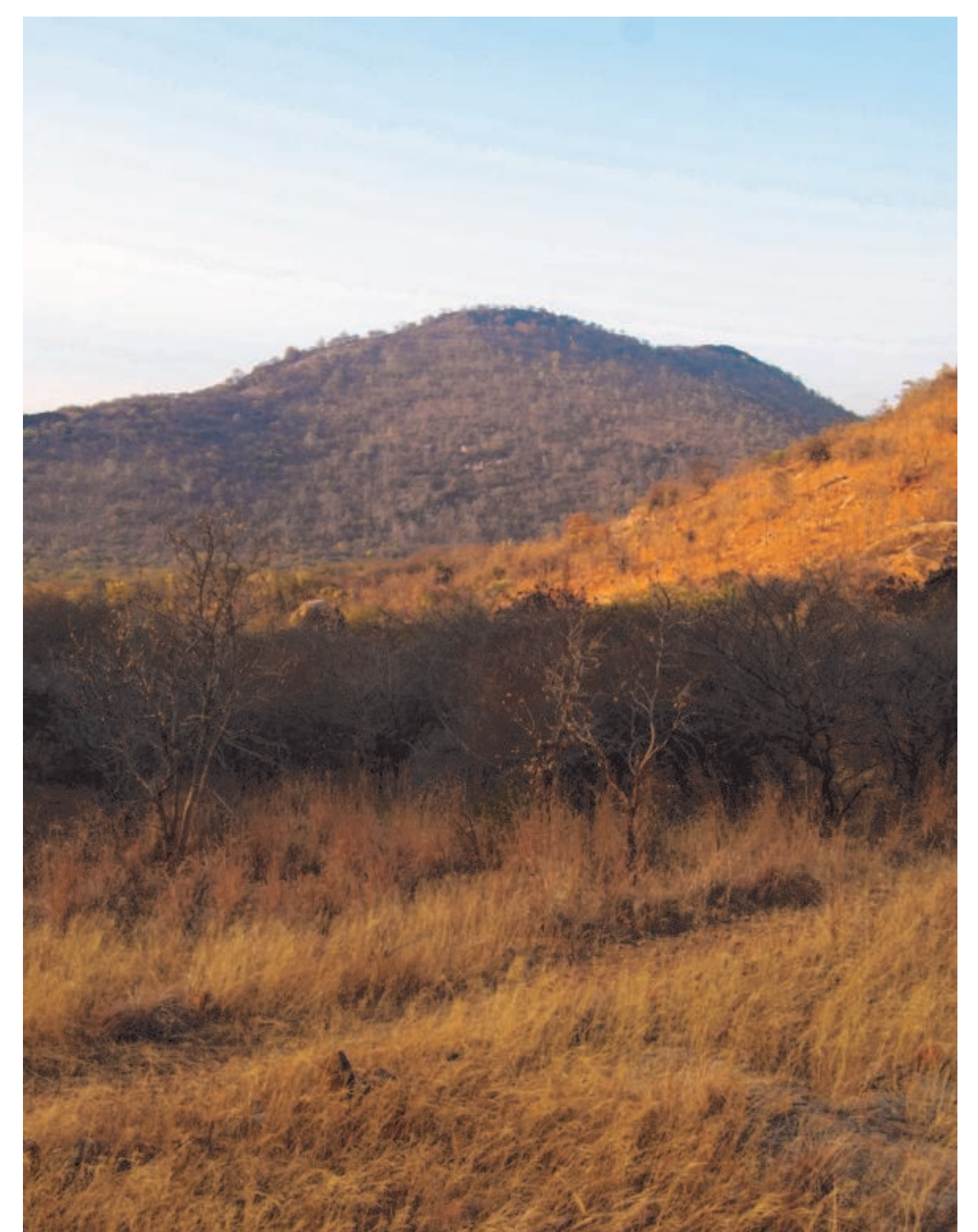
Importantly, both DDS and the Timbaktu Collective have shunned conventional organic certification that is very expensive and perpetuates a 'license raj' culture, and have adopted the Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) approach that is based on farmer-to-farmer peer review, individual integrity and mutual trust.



Ragi is an important millet in drought-prone areas of Andhra Pradesh.



A Timbaktu Collective facility of bottling organic groundnut oil.



Commons management is intrinsically related to food, recognized by the Timbaktu Collective.

Food & Agriculture (contd.)



Left: Labels in Gujarati for some of the seed varieties that Satvik attempts to conserve.



Right: The 'kala' cotton variety of Kachchh in Gujarat is by default organic because it is rain-fed and requires no chemical inputs to the soil. The cotton is being marketed by Khamir.

However, many farmers will switch away to BT cotton if irrigation becomes available.

Agro-ecological and cultural contexts are different from region to region. Farmers in Kachchh have increasingly preferred cash crops with national and international markets, such as cotton and castor. Here **Satvik**, an organisation based in Bhuj, has adopted a two-pronged approach, where on the one hand they advocate traditional drought-resistant seed varieties for food crops, and on the other obtain third-party organic certification for cash crops. This helps farmers to access markets and weed out the use of chemicals in agriculture. Through disseminating information and holding training programmes, Satvik has attempted to create a group of 'seed breeder' farmers who preserve seed variety through continual planting and seed circulation.

Among other examples of preserving seed variety through informal exchange and planting are **Maati** (see page 12) and **Beej Bachao Andolan** in Uttarakhand.

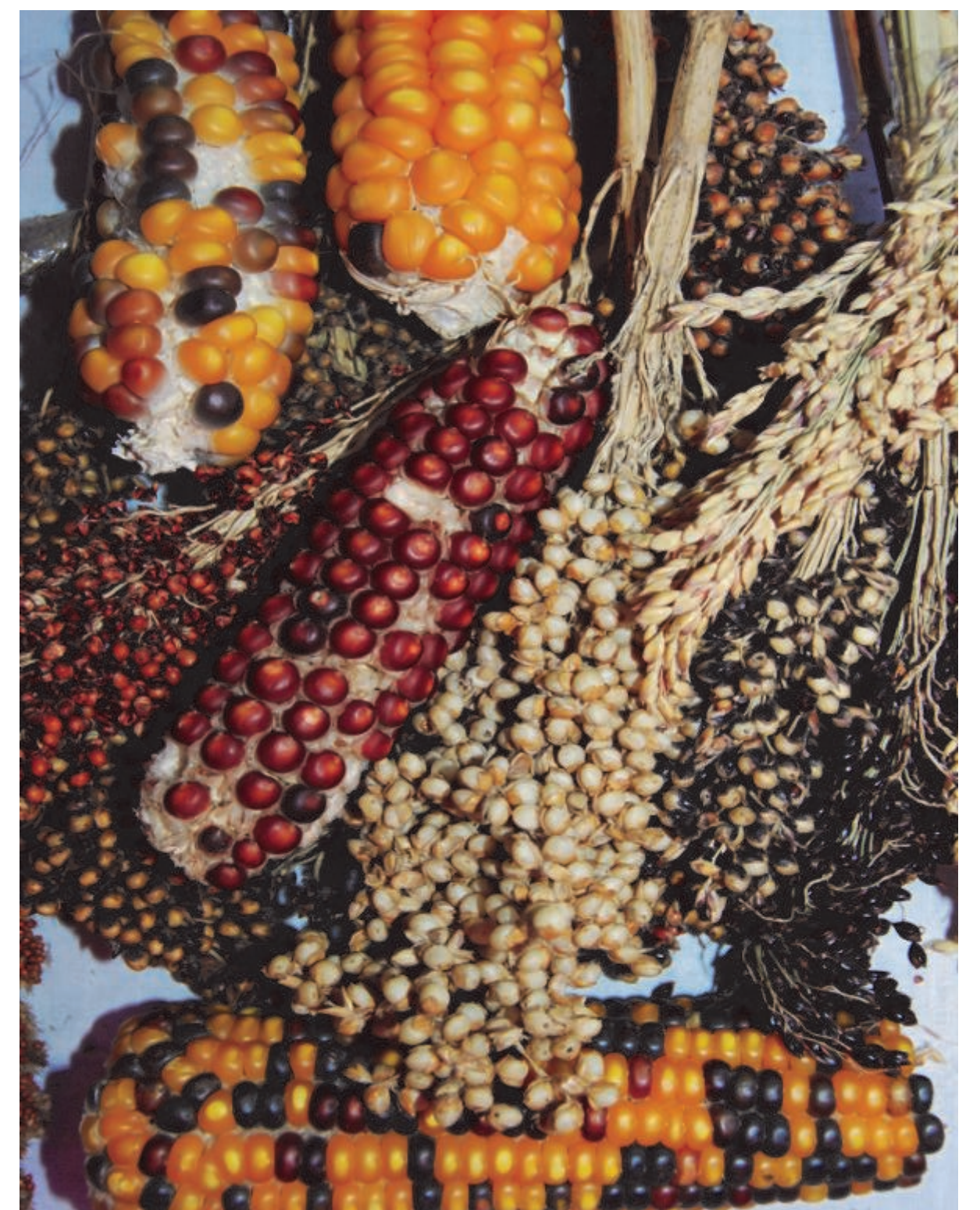
'Seeds are no good in the bank, they must pass through hands and grow in the field.'
- Sailesh Vyas, Satvik



Celebration of forest foods in Bhimashankar, Maharashtra. Wild foods from forests, wetlands and grasslands are a crucial source of nutrition.



Rajma seed variety in Munsiri, Uttarakhand.



Corn diversity in Jardhargaon, Uttarakhand, where Beej Bachao Andolan is active.

Wild Foods



Above: A slow food festival was part of the 2015 Indigenous Terra Madre in Meghalaya, where different communities from the North East and other parts of the world had set up over 40 stalls showcasing indigenous cuisines, as a celebration of the rich diversity and knowledge of indigenous cultures. Seen above is the stall set up by the villagers of Dombah from the West Khasi hills.



Above: Snails, an important wild food, exhibited in the 2015 Indigenous Terra Madre in Meghalaya.

Wild or uncultivated foods include a stunning variety of plants and plant parts including twigs, leaves, fruits, flowers, vegetables, roots & tubers, and fungi; and all kinds of animals including even insects! They are full of taste and nutrition, of great cultural importance, and often crucial survival foods in places that face droughts or harsh winters.

Traditional holistic healers also use wild foods as potent medicines for many diseases.



Above: Children carrying 'Kyu', harvested from the wild in Ladakh.



Above: Uncultivated foods on display as part of a PRA exercise conducted with Dalit women in Telangana by the Deccan Development Society.



Left: Wild mushrooms for sale at the Muniguda railway station; brought by women of the Dongria Kondh tribe that call the region of Niyamgiri in Odisha home.

Right: Leaves and fruits of 'Tsudenyi' (*Clerodendrum colebrookianum*), known to be beneficial in blood pressure control; brought by the Chizami tribe of Nagaland for display at the 2014 Forest Foods & Ecology Festival, Delhi.



Maganlal Ahir

A farmer's portrait



‘One must accept truths revealed by nature as soon as they are visible.’

- Maganlal Ahir.

There was a time when Maganlal, a farmer from Anjar block in Kachchh, used state-subsidized chemical fertilizers and pesticides. He saw his productivity increase in the initial years and then gradually drop, but farming was still turning in a profit. But increasingly he saw that the soil was retaining less moisture and the microbes in it were dying. He decided to turn organic.

Turning organic was painful, for the soil had got used to chemicals. But Maganlal had cows and buffaloes and he used their manure to feed the soil, rotated his crop through the year and even left some land fallow for months at a time.

He also grew trees (right) around his farms to recreate nature's chain of pests and pest-eaters. And then an amazing thing happened - the microbes returned and water stayed in the soil for longer. It would take between 6 and 8 years for his land to be healthy again, but Maganlal was nothing if not persistent. Today he says, he earns as much from his farming as he did when he used chemicals. But a greater satisfaction to him is to see the restoration of nature's cycles on his land.



Community Conservation

Forests provide crucial life-support and livelihoods to hundreds of millions of people, supporting agriculture, animal husbandry, non-timber forest produce, and diverse cultures. The threats that these forests face come from both within and without communities, and their conservation is often most effective when the communities that use them are closely involved in their protection.

Jardhargaon in Tehri-Garwhal in Uttarakhand is a pertinent example. Gaining inspiration from the Chipko Movement of the 70s, this village in the Himalayan foothills formed a forest protection committee to deal with issues of regulating resource use of wood and litter and ensuring equitable distribution to all households of the village. The committee members themselves are chosen by **consensus** in a *gram sabha* (village council) meeting, and not by a majority vote. In addition, women's committees were formed to deal with external threats of mining in an area that is rich in limestone.

Hiware Bazar (below) in Maharashtra is another illustration of holistic thinking about the agro-forest complex; with the idea of *shramadaan* (voluntary labour) and *bandi* (restraint) at its heart - *bandi* of *nasha* (liquor), *charal* (free grazing), *kulhad* (indiscriminate tree felling) and *nas* (population increase).



Above: A meeting of the Van Suraksha Samiti (forest protection committee) in Jardhargaon, Uttarakhand



Above: Villagers putting out a forest fire in Jardhargaon.



Above: Jardhargaon's regenerated forests.

Then



Now



Left to right: Historical change in Hiware Bazar, Maharashtra as a result of community action.

Community Conservation (contd.)

Since 2006, the Forest Rights Act has not only enabled some forest-dependent communities to continue using traditionally accessed forest resources as their right, but also given them a mandate for the conservation of those resources. By late 2014, over 2 lakh acres of forests were reclaimed by communities.

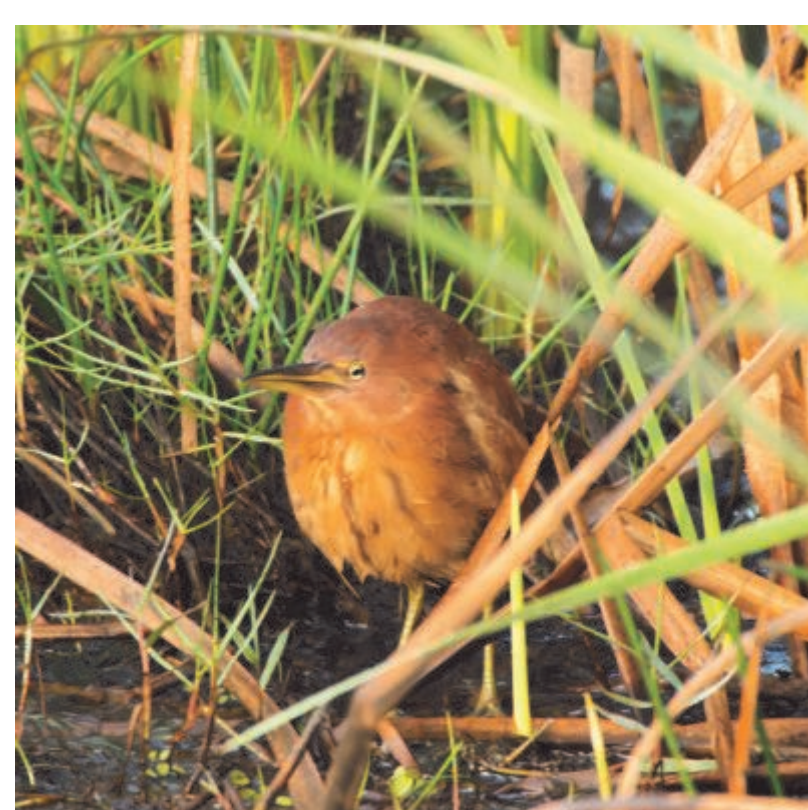
In the village of **Nayakheda** in Maharashtra, **Khoj** facilitated the filing of Community Forest Rights (CFRs) under FRA and the title was granted to the village in 2012. Since then the community has taken various measures to protect forests over 600 hectares, including a ban on hunting and cutting whole trees for firewood. In addition, fines are levied for grazing in non-designated areas and steps taken to mitigate fires.



Above: The pasture-forest matrix of Nayakheda village in Maharashtra, protected legally through the Forest Rights Act, by the local community.



Above: Human and avian co-existence in Mangalajodi, Odisha.



Left to right: Purple moorhen and Cinnamon bittern, two of the more charismatic of the estimated 200 species of birds who call the wetland of Mangalajodi their home.

A directory published by pune-based Kalpavriksh is the world's first country-wide compilation and analysis of CCAs (community conserved areas). It describes a diversity of initiatives, attempting to gain a deeper understanding of conservation of biological diversity, local livelihoods, peoples' rights and development, through around 140 case studies across 23 Indian states.

The idea of protecting forests is not limited to their role in providing resources for human use, but also for their own sake.

The village of **Mangalajodi** in Odisha, on the edge of the famous Chilika lagoon, is such an example, where village residents who previously hunted various species of birds in the wetlands were transformed into their conservators. The effort was initiated by **Wild Orissa** who employed cultural and ethical arguments to help with this transformation, and then trained local individuals as guides. An interesting aspect of this transformation was that the wetland was cordoned off only from hunting, but not other human uses like grazing and fishing, which appear to be in harmony with the birds.



Above: A Kalpavriksh poster that gives a glimpse of the diversity of landscapes and initiatives under CCAs in the country.

Learning & Education



Left: The buildings in SECMOL's campus in Phey, Ladakh, have been built on the principles of passive solar architecture and do not require any additional heating even in peak winter. Use of solar energy enables the campus to be off the grid.

Right: The SECMOL Skills University runs courses for local youth in renewable energy and Rammed Earth Building.

The failings of modern mainstream education are many, including engendering a culture of conformity and ultra-competition, and being increasingly absorbed by corporate values.

The **Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL)** is a departure from that ethos, providing instead a space that nurtures individual choice and creativity, innovates technology that is locally useful, develops educational material that is locally relevant, and is diversified enough to value both intellectual and physical work. SECMOL's work began in the 1980s and was a result of Ladakhi students failing within the local government's education system. Its alumni now include, among others, an all-female travel company and an award-winning filmmaker.



SECMOL students at a musical workshop

In Andhra Pradesh, Deccan Development Society's **Pachasaale** (the green school), focuses as a part of its curriculum on hands-on skill development such as carpentry, tailoring, book binding, permaculture and pottery, in addition to the more conventional teaching of language, science and mathematics.



Pachasaale students learning through both books and hands-on skill development.



Left: A Jeevanshaala campus in Bhitada, Madhya Pradesh.

Right: Students playing with a puppet in a Jeevanshaala in Manibeli, Maharashtra.

In Narmada valley, the Narmada Bachao Andolan's **Jeevanshaalas** were born from the struggle of local communities against forced displacement. Through an education based on the knowledge and dignity of tribal life, the schools help children to both relate to their culture and be aware of the larger political system that they are part of.

Learning & Education (contd.)



Clockwise: Early morning yoga, pottery, outdoor exploration and farm work at Imlee Mahuaa in Balenga Para hamlet in Kondagaon, Chhattisgarh.

“ Very few of us come to school just to learn to read and write and do math and science. We come here to listen to stories of adventure, to read books that take us into faraway lands, to dig into sand and clay, to go walking on the long boundary wall, to draw and paint, to play games, to go for picnics, to run up the slide the wrong way, to sing, and to chat merrily with our friends. So each of us spends our time at school playing, doing and learning only those things that fascinate us in a culture that deeply respects our individuality.” - students of **Imlee Mahuaa**, a rural school in Chhattisgarh’s tribal belt, that trusts children to take responsibility for their own education. The school fosters independent learning in an atmosphere where the children enjoy full freedom to decide when and what they would like to do or learn at school, and to initiate and implement it on their own or with the involvement of adults.

On the other hand, **Marudam Farm School** in Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu does have scheduled classes. But within this framework it still allows for freedom of choice that cherishes hands-on, project based and experiential learning including arts, crafts, drama and outdoor activities. The school is committed to an inclusionary model based on bringing together a body of students and teachers with very diverse backgrounds.



Clockwise: At Marudam Farm School, individual learning such as sewing blends seamlessly with collective exploration of landscapes and creative pursuits such as film-making and music.

Women's Empowerment



Left: Women are still the backbone of rural life in India, with significant contributions in household work, agriculture and resource management; and more recently, in politics and as drivers of social change.

Middle: Members of Maati Sangathan in Sarmoli, Uttarakhand.

Right: Pushpa, a member of Maati, weaving an 'aasan', a product made from locally procured sheep wool.

Maati in Sarmoli, Uttarakhand is a collective of about 20 women that first came together as a response to domestic violence. They have since grown into a living example of direct democracy, through participation in local politics, in management of their forest and water resources, in agriculture based on seed diversity and in complementing their livelihoods with low-impact tourism based on homestays.

At the other end of the scale is **Kudumbashree**, a mammoth state-led initiative in Kerala that attempts to empower women through a decentralized governance structure from the bottom up (self, neighbourhood, district); and training, networking and marketing for micro-enterprise set-ups that produce goods locally. While the programme has been exemplary in empowering women, challenges remain in ensuring local sourcing of raw materials and local consumption of products.



Left to right: A cloth-weaver in Thiruvananthapuram district and a women's group of a Nutrimix (supplementary food) production unit in Kochi, part of the Kudumbashree network.

Decentralised Governance



A meeting in Mendha-Lekha.



Both agricultural land and fish (and other natural resources) are now collectively owned in Mendha-Lekha.

‘We elect the government in Mumbai and Delhi, but we are the government in Mendha-Lekha!’

Mendha-Lekha village in Maharashtra was one of the two first villages to legally win community rights over their forests. Its adivasi communities earn substantial incomes through sustainable use of their natural resources and share this wealth equitably for village reconstruction. In fact recently, all residents of the village voluntarily donated all of their agricultural land holdings to the gram sabha (village council) to prevent private ownership of a vital resource.

The decision further strengthens the gram sabha, enabling it to better protect collective interests of food, water, shelter and education from threats from both within and outside the village.

In Nagaland, a series of workshops were held across the state by the government to understand the challenges of delivering government services, which led to the ‘**communitisation**’ of welfare schemes, rather than their privatisation. Within this, the communities can take the ownership and management of institutions across sectors, such as health (including traditional healing), education and power.

What examples like Mendha-Lekha, communitisation in Nagaland and the participatory budgeting process of Pune (page 17) show is the need for an alternative politics that focuses on direct and delegated democracy, where decision-making starts at the smallest unit of human settlement, in which every human has the right, capacity and opportunity to take part, and is respectful of the needs and rights of the currently disprivileged. Such a politics would provide due space to individuals, but within the umbrella of collective priorities necessitated by the need for social and environmental justice.



A traditional healers’ group in Sendenyu, Nagaland.



A community health centre in Khuzama, Nagaland.

Urban Sustainability



Left & Middle: Women of SWaCH on their daily drives in Pune, Maharashtra; the buckets of different colours denote segregation of organic and inorganic waste.

Right: One of SWaCH's waste collection centers in Pune; the sketch on the wall appeals for segregation between wet and dry waste.

SWaCH is a women's co-operative of self-employed waste-pickers, collectors and other urban poor. They are involved in the urban waste cycle, from the point of generation in homes and offices (by insisting on segregation at source) to its disposal and recycling. Their relentless campaign has led to not only better waste management but also a greater awareness of the issues facing waste-pickers and their eventual empowerment to lead a more dignified life.

But they can only do so much. The issue of garbage needs a larger movement in urban centers to reduce generation of waste in the first place, to move away from or innovate alternatives to packaging, and finally by transforming an economy excessively dependent on consumption.



Left: Small check-dams to prevent water run-off in Abdasa, Kachchh.

Far left: Well revival at Bera-Hadaphar in Abdasa, Kachchh.

In Kachchh, several dozen villages have shown that even in India's lowest rainfall area, careful harvesting, management, and use of rainwater provides all the local needs. Traditional and modern hydrological knowledge have been combined to revive old systems or create new ones.

Such water security and self-reliance has also been achieved in several low-income colonies of Bhuj town, by reviving traditional harvesting structures, and creating Water Management Committees to ensure equitable and sustainable use.

In both the above, communities have been facilitated by NGOs like **Sahjeevan**, **Arid Communities & Technologies** (ACT), **Kachchh Mahila Vikas Sangathan** (KMVS), and Urban Setu of **Kachchh Nav Nirman Abhiyan**.

Right: Recharge of wells and lakes in Bhuj.

Middle & far right: Communal water systems in slums of Bhuj.



Urban Sustainability (contd.)



Kaikondrahalli lake in Bengaluru, Karnataka has been restored through community action.



A water-harvesting tank in Rainbow Drive colony. Bengaluru, Karnataka.

Kaikondhrahalli lake in the city of Bengaluru faced many of the typical problems that urban water bodies in India face, including encroachment by buildings on its periphery, sewage disposal and immersion of religious articles during festivals.

However beginning in 2009 people of varied backgrounds including citizens , private donors and the local administration came together to carry out various restoration activities such as de-silting and providing alternative tanks for religious activities. Kaikondhrahalli is now a source of fodder for nearby villages, a recreation site for urban visitors and home to bird and other animal life. It is part of a wider attempt to restore a chain of water bodies in a city which was once famed as the city of lakes.

Part of that effort recognises that protecting lakes begins at the points of origin of sewage and other urban waste - homes, colonies and offices. Rainbow Drive is a colony of over 300 households in Bengaluru that harvests rainwater in each house and on street-sides, treats and recycles its wastewater, composts all its wet waste and organizes recycling of its solid wastes. This effort was begun by the residents themselves and the systems are maintained collectively.

In the city of Pune in Maharashtra, a unique effort is ongoing in an attempt to decentralize decision-making of budget allocation. Citizens have a say on where money should be spent on a range of urban works including paths to walk and cycle, playgrounds and gardens, treatment of waste and water, bus stops, planting of trees, etc.

A Centre for Environment Education (CEE) poster (right) documents the monthly process.

Participatory Budgeting in Pune

Pune Municipal Corporation makes a separate allocation of Rs 50 lakhs per electoral ward for citizens to make suggestions for works to be done in their ward.

- Provision introduced in 2006 and implemented every year since then
- Budget allocated for such works is 1-2% of the total municipal budget
- Type of works eligible: Footpaths/bicycle tracks, Playgrounds, Gardens, Signs, Bus stops, Traffic lights, Streetlights, Toilets, Waste, Water, Sewage, Roads and Others.

**Centre for Environment Education (CEE) Urban Programmes Group is working with PMC and citizens group in Pune to evolve such improvements to PB processes .*

Current Budgeting Process

Additional Proposed elements in Budgeting Process*

April	Pune Municipal Corporation publishes its budget on website	Budget presentations / discussions on local cable, through newspapers and at ward level
May	Printed Budget book publicly available	Social audit of works done in previous year
Jun	Administrative and financial approvals for proposals which are not affected by monsoon	Participatory needs assessment
July		Development of proposal ideas for PB
Aug	Tenders issued for works to be executed in current year. Advertisement about Participatory Budget inviting citizens suggestions for works for their neighbourhoods	Monitoring of tenders issued for PB works to be executed in the current year
Sept	Re- allocation of budget(Financial half year) Last date for citizens to submit PB forms	Deliberative meetings at neighbourhood level on proposals for PB
Oct	Prioritization of proposals for PB through an open exhibition, deliberation and voting at Prabhag(electoral ward) level	Prabhag Samiti meetings and publication of minutes with reasons for selection/ rejection of proposals through PB process
Nov	Children's Day announcement of relevant works	
Dec	Draft Budgets by Administrative Ward Offices including citizens suggestions (those approved by Wards Committee) submitted to PMC Accounts Dept	World Disability Day announcement of relevant works
Jan	Municipal Commissioner's Budget presented. Has a special section for works approved under PB	Monitoring of budget revisions by Municipal Commissioner and General Body to track inclusion of PB works
Feb	PMC Standing Committee's Budget presented (revised version of Municipal Commissioner's Budget)	Discussions on Draft Budget in public meetings, media.
March	General Body of PMC debates and approves the Budget accepted by Standing Committee before 31st March	Women's Day announcement of relevant works

Developed by Centre for Environment Education. November 2014

Energy



Children of Dharnai, a village in Bihar that runs exclusively on solar power through a micro-grid established by Greenpeace India.



Solar-powered streetlights in Dharnai

Nowhere is the contrast between localisation and centralisation more apparent than in how electric energy is produced and distributed. Even sources of energy traditionally considered as alternate such as solar and wind can be destructive if the scale is large and if design and implementation are exclusionary and informed by profits alone (right).

But when the scale is local, and when the end-user is a participant in the process, renewable sources of energy can be socially just and environmentally prudent. **Greenpeace India** has demonstrated successfully (top) that a settlement of 450 households and 50 commercial establishments can run on a solar micro-grid.



When 'alternative' energy becomes a menace; large scale windmills in Kalpavalli in Andhra Pradesh that drastically alter land-use and water drainage patterns, threatening wildlife and human subsistence.



Clockwise from left: Panels installed by SELCO powering homes, schools and small businesses in south India.

SELCO (left), a social enterprise employing solar panels and micro-grids, has helped thousands of poor families in south India own their own solar units.

It is important to note however that energy security also requires serious efforts at reducing elite consumption, and increasing efficiency of production, distribution, and use.

Food in Sangams



Left to right: A women's group from Ledo village with traditional food; at the Vikalp Sangam held in Leh.



Above: 'Phaktsa Markhu', a sweet made from wheat flour, dried cheese, and local butter and sugar; at the Ladakh Vikalp Sangam.

At each of the Vikalp Sangams (see page 20), local food has been offered by the hosts, as part of the effort to demonstrate and encourage diversity of local knowledge and cultures. At Timbaktu, the first Sangam had a delicious variety of millet-based dishes and drinks. In Tamil Nadu there was Chukku Malli (a drink of coffee, ginger and coriander), and steaming Pongal (a boiled rice dish), among others. In Ladakh, several foods impossible to get in Leh's restaurants but still eaten in many villages, were given to participants, including Tapu (buckwheat flour with walnut) and Khambir (a bread of a local variety of whole wheat). In Maharashtra, there were diverse millet and pulse-based dishes and spicy chutneys such as Thecha (a chutney made from chillies). This journey of diversity will continue in future Sangams as well.



Above: Bhakris made from Makka (corn), Bajra (pearl millet), Jowar (sorghum), Urad (black gram) and Moong (green gram); and a variety of chutneys of flax, chilly, tomatoes and yogurt; at the Vikalp Sangam held at Wardha, Maharashtra.

The Sangams

Every grassroots practice and movement - whether of sustaining livelihoods and participatory governance, of conserving agriculture and forests, of transforming education and urban spaces, or of empowering women and other oppressed segments of society - has contained within it a diverse heritage of ideas, cultures and worldviews. Can these seemingly isolated perspectives and visions be brought together to form a comprehensive framework that poses fundamental alternatives to today's dominant economic and political system? Can we then collectively evolve a vision of an alternative future?

For this, it is essential that a platform exists for people and groups and movements that practice alternatives to come together in regional and national gatherings to constructively challenge and learn from each other, build alliances and evolve alternative worldviews. We call these Alternatives Confluences or Vikalp Sangams.

The first few Sangams have been held at Andhra Pradesh (October 2014), Tamil Nadu (February 2015), Ladakh (July 2015) and Maharashtra (October 2015). For more information, please see: <http://goo.gl/2n5BTe>



Left to right: The joyous gatherings at Timbaktu Collective (Andhra Pradesh), CESC (Tamil Nadu), LEDeG (Ladakh Ecological Development Group in Ladakh) and Sevagram Ashram (Maharashtra).



The Sangams have been an exciting combination of serious discussions and fun activities such as games and hikes, and cultural explorations through art, music and theater.

The name 'Vikalp Sangam' is Hindi for "Alternatives' Confluence".

As the world hurtles towards greater ecological devastation, inequalities, and social conflicts, the biggest question facing us is: are there alternative ways of meeting human needs and aspirations, without trashing the earth and without leaving half of humanity behind?

Across India (as in the rest of the world), this question is being answered by a multitude of grassroots and policy initiatives: from meeting basic needs in ecologically sensitive ways to decentralised governance and producer-consumer movements, from rethinking urban and rural spaces towards sustainability to struggles for social and economic equity. This book, based on a mobile poster exhibition, is an effort towards creating awareness of such stories.

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