Eternal
Bhoomi

Ecological Wisdom | Social Justice | Holistic Thinking | Positive Action

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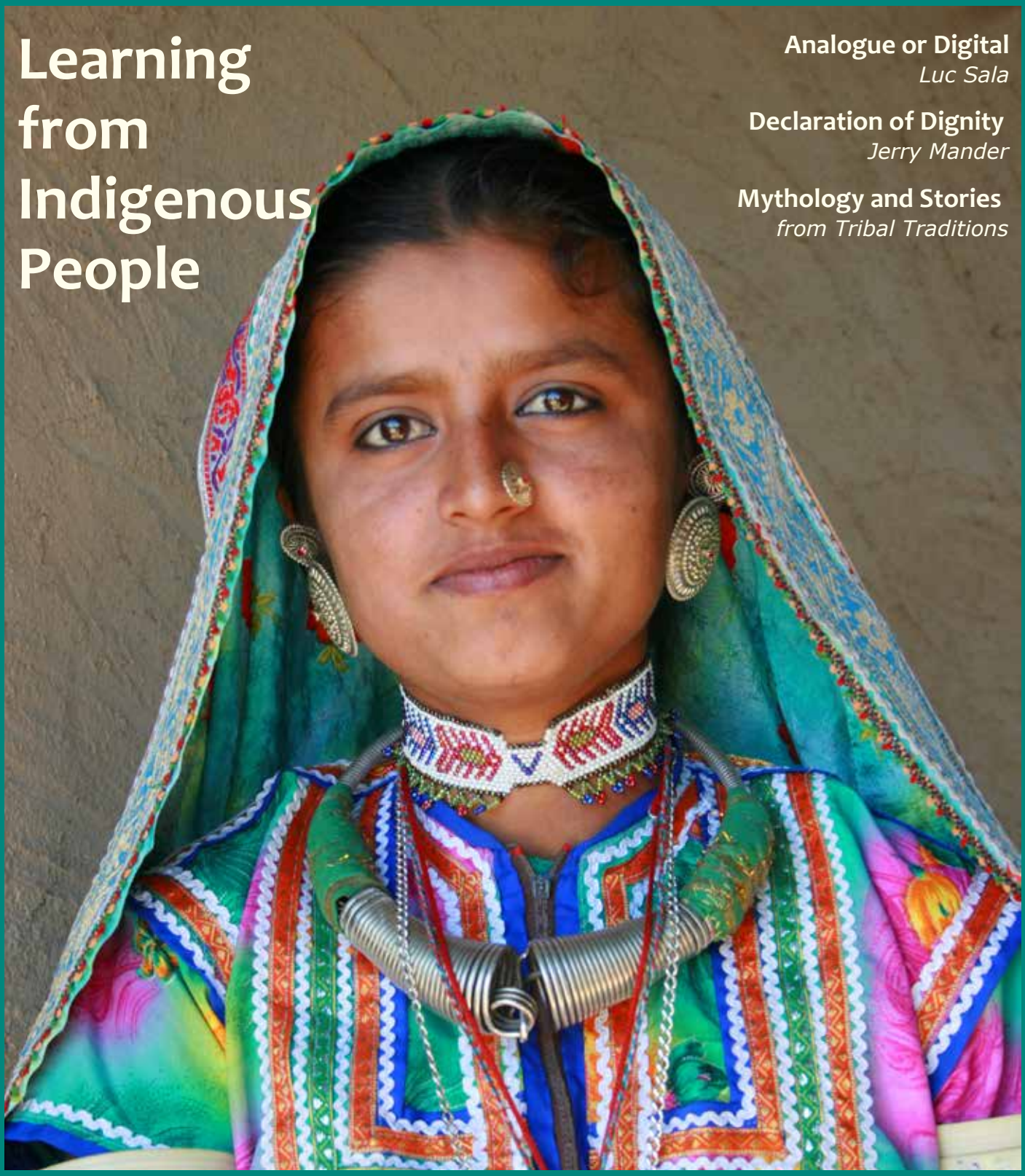
Learning from Indigenous People



Analogue or Digital
Luc Sala

Declaration of Dignity
Jerry Mander

Mythology and Stories
from Tribal Traditions

The Great Spirit Prayer

Oh, Great Spirit
Whose voice I hear in the winds,
And whose breath gives life to all the world,
hear me, I am small and weak,
I need your strength and wisdom.
Let me walk in beauty and make my eyes ever behold
the red and purple sunset.
Make my hands respect the things you have
made and my ears sharp to hear your voice.
Make me wise so that I may understand the things
you have taught my people.
Let me learn the lessons you have
hidden in every leaf and rock.

I seek strength, not to be greater than my brother,
but to fight my greatest enemy - myself.
Make me always ready to come to you
with clean hands and straight eyes.
So when life fades, as the fading sunset,
my Spirit may come to you without shame.

(translated by Lakota Sioux Chief,Yellow Lark in 1887)

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Photo: Mauricio Romero Mendoza

Learning from Indigenous People

Thoreau expressed his contempt for mankind when he said, "It appears to be a law that you cannot have a deep sympathy with both man and nature." Woody Allen put forth his biophobia by proclaiming, "Nature and I are two." A cursory glance at the quotes may suggest diametrically opposite perspectives but the implicit axiom connecting the two seems to be that human beings and nature are primarily distinct and separate entities.

Indigenous cultures on the other hand, have been built on a holistic view of the universe where everything is intimately connected to everything else. On an expanded view of community in which humans, animals, plants, rocks and rivers are all biologically and spiritually fused together. The planet then in such a system does not just come alive, but turns sacred as well. The Indigenous have over thousands of years, become "biospherically conscious" and continue to live harmoniously with all life around them.

Almost.

Over the past centuries though, lands of the Indigenous have been invaded and exploited to the extent that most of them are now close to extinction. Be it the Bo tribe from the Andamans or the Nenets from Northern Siberia. Hence, the need of the hour is to focus on the immediate survival, revival and long-term sustainability of the indigenous way of life.

The greater need now however, is to help ourselves re-imagine a way of life which connects us back to Nature. So in addition to the preservation of the cultures of indigenous people, we need to honour and learn from their wise and grounded way of living.

In this issue, Jerry Mander takes a look at the UN Declaration on the rights of Indigenous and how the landmark documentis a significant step towards the recognition of the importance of safeguarding indigenous culture and the value in preserving its knowledge.

Derrick Jensen, who has contributed an article on how the indigenous perceive the world around them, says that the stories we are told shape the way we see the world and that we experience the world accordingly. He says in his article, "If when you look at trees, you see dollar bills, you'll treat them one way. If when you look at trees, you see trees, you'll treat them differently. If when you look at this particular tree you see this particular tree, you'll treat it differently still."

With that in mind, we also bring you stories of Indigenous people from around the world that exemplify their belief in a living universe whose wisdom lies in maintaining long-term relationship with the animals, plants and the land.

Adil Basha
(Guest Editor for this Issue)

EternalBhoomi Issue No. 26 April - June 2016

Eternal Bhoomi is committed to bringing you holistic perspectives on Nature and sustainability from renowned writers and thinkers as well as practical ideas and examples of earth conscious living from people around the world.

Indigenous People

To revere the Earth, to be mindful and responsible is a way of life for the indigenous around the world. Articles in this issue focus on what we can learn from them to reconnect deeply with the planet.

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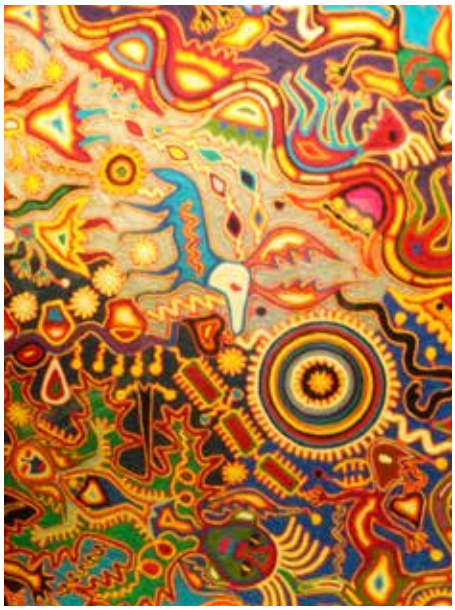

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Adil Basha is the guest editor of this issue. Adil has been a film curator and now treads an alternative path by writing of stories on ecological and social initiatives. He has also been part of the Bhoomi Magazine team and supports Bhoomi Network in multiple ways.

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Cover page Image:

Banni woman from Kutch.
Photo Courtesy: Chris/flickr

Analogue or Digital: A Dichotomy

Luc Sala on why we need to maintain a balance between the digital and the analogue in life.

Photo Courtesy: Guian Bolisay/flickr

These days most people think that digital is the way to go. Digital is progress, and analogue is old-fashioned, even out-of-date. But the difference between analogue and digital should be understood, as it is fundamental in a practical as well as a philosophical context.

The digital age is not new. It started when God commissioned Adam to name all animals and birds (Genesis 2:19). Thus the process of 'naming is framing' started. Applying a limited set of symbols like the names of species is essentially digital, a good way to organise things, but it also restricts. 'Analogue' refers to continuous, unlimited, unsynchronised, non-discrete phenomena, something beyond name and measure – things like love and beauty. Most things in Nature are essentially analogue. The word 'digital' comes from digitus (Latin for 'finger'), as fingers are often used for discrete counting and pointing. Numbers, letters and names are systems of representation. Using them requires following certain rules, and that poses restrictions. Writing is thus digital, while speaking is analogue. We need both.

These days most people think that digital is the way to go. Digital is progress, and analogue is old-fashioned, even out-of-date. But the difference between analogue and digital should be understood, as it is fundamental in a practical as well as a philosophical context.

There are clear advantages for using digital. It has made modern computers and communication possible. Error reduction and elimination of noise are where digital excels. Deconstruction of a whole into standardised parts has obvious advantages. Neil Gershenfeld of MIT's Center for Bits and Atoms, who champions digital production, uses the example of Lego to illustrate how discrete and limited-set components are effective, fast and error-free. The Lego example, however, also shows that while very complex structures can be constructed with digital, achieving beauty through it remains problematic.

One of the essential differences between analogue and digital can be termed as the distinction between love and truth. In our digital age, making such a distinction can help us to understand the direction of human evolution. The digital creeps up on us. Slowly all our media are becoming digital, and the tool most used these days to escape the analogue is the smartphone. Texting is obviously digital. For many, clicking on their digital pocket-secretary replaces the analogue medium of speech.

The advocates of digital assert that, with the limited set of symbols and exponential reduction in error, we can clean up communication, making it faster and reliable. Today we take these functions for granted in our digital world of internet, computers and media. Abandoning ambiguity. The truth reduced to 'yes' and 'no' answers. Wikipedia has become the standard of human knowledge.

The Eastern law of karma reflects the force of change in the universe, seen as a fundamental balance in the wider reality that includes the intangible spiritual realm, which encompasses totality. By contrast, the Western idea of the time-arrow of cause and effect is a digital one. Normal causality remains time-bound and strictly categorised as true or false, good or bad.

Photo Courtesy: Pimthida/flickr

Time as a concept is analogue, but clock time is digital. Clock time ties us down, limits us. The timeless state of the soul, the higher self, is where we can get in touch with the absolute that rises above all dichotomy. One could say that God uses time to create the opportunity to transcend the distinction between love and truth.

Digital is about borders: distinction between you and me, your land, my land. Don't enter my territory! Digital embraces the truth in science, which is based on fact and evidence. Analogue is about sharing, about common interest, about timeless sustenance and responsibility for values. It is slower. It is about feeling. With it mistakes are likely, as there is less effective error-reduction. Digital is more about measuring, feedback, fast response and effectiveness. Both have their points, but at the present time the balance leans towards digital. We need to redress that balance.

While the law is digital, justice reflects the analogue. The original legal system grew out of ritual and into a code. But Anglo-Saxon law has been based on rules; American contracts stipulate each and every eventuality. What is not included in a clause is not part of the deal. This system is more digital than Roman law, where principles, fair play and a sense of due diligence were prevalent.

In religion we see a similar division. There are rule-based and thus more digital religions, which tend to stick to the book; the set of rules is fixed: no bending allowed. You are either with us, or against us! Truth cannot be compromised! Then there are the more lenient religions, where rules are less strict, and forgiveness and love are prevalent. This distinction has deep roots. In essence we talk about magical and anti-magical religions. The more analogue religions cherish and honour the mystical, the intangible and timeless over sticking to the rules. Some religious thinkers are digital reformers, doing away with the ritual. They steer back to the rules and the rational.

Understanding the difference between rule-based digital and more flexible analogue can be applied to many areas of knowledge. In the medical field, the digital way is to use chemicals, surgery and other interventions, while the spiritual, herbal and holistic approach to healing is more analogue, focusing on restorative treatment.

By way of our emergent human self-consciousness we have traded love and interconnectedness for an obsession with fixed truth, inventions and individual recognition. We started to live in larger cities and at the same time we embraced individuality. Our language developed beyond the merely indicative. World culture moved towards a digital approach, with more rules and 'hard' truths, while being less guided by principles, moral values, intuition and undefined feelings. Increasingly we have placed our preference on the digital over the analogue.

The Eastern law of karma reflects the force of change in the universe, seen as a fundamental balance in the wider reality that includes the intangible spiritual realm, which encompasses totality. By contrast, the Western idea of the time-arrow of cause and effect is a digital one. Normal causality remains time-bound and strictly categorised as true or false, good or bad.

Inverting (or escaping) the cause-and-effect relationship offers us a way of defining magic. The analogue is the opposite of rational truth. In the analogue there are no absolute truths, fixed rules, or even errors. Everything flows; existence merges with the symbolic. Flexibility is the name of the game.

Digital is discrete, rational and left-brain, whereas analogue is holistic and right-brain. Life is not black and white: it is an ever-emerging, changing and unfolding experience.

Luc Sala *is a Dutch writer about ritual, sacred journeys and cyberspace.*

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Declaration Of Dignity

Jerry Mander

Photo Courtesy: Rita Willaert

Bonda Poraja woman from Bilaput, Orissa

A landmark document has created a visible set of standards to protect and empower the rights and worldviews of Indigenous peoples.

"Affirming that Indigenous peoples are equal in dignity and rights to all other peoples, while recognising the right of all peoples to be different, to consider themselves different, and to be respected as such… Recognising the inherent rights and characteristics of Indigenous peoples, especially rights to their lands, territories and resources, which derive from their political, economic and social structures and their cultures, spiritual traditions, histories and philosophies…

"Indigenous peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status… Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual and material relationship with the lands, territories, waters and coastal seas which they have traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used… Indigenous peoples have the right to require that States obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands, territories, and other resources…"

– from the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

In 2007, after twenty-five years of negotiation, and despite very strong opposition from some of the most powerful countries in the world, the United Nations General Assembly overwhelmingly passed the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Regrettably, neither the fierce debate about the Declaration, nor its passage, received any notice in the mainstream press of either the US or the UK, an alarming sign of continued invisibility for Indigenous causes. Yet it was a momentous event in human rights history. The Declaration is a unique and profound document worthy of great study and discussion. It codifies for the first time in any international body a set of inherent rights and concepts for the world's 350 million Indigenous peoples at least equal to the previous standard-bearer in these matters, the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, passed in 1948.

Among nineteen preambular points and fifty-four Articles that grant specific rights and recognitions are many that are particular to the difficult situation that native peoples have faced during the last millennium. These include official recognition for the first time of the right of Indigenous peoples who preceded nation-states in a territory by centuries, and who continue to occupy that place, to determine the disposition

of resources in those ancestral lands. In some countries these are called 'prior rights' or 'Aboriginal rights'. They are viewed by some countries as defying their authority and potentially undermining a nation-state's ability to develop resources wherever and whenever it sees fit. Indeed, that may have been the point.

Another Article affirms the right of self-determination for Indigenous peoples, which is also controversial for the world's resource-hunting countries. They worry that Indigenous peoples could exercise sovereignty and try to break away. In fact, many Indigenous peoples already do not think of themselves as a subordinate part of any nation-state.

Perhaps most important is the right of "free, prior, and informed consent". Over centuries, Indigenous lands have been invaded and exploited without the slightest effort to consult or gain approval from those who have lived there for millennia. To this day, corporations and countries use means as varied as military intervention, double-dealing, and lately, WTO trade rules to separate Indigenous peoples from control over traditional resources.

The Declaration is also surely the first major international agreement to specifically confirm collective rights as the rights of peoples in addition to individual rights, thus effectively validating Indigenous collective governance and ownership concepts. It also protects religious and cultural places, artefacts, languages, arts, and the rights to worship and live in a traditional manner, including the practice of subsistence-based economies. The Declaration has advanced protection for Indigenous peoples beyond anything that preceded it, and has arguably also helped protect millions of square miles of lands that might otherwise be ravaged in today's resource-starved corporate-driven global economy.

After twenty-five years of roadblocks, the vote for passage in the UN General Assembly was 144 to 4, with 11 abstentions. Not surprisingly, 'No' voters included the US and Australia. More surprisingly, they also included Canada and New Zealand, usually known for positive human rights stances. All four have big stakes in Indigenous peoples not having rights to restrict development, especially mining, on their lands. Russia, the UK and China also fought the Declaration at various stages, but relented. Certain mineral-rich African countries – Botswana, Namibia and others – opposed the Declaration for a while, given the scale of corporate diamond, coltan (a component of mobile phones) and other mining activities on Indigenous lands within their boundaries. African countries were aggressively lobbied and economically threatened, especially by Canada, to maintain their opposition, but finally nearly all voted 'Yes', with none against.

In today's economy, growth rates determine profits, stock values, ability to attract investment, and CEO salaries. Economic growth is what drives the entire model – its raison d'être.

To achieve rapid growth requires ever-expanding use of natural resources...

The assumption was that it could go on forever...

Alas, much of that resource raiding was performed on Indigenous lands, usually by fraud, force or coercion.

The passage of the Declaration is especially notable for the political moment in which it occurred. The situation of native peoples really cannot be separated from the ecological crises of the whole planet – massive climate change, and the global decimation of key resources – which are direct results of the drives of the global economy towards expansion, development and the promotion of globalised consumerism. Modern corporate-driven economic globalisation is entirely dependent upon sustaining a voracious continuous rate of economic growth. In today's economy, growth rates determine profits, stock values, ability to attract investment, and CEO salaries. Economic growth is what drives the entire model – its raison d'être.

To achieve rapid growth requires ever-expanding use of natural resources, especially oil and gas, water, forest products, fish, arable soils, and key minerals including zinc, copper, coltan, phosphorus and gold. During the last half of the 20th century, when the planet remained resource-rich, all of these were developed at a terrible rate to stimulate spectacular growth and the transformation of materials of the Earth into commodities. The assumption was that it could go on forever.

Alas, much of that resource raiding was performed on Indigenous lands, usually by fraud, force or coercion.

And as a result of this half-century of plunder, all those resources are now seriously depleted. As supplies declined, they became ever more difficult and costly to recover, dramatically affecting costs and bringing global financial chaos. When we view this in combination with climate chaos, we suddenly see clearly the inherent ecological limits of the planet. Now economic growth is itself threatened, as are the underpinnings of globalisation and the continued viability of industrial society at anything approaching its present scale. It's a house of cards. The fundamental problem is the preposterous idea of designing a system based on unlimited economic growth, on a finite planet. It was doomed the moment it started.

But many Indigenous peoples have a special problem. A high percentage of the planet's remnant resources – some say as high as 50% – are located on lands where native people have thrived for millennia. So their lands, already under various degrees of siege for 500 years, are now even more the targets of global corporations.

Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, the dynamic Igorot activist from the Philippines who is also head of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, points out that it is no small irony that the very reason that native peoples have become such targets is exactly because they have been so successful over millennia at maintaining cultures, economies, worldviews and spiritual practices that are not built upon abstract ideas of economic growth or short-term profit seeking.

Most Indigenous societies do not seek to mine the natural world they live within, or to ship mountains of logs, copper or oil across oceans to foreign markets. So, in a world in serious resource decline, many native peoples continue to live successfully in areas of significant natural abundance – in the

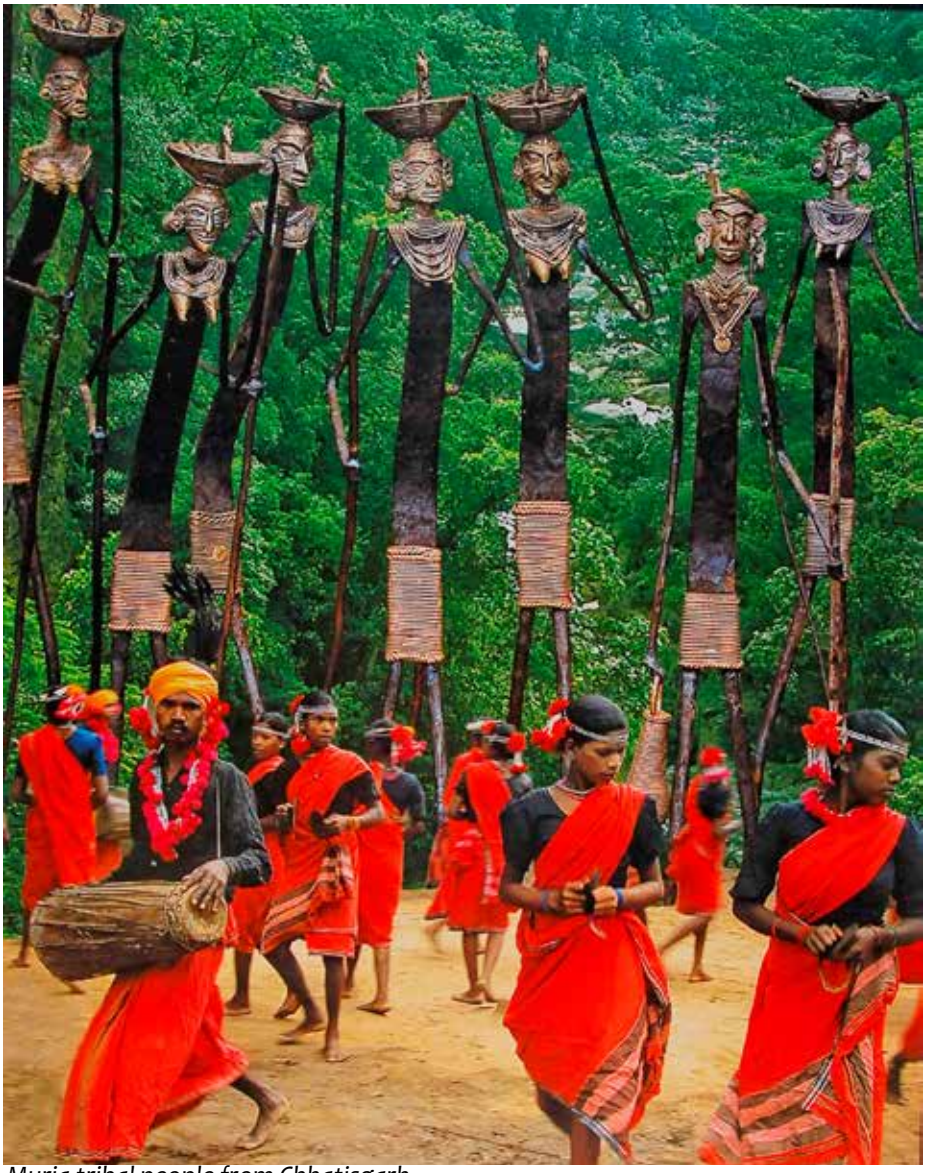

Photo Courtesy: Chris Serour

Muria tribal people from Chhatisgarh

Most Indigenous societies do not seek to mine the natural world they live within, or to ship mountains of logs, copper or oil across oceans to foreign markets. So, in a world in serious resource decline, many native peoples continue to live successfully in areas of significant natural abundance

Amazon regions, in Pacific and South Asian countries, in the Arctic North and in North America – with themselves to thank for it. Rather than following Western development models, native peoples have tended towards such shared primary values as reciprocity with Nature, economies of limits and balance, the central importance of community and collective ownership, and an integration into and sense of kinship with Nature.

Such values are opposite to those of the dominant society, though this would be a great moment for the dominant system to make adjustments. But rather than recognising current economic paradigms as bringing catastrophic failure, the pressures have continued to exploit the world's last resources, leaving Indigenous peoples in the line of fire. Faced with this reality, they have resisted.

The increasingly unified effort among Indigenous peoples over more than two decades to pass the UN Declaration is only one expression of Indigenous resistance over the past fifty years.

They have also organised regionally to fight dams, oil developments, mining operations, conversions to industrial agriculture, forestry operations and, lately, biofuels. These include Igorot battles against giant dams in the Philippines; the halting of oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, led by the Gwich'in people of Alaska; the campaigning by Indigenous peoples of Ecuador and Nigeria against Chevron's oil drilling; and the reversal of the forced removal of the San from their ancestral land in the Kalahari Desert in Botswana, where they had been opposing diamond mining.

Increased Indigenous strength has also been demonstrated politically, especially in South America. Indigenous people have been instrumental in the astonishing conversion of nearly a whole continent away from corporate globalisation, transitioning to more regional and locally oriented economies. Indigenous peoples form a high percentage of the population in many South American countries, and had a role in electing new leaders in Brazil, Ecuador, Uruguay, Venezuela, Peru, Brazil, Argentina and most notably Bolivia, where an Indigenous farmer, Evo Morales, has become president and is introducing traditional Indigenous values into the governing process.

In these cases and others, Indigenous peoples have argued for rights to sovereignty, self-governance, and collective ownership standards that characterised their societies in those places long before oil, coltan and biofuel development existed. In some cases their battle has been for the protection of language, cultural and religious practices, or traditional science and knowledge – particularly against big agricultural and pharmaceutical interests. But the central demand has usually been inclusion in all discussions and decisions about their ancestral lands, and the final right to determine when, if ever, resource removal or other intrusions are permitted, and under what terms. That is the "right of free, prior and informed consent" codified at last in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Some people lament that the Declaration has no enforcement mechanisms. It is a statement of standards and principles, like the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Countries can ignore it. No armies enforce it, and no sanctions are built in. True enough. But it's relevant to ask this: if the statement has no importance, then why did some of the world's most powerful countries fight it doggedly for twenty-five years?

Ultimately, the goal must be to have the Declaration officially recognised and internally codified by individual countries, as well as by regional and local governments, just as the Human Rights document has been.

This is something we must all be able to find ways to encourage.

Photo: Prabhu B Doss

A dogra women at Sonamarg

Photo: Chris

Banni woman from Kutch

In fact, moral statements like this do have effect, and the best example is the Human Rights Declaration. When countries ignore human rights standards, they now often become the subjects of derision and sometimes sanctions. Similarly, passage of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples creates a visible set of standards that the world community asserts must be honoured. A great world body embraced the cause, and this is meaningful.

As for the rest of us, from here forward our job is to support efforts to 'actualise', apply and make concrete the specific expressions of the Declaration within all international negotiations that have bearing on Indigenous communities, whether the discussions focus on resources, trade or climate. A current case concerns the climate change negotiations in the UN itself (called REDD: Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) – which raise ideas like creating 'forest offset markets' for Northern polluters, using forests on Indigenous lands! Typically, Indigenous peoples – who may or may not like such market-based climate schemes – are not included at the table. But now they are strenuously demanding inclusion, using principles of the UN Declaration as leverage.

Ultimately, the goal must be to have the Declaration officially recognised and internally codified by individual countries, as well as by regional and local governments, just as the Human Rights document has been. This is something we must all be able to find ways to encourage.

Photo: Biodiversity International_E.Hermanowicz

Young Girl from African descended tribe, Siddis in Western Ghats

Jerry Mander *is co-author (with Victoria Tauli-Corpuz) of Paradigm Wars: Indigenous Peoples' Resistance to Globalization (Sierra Club Books) and Founder of The International Forum on Globalization. www.ifg.org*

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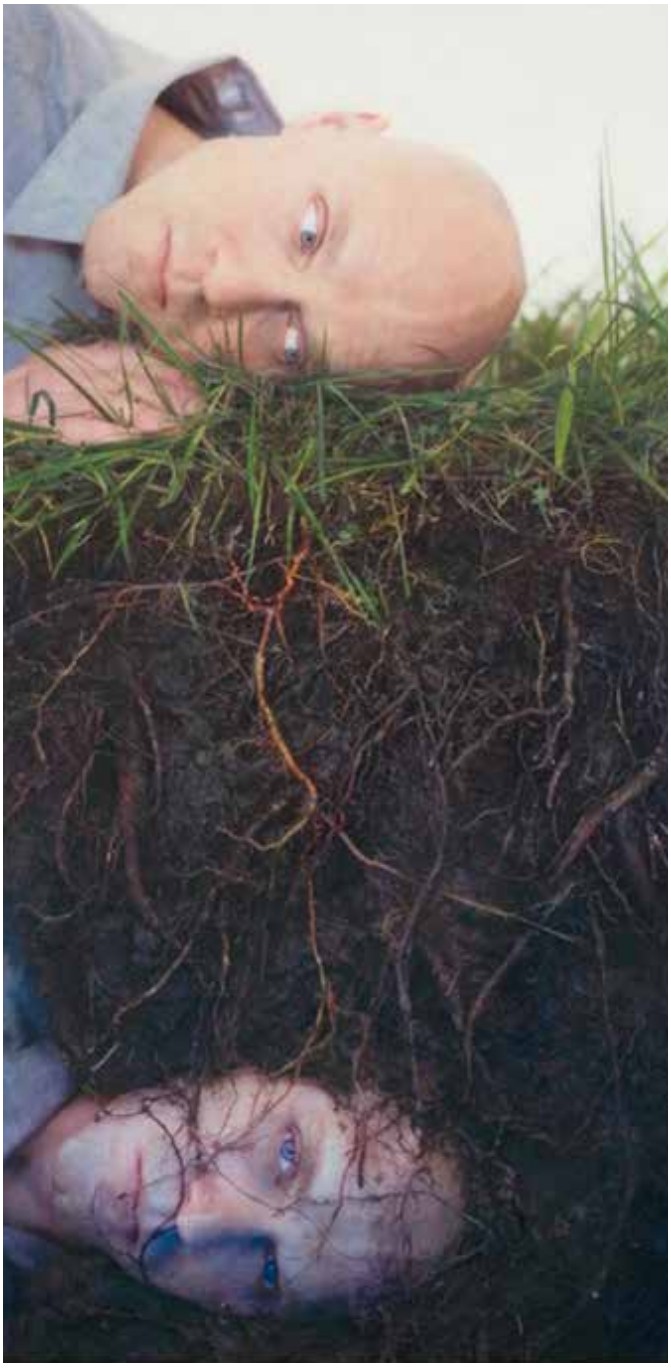

Bloodroot, 2007
Image Courtesy: Shana and Robert Parkeharrison, www.parkeharrison.com

Playing for Keeps

If we want to stop this culture from killing the planet, we might instead try asking how so many indigenous cultures lived in place for so long without destroying their landbases,
asks **Derrick Jensen**

PEOPLE often say, "Okay, so it's clear you don't like this culture, but what do you want to replace it?" The answer is that I don't want any one culture to replace this culture. I want ten thousand cultures to replace this culture, each one arising organically from its own place. That's how humans inhabited the planet (or, more precisely, their landbases, since each group inhabited a place, and not the whole world, which is precisely the point), before this culture set about reducing all cultures to one.

I live on Tolowa (Indian) land. Prior to the arrival of the dominant culture, the Tolowa lived here for 12,500 years, if you believe the myths of science. If you believe the myths of the Tolowa, they lived here since the beginning of time. This story may sound familiar, but its significance has, thus far, been lost on the dominant culture, so it bears repeating: when the first settlers arrived here maybe 180 years ago, the place was a paradise. Salmon ran in runs so thick you couldn't see the bottoms of rivers, so thick people were afraid to put their boats in for fear they would capsize, so thick they would keep people awake at night with the slapping of their tails against the water, so thick you could hear the runs for miles before you could see them. Whales were commonplace in the nearby ocean. Forests were thick with frogs, newts, salamanders, birds, elk, bears. And of course huge ancient redwood trees.

Now I count myself blessed when I see two salmon in what we today call Mill Creek. Another Tolowa staple, Pacific lampreys, are in bad shape. Just three years ago you could not hold a human conversation outside at night in the spring, and now I hear maybe five or six frogs at night. Salamanders, newts, songbirds, all are equivalently gone. The rivers are poisoned with pesticides and herbicides. All in less than two centuries.

Why? Or, perhaps more important, how?

Only the most arrogant and ignorant among us would say something that implies that all humans are destructive, and that the dominant (white) culture is the most destructive simply because somehow indigenous peoples around the world were too stupid to invent backhoes and chainsaws, too backward to dominate their human and nonhuman neighbors with the efficiency and viciousness of the dominant culture. They might even try to argue that the Tolowa weren't actually living sustainably, even though they lived here for at least 12,500 years. But when 12,500 years of living in place won't convince them, it becomes pretty clear that evidence is secondary, and that there are, rather, ideological reasons the person cannot accept that humans have ever lived sustainably. One of these ideological reasons is very clear: if you can convince yourself that humans are inherently destructive, then you allow yourself the most convenient of all excuses not to work to stop this culture from destroying the planet: it's simply in our nature to destroy, and you can't fight biology, so let's not fuss about all these little extinctions, and could someone please pass the TV remote? It's an odious position, but a lot of people take it.

If we want to stop this culture from killing the planet, we might instead try asking how so many indigenous cultures lived in place for so long without destroying their landbases.

There are many differences between indigenous and nonindigenous ways of being in the world, but I want to mention two here. The first is that the indigenous had and have serious long-term relationships with the plants and animals with whom they share their landscape. Ray Rafael, who has written extensively on the concept of wilderness, has said that Native Americans hunted, gathered, and fished "using methods that would be sustainable over centuries

American Indian writer Vine Deloria, says, "I think the primary thing is that Indians experience and relate to a living universe, whereas Western people, especially science, reduce things to objects, whether they're living or not. If you see the world around you as made up of objects for you to manipulate and exploit, not only is it inevitable that you will destroy the world by attempting to control it, but perceiving the world as lifeless robs you of the richness, beauty, and wisdom of participating in the larger pattern of life."

Illustration: Nidhi Aggarwal

and even millennia. They did not alter their environment beyond what could sustain them indefinitely. They did not farm, but they managed the environment. But it was different from the way that people try to manage it now, because they stayed in relationship with it."

That last phrase is key. What would a society look like that was planning on being in that particular place five hundred years from now? What would an economics look like? If you knew for a fact that your descendants five hundred years from now would live on the same landbase you inhabit now, how would that affect your relationship to sources of water? How would that affect your relationship with topsoil? With forests? Would you produce waste products that are detrimental to the soil? Would you poison your water sources (or allow them to be poisoned)? Would you allow global warming to continue? If the very lives of your children and their children depended on your current actions — and of course they do — how would you act differently than you do?

The other difference I want to mention — and essentially every traditional indigenous person with whom I have ever spoken has said that it is the fundamental difference between western and indigenous peoples — is that even the most open Westerners view listening to the natural world as a metaphor, as opposed to something real. I asked American Indian writer Vine Deloria about this, and he said, "I think the primary thing is that Indians experience and relate to a living universe, whereas Western people, especially science, reduce things to objects, whether they're living or not. The implications of this are immense. If you see the world around you as made up of objects for you to manipulate and exploit, not only is it inevitable that you will destroy the world by attempting to control it, but perceiving the world as lifeless robs you of the richness, beauty, and wisdom of participating in the larger pattern of life." That brings to mind a great line by a Canadian lumberman: "When I look at trees I see dollar bills." If when you look at trees, you see dollar bills, you'll treat them one way. If when you look at trees, you see trees, you'll treat them differently. If when you look at this particular tree you see this particular tree, you'll treat it differently still. The same is true for salmon, and, of course, for women: if when I look at women I see objects, I'm going to treat them one way. If when I look at women I see women, I'll treat them differently. And if when I look at this particular woman I see this particular woman, I'll treat her differently still.

Here's where people usually ask, "Okay, so how do I listen to the natural world?" When people ask me this, I always begin by asking them if they have ever made love. If so, I ask whether the other person always had to say, "put this here," or "do that now," or did they sometimes read their lover's body, listen to the unspoken language of the flesh? Having established that one can communicate without words, I then ask if they have ever had any nonhuman friends (a.k.a. pets). If so, how did the dog or cat let you know that her food dish was empty? I used to have a dog friend who would look at me, look at the food dish, look at me, look at the food dish, until finally the message would get across to me.

How do we hear the rest of the natural world? Unsurprisingly enough, the answer is: by listening. That's not easy, given that we have been told for several thousand years that these others are silent. But the fact that we cannot easily hear them doesn't mean they aren't speaking, and does not mean they have nothing to say. I've had people respond to my suggestion that they listen to the natural world by going outside for five minutes and then returning to say they didn't hear anything. But how can you expect to learn any new language (remember, most nonhumans don't speak English) in such a short time? Learning to listen to our nonhuman neighbors takes effort, humility, and patience.

Derrick Jensen *has authored twenty-one books and is often called the philosopher-poet of the environmental movement. In addition to his published books, he writes for Orion, Audubon, and The Sun Magazine.*

Original article: https://orionmagazine.org/article/playing-for-keeps/

Ziro-ing on a Tribe In Arunachal Pradesh Where Man And Nature Co-exist In Perfect Harmony

Richa Gupta

The Apatanis give us a taste of a life that involves simple living, traditional food, sustainable farming and social forestry.

A tribe located in a small valley in Arunachal Pradesh has been able to defeat modern technological advancements in terms of environment conservation. The Apatanis from Ziro have a unique lifestyle that focuses on living in harmony with nature. We take you into their homes and give you a glimpse of their lives that are simple, peaceful and rare to find in the present era.

Ziro is a small picturesque valley tucked away in the lower Subansiri district of Arunachal Pradesh. Somewhat off the popular tourist path of Tawang, this little valley and its people have much to offer to those seeking beautiful unexplored regions in our country and a culture to learn a lot from.

Apatanis, who are nature worshippers (particularly the Sun & Moon), are known for their traditional methods of sustainable farming and social forestry. In April 2014, Apatani Cultural Landscape was added to the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites for "extremely high productivity" and "unique" ways of preserving ecology. I had an opportunity to stay with one such Apatani family in Hong Basti (village) of Ziro and get a glimpse into their lives & surroundings.

Traditional rice fields

Primarily farmers, Apatanis are known for using sustainable and efficient methods of cultivating rice. Their farms are built on flat lands and therefore, wet rice cultivation is followed along with pisciculture. Even the elevated partition bunds between rice plots are utilised to grow millets. Their farms are marked with efficient channels and canals for irrigation purposes. No farm animals or machines are used; the focus instead is on using nature friendly and sustainable methods only. They have also successfully been able to conserve the forests around the valley which serve as water sheds for streamlets flowing down into the fields, thereby, helping them in the irrigation system. There is so much that one can learn from them on how to use traditional methods to accomplish what modern machines and systems have been unable to!

Hong Basti from the inside

The Apatanis live in very simple

A tribe in Arunachal Pradesh located in a tiny valley has been able to defeat modern technological advancements in terms of environment conservation. The Apatanis from Ziro have a unique lifestyle that focuses on living in harmony with nature.

Hong Basti

bamboo huts perched on top of vertical wooden stilts forming dense settlements called Bastis. Almost all houses in Hong Basti are traditional, but a little walk into other villages like Hari and Siiro show signs of more permanent, brick and mortar structures coming up. In spite of this, these simple yet adequately furnished houses are one of the examples that me rethink our consumerist approach towards life.

The centre of the house, not only serves as a kitchen where food is cooked over wood fire, but also as a gathering point for talks and discussions. Fire is lit right in the centre, around which family members and visitors sit to chat, watch TV, play music or simply spend time with each other.

The Rice Fields

Day one at Ziro

A usual day in a Ziro village begins as early as 5:00 a.m. when all the adults, having finished their morning chores, leave for the farms and children for school. The entire village seems to come to a halt in the late morning hours till evening, with just a few women engaged in weaving traditional clothes, if not going to the fields. Being on the east, the sun can set as early as at 4:30 p.m., depending upon the time of the year. As a result, all the evening activities happen around 4-5 pm which is also the time for everyone to be back to their homes, take a stroll, meet neighbours and friends and for children to play in open spaces around the village.

Forested areas around the rice fields

Ziro is a wonderful landscape with beautiful forests, rolling hills and rice fields, and also home to a unique culture which sets an example to the world for successful co-existence of man and nature.

Homemade beer and discussions

Every evening after sunset, our hosts received their neighbours and relatives who would mostly just stop by to say hello, and they would all be served traditional homemade rice beer with special Apatani salt called 'Tapyo'. Traditionally Tapyo is made at home using ashes of certain indigenous plants, which to a large extent is also responsible for saving Apatanis from the problem of goitre, Now of course with the easy accessibility of iodised salt, this problem has been tackled by all. Drinking freshly made rice beer is more of a social activity and along with it came discussions and insight into the lives of the Apatanis. During those evening sessions, topics discussed are as varied as environmental conservation & politics to trends of love marriage & music.

The unique nose plugs of the Apatani women

Another unique feature of Apatanis and probably the most photographed are the facial tattoos and nose plugs that the women wear. There is no documented reason as to why the tradition started, but we did notice that this tradition is no longer followed by the younger generation. Many women from even the older generations have opted to take off their nose plugs.

Myoko Festival

Food in a traditional Apatani home revolves around rice for obvious reasons. Rice is often accompanied with boiled vegetables, meat preparations or other delicacies cooked in bamboo shoots. There are hardly any spices used in traditional Apatani food, hence the green chilli, which accompanies every single meal.

Fortunately, my travel coincided with the Myoko festival celebrated in the month of March. It is a month long festival of friendships and merry making, starting somewhere around 20th March every year and going on for one full month. A couple of villages get together every year to host this festival. The unique feature of this festival is that homes of host villages are open all day for guests throughout the month. Just about anybody can walk in, greet and enjoy rice beer and local delicacies! Apart from feasting, there are lots of sports events, singing competitions, stage shows and more.

The way forward

With all the goodness & simplicity of Ziro and its people, there certainly are some problems too. Infrastructural facilities like decent roads and drainage systems are missing. Employment opportunities are only restricted to the government sector which has limited jobs. This has led to the younger generation migrating to the neighbouring states. The community is also in dire need of a local municipal body that can ensure cleanliness within the villages and in public areas. Even though some local NGOs like Ngunu Ziro are working in the areas of sanitation, environmental conservation and recycling, a lot still needs to be done.

Ziro inspite of this is a wonderful landscape with beautiful forests, rolling hills and rice fields, and also home to a unique culture that sets an example for successful co-existence of man and nature.

Richa Gupta *is a traveler and travel writer. She keep an interest in living cultures around the world and has special focus on responsible traveling. She has been published in various magazines and newspapers, including National Geographic Traveller, New Indian Express and Platform. She blogs at www.travelsandstories.com*

All images courtesy Richa Gupta

You've Seen Warli Paintings Before...

Now Get Ready To Visit The Warli Tribe and Listen To Their Music...

Gangadharan Menon

I walked straight into the inviting kitchen and took intimate photographs of her utensils and fireplace, dimly lit by the skylight on the roof. That's when I realized why Warlis paint in white on the brown walls inside their houses. It's for the figures to catch light, as colours would have merged into the darkness.

Did my car slow down on its own near a house made of karvi sticks? Or did the muscle memory of my legs press on the brake ever so lightly? Whatever be the case, I had halted at the house of Anusuyabai, my host in the adivasi village of Walvanda.

And the moment I walked into her house, the sense of déjà vu became more intense. Her disarming smile told me that I have met her somewhere; and her warm, welcome said that I have been to this house before. I walked straight into the inviting kitchen and took intimate photographs of her utensils and fireplace, dimly lit by the skylight on the roof. That's when I realized why Warlis paint in white on the brown walls inside their houses. It's for the figures to catch light, as colours would have merged into the darkness.

When we took part in various village activities, in different houses, it dawned on me that despite not having a caste division (they were all Warlis here), there was a clear division of labour. So there was the village blacksmith, the tailor, the cattle-rearer, the hunter-gatherer, the farmer, the fisherman, and even an expert who had the perfect antidote for treating poison bites.

But what amazed me was that none of the implements that were being used here were 'bought'. They were all made by them. And necessity being the mother of invention, you could see innovation at its best. So there were separate baskets made of bamboo in two unique shapes. One for catching fish, and another strange-looking one for catching crabs! Then for trapping raptors, they had a quiver that had the resin of the mahua tree. This resin would be applied on short bamboo sticks and then laid out on a straw mat in a haphazard way around the bait. The unsuspecting bird would land on the sticky sticks to lift off its prey and would get stuck on them, never to fly free again.

Village Walvanda

In one of the typical Warli houses, the walls were made of Karvi sticks tied together and the roof was made of tiles. This house was much cooler than the concrete structures nearby which were like ovens. But somehow such simple houses were being looked down upon and were being replaced with modern monstrosities. So much for 'progress'.

An example of their innate intelligence was seen when my wife got a bee sting. When Waman, our guide, saw her hand swelling up, in one swift move he pulled out the tiny sting. Then he went into the nearby forest from where he plucked the leaves of two local plants: Burada and Tarota. He squeezed out the juice of the leaves and applied it on the sting. And hey presto, in minutes the inflammation was gone!

In one of the typical Warli houses, the walls were made of Karvi sticks tied together and the roof was made of tiles. This house was much cooler than the concrete structures nearby which were like ovens. But somehow such simple houses were being looked down upon and were being replaced with modern monstrosities. So much for 'progress'.

In the evening, we walked to the river. As we walked, on either side we saw golden farmlands ready for harvest. And the bizarre sight of scare-crows made of Kurkure packets. Another contribution of 'civilization' to the simple, pastoral life of the villages.

When I started looking for Warli artists in this village, I was told there were none. The last of them had taken up farming long ago. But I did get to see a Warli painting done on the wall of a house where there was a wedding recently. But it was not a work of art but more like a ritual; very rudimentary.

That's when it occurred to me that there's no art if there's no market. In the nearby town of Jawhar and the faraway Palghar, there's a flourishing market for Warli paintings which makes young artists take up this art form as a source of livelihood.

And I remembered the words of Inir Pinheiro, the founder of Grassroutes that has been promoting village tourism with a missionary zeal for the last eight years. He had once told me, '*We city folks should earn in the city and spend in the villages. That's one way we can help the villagers earn their livelihood right here without migrating to cities looking for jobs. It's when we come and live with them that we understand the joys of their simple living. This will even help them preserve their beautiful traditions, culture, music and art, as they greatly value our appreciation.*'

This rang true all the more when I met Bhiklya Ladkya Dinda, the master of the tarpa which is a wind instrument unique to the Warlis. He was not a mere musician; he was a philosopher too. Taking a masterclass on his favourite tarpa (he had three of them), he first explained the intricacies of the two bamboo pipes. One he calls a female, and that

The waterfall on Jambha river

Dewdrops on rice plants

produces treble. And the one he calls a male produces bass. Thus probably making it the only wind instrument with both treble and bass in the instrument itself! Then with a twinkle in his septuagenarian eyes, he said: 'It needs a male and a female to make great music!'

For the next 30 minutes he went into a trance and played such divine music that I felt fortunate to be living on this earth. There was a lilt and a rhythm inbuilt in his music, which made up for the absence of percussion, and he gently swayed to a beat that only he could hear.

When I asked him if he sold these wonderful tarpas that he makes, he said that a musician has to make his own instrument. And not play on one made by another. To him each tarpa is as unique as the individual, and you should make one of your own that reverberates with your soul. Then, and only then, will great music flow out of it.

Later in the night, youngsters had gathered at the village square for the Sarvajanik celebrations. There, on the stage, the master of the tarpa got only 15 minutes of fame. The rest of the night was hogged by, you guessed it, item numbers from the omnipresent Bollywood.

The next day, on our way to the waterfall nearby, we had to cross the Jambha river. There we saw two Warli boys frolicking in the water. The older one of them was singing a Warli folk song; and soon his younger friend joined in. It was indeed music to my ears, as I saw a glimmer of hope there for the musical tradition of the Warlis. A fond hope that eventually the tarpa will win over Bollywood. At least in their village.

Bhiklya, the master tarpa player: When I asked him if he sold these wonderful tarpas that he makes, he said that a musician has to make his own instrument. And not play on one made by another. To him each tarpa is as unique as the individual, and you should make one of your own that reverberates with your soul. Then, and only then, will great music flow out of it.

Gangadharan Menon *- After 28 years in advertising as a writer and creative director, Gangadharan Menon quit the profession to take up his first and second love: teaching and travel. He has over 90 published articles that recount the joy of travelling in this amazing country. A member of Bombay Natural History Society, he is an avid wildlife photographer too.*

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All images courtesy Gangadharan Menon

Forest Food of Indian Tribes

Can Overcome the Nutrition Crisis

Venus Upadhayaya

Credit Bioversity InternationalP. Mathur

Living Farms, an NGO that works with tribal villages in the eastern state of Odisha, has documented 357 forest foods harvested by tribes in the region. Nutrition experts under NIN studied 63 of them and found them to be high in micronutrients.

The World Health Organization estimates that more than two billion people in the world today suffer from micronutrient deficiencies, primarily in Asia and Africa.

Micronutrients are nutrients the body needs only in small amounts like iodine, zinc, iron, and Vitamin A. They enable the body to produce enzymes, hormones, and other substances critical for proper growth and development of the body.

Researchers working with indigenous tribes in India have said forest foods could provide a solution to micronutrient deficiency, a condition that has been termed "hidden hunger."

As the population in India has expanded and more people move to cities, the traditional sources of foods high in these micronutrients like leafy greens, fruits, and nuts are not as readily available, says India's National Institute of Nutrition (NIN).

Living Farms, an NGO that works with tribal villages in the eastern state of Odisha, has documented 357 forest foods harvested by tribes in the region. Nutrition experts under NIN studied 63 of them and found them to be high in micronutrients.

"The forest foods are the best available sources of micronutrients which are available, accessible, and affordable," says Buduru Salome Yesudas, a nutrition researcher who has been documenting the food systems of various indigenous tribes in southern India since 1995.

She said more research is needed to uncover the potential these foods have to stop malnutrition and how they can be included in mainstream food pyramids.

Food Security

In developed countries, staples like salt and wheat are often fortified with micronutrients like iodine and folic acid.

In 'developing' countries where access to food, let alone fortified food, is not guaranteed, governments, NGOs and other organizations are looking at sustainable, nutrient-rich food systems to combat nutritional deficiencies.

"The forest foods are the best available sources of micronutrients which are available, accessible, and affordable," said Buduru Salome Yesudas, a nutrition researcher who has been documenting the food systems of various indigenous tribes in southern India since 1995.

"When forests are cut ,you are not only displacing unskilled, unorganized, rural people, you are actually displacing highly wise, knowledgeable people,"

Baiga women from Odisha

Forest foods are also not as affected by natural disasters like drought, pests, and storms, which make them an important addition to conventional forms of agriculture, the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFR) said.

Mahua Forest Foods

Debjeet Sarangi the founder of Living Farms, said the indigenous people who have sustainably harvested forest food for centuries can provide insight into how countries can do just that. Conversely, he said that as forests are cut down for agriculture and industrial purposes, these people are being displaced and their knowledge lost.

"So you are not only displacing unskilled, unorganized, rural people, [when forests are cut], you are actually displacing highly wise, knowledgeable people," he said. "And after doing that, we bring them to the urban cities and then provide [them] subsidized food, which in our country is rice and wheat procured from 10,000 miles away, which is being grown with pesticides … burning fossil fuels. I don't know how that makes sense!"

Forest foods are also not as affected by natural disasters like drought, pests, and storms, which make them an important addition to conventional forms of agriculture, the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFR) said. In addition to food, firewood for fuel, and pollinators like bees that are vital for agriculture are also threatened by deforestation.

"While conversion of forest to agriculture can in some cases improve rural incomes, all too often deforestation leads to impoverishment of both ecosystems and livelihoods in the long term," CIFOR said in a paper.

Sarangi wishes that policymakers should recognize and conserve forests for the food and vital nutrients they provide, not only as habitats for wild plants and animals.

"Here's a food system which doesn't need a subsidy," says Sarangi.

Venus Upadhayaya *is passionate about democracy and politics in south Asia but reports on a wide range of topics. She has traveled to remote regions of India as a development worker and community media facilitator and is a strong believer in participatory approaches to grassroots governance and development.*

Is traditional wisdom a key to combating climate change?

Sabita Kaushal

The study disproves the myth that innovation must always be transferred from the lab to the land. It concludes that the indigenous wisdom widely practiced by communities before farming began, are highly relevant for climate change adaptation.

Farmers have been known to observe the movement of ants and butterflies to forecast rainfall. Do such indigenous practices hold the key to addressing climate change issues?

Erratic rainfall, heavy storms, extreme weather and droughts are some of the major impacts of climate changes. Though it affects everyone, certain sections of society, like indigenous people who live closer to the natural environment, are in fact more vulnerable to these variations. However, they are also the first to observe, identify and formulate required strategies to adapt to climate change. This wisdom, insight and knowledge of local people is termed as indigenous technical knowledge (ITK). Can this wisdom be recognised and the already available knowledge be integrated with our formal basic research to combat climate change better?

A paper titled 'Assessing the Potential of Indigenous Technological Knowledge (ITK) for Adaptation to Climate Change in the Himalayan and Arid ecosystems' published by 'Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge' addresses the issue of assessing the potential of indigenous knowledge towards adaptation to climate change. The study covered a sample of 100 farmers each from Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan, representing Himalayan and arid ecosystems respectively. Documentation of the ITK's was done using both primary and secondary sources of information.

A sample of Indigenous Tecnical Knowledge revealed in the study

Himachal Pradesh farmers:

o Predict rainfall through movement of insects and animals. For example, if honeybees fly toward the northern hills, there will be no rainfall; and vice versa.

o Carry out disease management through application of wood ash in fields to supply nutrients and control pests.

o Use crush of 'rambaan', a local plant, with irrigation water to control pests in rice fields.

o Follow rainwater harvesting

Though climate change affects everyone, indigenous people who live closer to the natural environment, are more vulnerable to these variations. However, they are also the first to observe, identify and formulate required strategies to adapt to climate change.

Simon Chauvette - Bija Vidyapeeth

Navdanya Biodiversity and Conservation Farm

through 'chal', a local small water storage structure that helps reduce the vulnerability of farmers under prolonged dry spells.

o Incorporate in their diet 'siddu' or 'khobli', an ethnic fermented wheat product, that protects them from extreme cold.

o Cover the top of triad shaped forage structure with low cost locally available polythene.

Rajasthan farmers:

o Believe that many butterflies indicate good rainfall, as does the appearance of ants and termites.

o Consider that extra bushing of 'khair', a common, local tree, points to a dry spell.

o Predict rain by the colour of the moon; a pale, yellow colour means good rainfall, whereas red and white indicates rainless conditions.

o Believe that good rainfall occurs every 5 years.

o Build 'kanabandi', a micro wind-break built with locally available vegetations, to intercept high velocity winds.

o Follow 'jhoor, 'a traditional soil management system, that involves the cutting of local shrubs and grasses into very small pieces and spreading over farmland before cultivation to improve soil quality and productivity.

o Carry out a traditional practice 'jhopa', that involves covering tree-saplings by local brushwood for protection against strong sun, winds, cold winters, and also protection of grazing by free animals.

o Use 'khadin/ khudi' or oasis farming system to harvest water for growing crops without any irrigation as the soil is fertile.

o Construct 'jupka', a traditional fodder storage structure, to preserve fodder from spoilage by climatic changes.

o Make 'kothi/tuke', a grain storage structure made of cowdung, soil and local grass with a cement base to keep inside temperature low and prevent attack of termites and insects.

o Use farm compost to increase soil fertility and reduce termite attacks.

o Construct 'tanka', a water harvesting structure, that collects surface runoff water.

o Act against climate change related health related hazards by using local plants in their diet.

o Make a cover/outfit for animals called 'ola/chappar', made from local grass to protect them from high temperatures.

o Use local remedies for animals diseases like dysentery and arthritis.

Validation of ITKs

Each of these ITKs was ranked based on the degree of their use and relevance under changing climate conditions. The study revealed that these ITKs were highly useful for the local community to manage climate change induced stresses.

The study disproves the myth that innovation must always be transferred from the lab to the land. It concludes that the indigenous wisdom widely practiced by communities before farming began, are highly relevant for climate change adaptation. The paper concludes that these technologies are restricted unequally in the community and even outside it, and thus government intervention is essential. Not only must it disseminate this knowledge in the region but also develop an appropriate policy for its validation and eventual adoption by farming communities.

Sabita Kaushal *holds a Masters in Ecology & Environment. She has also undergone courses in disaster management from the National Institute of Disaster Management.*

She has worked on projects dealing primarily with water and solid waste management. Sabita works with India Water Portal as a consultant.

The Difference Between My Psychiatrist and My Shaman

Dylan Charles

The role of the shaman as healer is much different than that of a psychiatrist, psychologist or counselor. The healing task is not to correct or remedy anything, but is instead to facilitate change and integration within the patient. To help the flow of psychic and spiritual energy around and through the patient. Assisting them in aligning their thoughts and behaviors with their life purpose.

Nowhere is the disconnect between science and spirit felt more intimately than in matters of mental health.

We can speak empirically on this by saying things like, "America spends over $113 billion a year on mental health treatment," or "depression affects over 14.8 million adults," but, cold data marginalizes actual human experience, so if you're suffering, this doesn't really help much.

The statistical view does, however, tell us that mental illness is epidemic in our culture, that an enormous economy has risen around the mainstream medical approaches to treating mental illness, and that this industry does not appear to be effective in reversing the growing epidemic of mental illness.

What is Madness?

The influential book on Western mental health, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, or DSM, presently lists some 300 mental disorders that a doctor, psychiatrist or psychologist can choose from when diagnosing a patient. Given that many of the symptoms of poor mental health are overlapping, like mood swings, depression, and anxiety, psychiatry is a subjective science at best, and the pathological model to matters of the mind and spirit doesn't always work.

There is, of course, another perspective on mental wellness, one much older than the DSM and the American Psychiatric Association. Many of the world's indigenous cultures would view our mental disorders not as symptoms of something wrong with a person, but rather as evidence of the arrival of incompatible psychic energies into the person's life. Energies that must be dispelled or integrated, rather than ignored or subdued.

Another way to say this, which may make more sense to the Western mind, is that we in the West are not trained in how to deal or even taught to acknowledge the existence of psychic phenomena, the spiritual world. In fact, psychic abilities are denigrated. When energies from the spiritual world emerge in a Western psyche, that individual is completely unequipped to integrate them or even recognize what is happening.

In this context, the role of the shaman as healer is much different than that of a psychiatrist, psychologist or counselor. The healing task is not to correct or remedy anything, but is instead to facilitate change and integration within the patient. To help the flow of psychic and spiritual energy around and through the patient. Assisting them in aligning their thoughts and behaviors with their life purpose.

The plant medicines Ayahuasca and Iboga are revered as agents of profound healing and personal transformation. We don't fully understand how or why they work, but they do. Clinical studies are backing up the enormous volume of anecdotal evidence of their power to quickly interrupt depression, anxiety, and addiction, and the shamanic healing experience is now both credible and accessible to Westerners.

The Healing Journey

In darker days I've called on Western physicians for support, and since those days I've had many opportunities to journey with plant medicine masters. The differences between the two systems and experiences are profound, but both have been integral to me in knowing happiness and peace of mind.

Below are my personal reflections on how the experience of modern mental health care and the experience of ancient indigenous medicines compare. As a disclaimer, this is not to be taken as medical advice, as it is only a collection of personal observations intended as a small contribution to the big conversation about mental health.

The Call

I was driven to counseling and psychiatry during a time of serious personal crisis, my own dark night of the soul, if you will. By the time I decided to actually seek help I was terribly distraught, panicked even. Friends and family recommended I see a doctor, as did the advertising campaigns on TV, so I worked up the nerve to do so. It was a tough and frightening decision that I'll never forget.

When shamanism came to me I was, gratefully, in a better frame of mind, but still restless and troubled to a degree. Uneasy and discontent in general. Not happy and unfulfilled. I knew nothing of shamanism or plant medicines until a friend mentioned them in conversation, which instantly awoke within me some latent curiosity that stayed with me. The idea began to call me, it seemed.

The Search for a Healer

To find my psychiatrist I first called my health insurance company, then sifted through advertisements. After narrowing the candidates down to those whom I could afford and those who were conveniently located, I chose a professional doctor covered by my HMO. A rational process, but tedious and embarrassing.

During the year after first hearing about shamanic plant medicines my life seemed to fill itself with a series of fabulous coincidences and synchroncities. I knew something big, something crucial was about to happen to me, but not what. I was being called to discover some important, yet so far uncovered piece of fate. It was a very exciting and very cosmic time, and without wanting it, without asking around or seeking it, I found myself in contact with the shamanic healers who have since had such a positive impact on me. With no effort from me, they appeared exactly when they were supposed to.

The Clinic

The psychiatrist was close to my office, so I didn't have to take any extra time off work. Parking was easy, the receptionist pleasant, and other anxious patients waited as pharmaceutical sales reps came and went. All very clinical, business-like and professional. White jackets, neck-ties, manila folders, magazines, that sort of thing. I filled out paper work, handing over intimate personal and financial details. The walls of the doctor's office were covered in plaques, certificates, diplomas, war memorabilia and golfing photos. My co-pay was next to nothing.

The shaman I know are all deceptively strong and powerful people, especially the elders. Their open-air houses have thatched roofs and are built on stilts with wooden plank floors and next to no furnishings, set deep in the jungle aside rivers. Their clothes are simple, worn, and often dirty, but you hardly notice because their smiles are so big and they always seem to be laughing and enjoying life. They know every plant, tree, animal and insect in the rainforest. They are unflinchingly kind, sensitive and humble people who are a joy to be around.

At considerable expense and some alarm to my family, I signed up to go deep into the jungle to have ceremony with a group of shamans whom I'd never met. It was costly, inconvenient and irrational, taking me way out of my element, beyond my comfort zone, and deep into nature. The ceremonial lodge was a sacred healing space, and very much felt so. A place where the sounds and smells of fire, incense, flutes, rattles, and nature combine. A purifying, healing, spiritual place to heal.

The Doctor

My psychiatrist lived in a mansion in the best part of town. He drove a Mercedes-Benz, owned vacation homes in the Rockies and Acapulco, plus a private airplane. He was extremely confident and well-respected in the medical community. He made over $450 thousand dollars a year. His type of healing paid well, he had plenty of clients and lots of repeat customers.

The shaman I know are all deceptively strong and powerful people, especially the elders. Their open-air houses have thatched roofs and are built on stilts with wooden plank floors and next to no furnishings, set deep in the jungle aside rivers. Their clothes are simple, worn, and often dirty, but you hardly notice because their smiles are so big and they always seem to be laughing and enjoying life. They know every plant, tree, animal and insect in the rainforest. They are unflinchingly kind, sensitive and humble people who are a joy to be around.

The Treatment

My psychiatrist asked many intimate questions, and the conversations felt forced, rigid, impersonal and mechanical. Like taking care of business. I was diagnosed as having depression, anxiety, bi-polar disorder, ADHD, borderline schizophrenia and insomnia. The remedy was antidepressants, anti-anxiety meds, and other psychotropics, along with weekly appointments with the doctor... all to continue for as many years as needed. This also included the warning

The shaman never asks about my troubles, but I sense that he knows of them, perhaps even better than I. He sings instead of speaks and the journey ends in deep in meditation, as powerful and transformative insights appear from some unknown spiritual source. It feels like both a purge and a download. The following day is like a gift, a new beginning, completely renewed in body, mind and spirit.

that it was extremely dangerous to stop taking these medications.

Before a night-time medicine ceremony, the day is spent mentally and spiritually preparing. Fasting, meditation, reflection, introspection and concentration. A process of gathering intention and focusing energy. Plant medicine journeys can induce indescribably harrowing and enlightening visions and experiences. The shaman never asks about my troubles, but I sense that he knows of them, perhaps even better than I. He sings instead of speaks and the journey ends in deep in meditation, as powerful and transformative insights appear from some unknown spiritual source. It feels like both a purge and a download. The following day is like a gift, a new beginning, completely renewed in body, mind and spirit.

The Results

I took my doctors recommendations and took the pills, but I quickly realized that the side-effects and the personality changes that the drugs induced in me were not something that I, nor my family, could live with. I dumped them, cancelled all remaining appointments and resolved to heal myself. It was not easy.

My time with sacred medicine always feels like going home to some very special place of physical and spiritual renewal. The visions and experiences from ceremony always prove challenging to integrate into daily life, but the journeys are a continuing source of inspiration to improve myself and enjoy life to the fullest. I've come measure the results of this type of healing with a simple metric: am I happy? The answer is yes. Finally.

Dylan Charles *is a student and teacher of Shaolin Kung Fu, Tai Chi and Qi Gong, a practitioner of Yoga and Taoist arts, and an activist and idealist passionately engaged in the struggle for a more sustainable and just world for future generations. He is the editor of WakingTimes.com, the proprietor of OffgridOutpost.com, a grateful father and a man who seeks to enlighten others with the power of inspiring information and action. He may be contacted at wakingtimes@gmail.com.*

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"We are all visitors to this time, this place. We are just passing through. Our purpose here is to observe, to learn, to grow, to love… and then we return home."

– Australian Aboriginal saying

We desire to bequeath two things to our children; the first one is roots, the other one is wings.

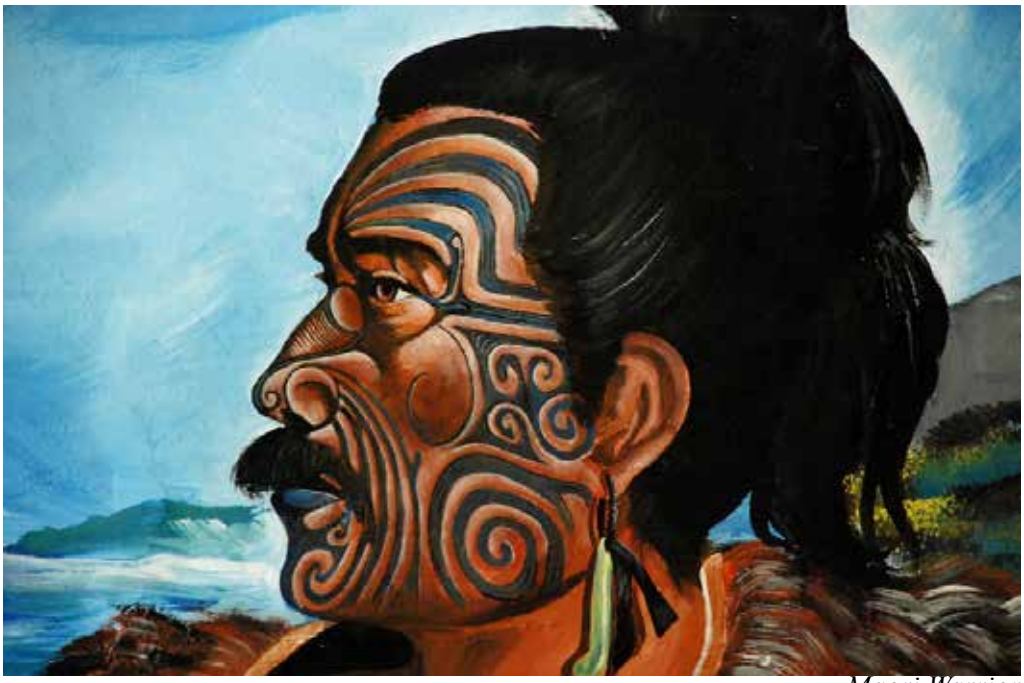
– Sudanese proverb

Don't let the windows of your home be so small that the light of the sun cannot enter your rooms.

– Inuit saying

One Family on Earth and Beyond

Only in the industrial and post-industrial age has the human mind enslaved itself to an exploitative mindset. For millennia, world over, indigenous human communities have viewed their own survival as inalienable from that of plants, animals, earth, water, the sky, and the sun, the moon, the planets and the stars. We present a selection of oral traditions from Maori, Soliga, Aboriginal, Gond, Cherokee and Namibian lore that illustrate how deeply the ancients held sacred the interdependence between Earth's species and between Earth and the cosmos.



Courtesy: Geof Wilson

Maori Warrior

Maori Mythology

How the Kiwi Lost his Wings

In the Māori language, the word māori means "normal", "natural" or "ordinary," a descriptor that, with tāngata ("people"), denotes mortals or ordinary humans (tāngata māori), as contrasted with deities and spirits (wairua).

Māori people also use another term, tāngata whenua, which means "people of the land" and translates also as "people of the placenta" (because the Māori regard the land as their mother) and expresses their relationship with a particular area of land. Thus, a Māori tribe may be tāngata whenua in one area but not in another.

A Māori Legend

"How the Kiwi lost his Wings" is a well-known Māori legend that goes like this:

One day, Tanemahuta, the god of the forests, was walking through the forest. He looked up at the trees, his children reaching for the sky, and noticed that they were starting to look sick, as the bugs were eating them.

So he spoke to his brother, Tanehokahoka, the god of the birds, who called all his children – the birds – together.

Tanemahuta spoke to them. "Something is eating my children, the trees. I need one of you to come down from the forest canopy and live on the forest floor, so that my children – and your home – can be saved. Who will come?" All was quiet. Not a bird spoke.

So Tanehokahoka turned to Tui, the parson bird. "Tui, will you come down from the forest roof?"

Tui looked up at the trees and saw the sun filtering through the leaves. He looked down at the forest floor and saw the cold, dark earth. He shuddered. "No, Tanehokahoka, for it is too dark, and I am afraid of the dark." All was quiet. Not a bird spoke.

Tanehokahoka then turned to Pukeko, the Australasian swamphen. "Pukeko, will you come down from the forest roof?"

Pukeko looked down at the forest floor and saw the cold, damp earth. He shuddered. "No, Tanehokahoka, for it is too damp, and I do not want to get my feet wet."

All was quiet. Not a bird spoke.

Tanehokahoka now turned to Pipiwharauroa, the shining bronze cuckoo. "Pipiwharauroa, will you come down from the forest roof?"

Pipiwharauroa looked up at the trees and saw the sun filtering through the leaves. He looked around and saw his family. "No, Tanehokahoka, for I am busy at the moment building my nest."

All was quiet. Not a bird spoke.

Great was the sadness in Tanehokahoka's heart, for he knew that if none of his children came down from the forest canopy, not only would his

brother Tanemahuta lose his children, the trees, but also his own children – the birds – would have no home.

So Tanehokahoka turned to yet another of his children, the kiwi. "Kiwi, will you come down from the forest roof?"

Kiwi looked up at the trees and saw the sun filtering through the leaves. He looked around and saw his family. Then he looked at the cold, damp earth. Looking around once more, he turned to Tanehokahoka and said, "I will."

Great was the joy in the hearts of Tanehokahoka and Tanemahuta, for this little bird gave them hope. But Tanemahuta thought he must warn Kiwi of what would happen to Kiwi afterwards. "Kiwi, if you do as you say, you will have to grow thick, strong legs so that, to get to the bugs, you can rip apart the logs on the ground. You will have to lose your beautiful, coloured feathers and your wings and will never be able to return to the forest roof. You will never see the light of day again."

All was quiet. Not a bird spoke.

"So, Kiwi, will you still come down from the forest roof?"

Kiwi took one last look at the sun filtering through the trees. He said a silent goodbye to them. He took one last look at the other birds, their wings and their coloured feathers and said a silent goodbye to them, too. Looking around once more, he turned to Tanehokahoka and said, "I will."

Then Tanehokahoka turned to the other birds and said, "O Tui, because you were too scared to come down from the forest roof, from now on you will wear the two white feathers at your throat as the mark of a coward. O Pukeko, because you did not want to get your feet wet, you will live forever in the swamp. O Pipiwharauroa, because you were too busy building your nest, from now on you will never build another nest again, but lay your eggs in other birds' nests. But you, O Kiwi, because of your great sacrifice, you will become the best-known, most loved bird of them all."

http://www.kiwinewz.com/html/losewing.htm
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tui_(bird)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australasian_swamphen
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shining_bronze_cuckoo

Courtesy: Bhoomi Team

Soligas performing traditional Gorukana dance

Soliga Story

Weave, spider weave

Every year, during March-April, the forest-dwelling Soliga tribals (whose name derives from sola, meaning forest) gather for the Rotti Habba (rotti is a flatbread, while habba means "festival"), where they make fresh roti from ragi flour (finger millet) and share it among themselves.

The Soligas live in the southern Indian states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, spread across the southernmost tip of Karnataka (Chamarajanagara district) and the adjoining westernmost tip (Erode district) of Tamil Nadu. The tracts they have inhabited for as long as 3,000 years cover the forests of Biligiri Rangana Hills, Mala Mahadeswara Hills and Sathyamangalam.

The Soliga people have an intricate understanding of their flora and fauna. As they make the ragi bread, the Soligas join in singing "Goru, Goruka, Gorukana," a song that, like a goruka ("spider," in Soliga lingo) spinning its web, weaves in lines from their daily experiences in the jungle – rich details about their flowers, crops, waterfalls, trees and firewood, animals, birds, butterflies, insects and girls. The singing is accompanied by dancing.

It is common to hear the Soligas sing of the cheeky, playfully mocking call of the laughing dove (a low rolling croo-doo-doo-doo-doo with a rising and falling amplitude) or of the ambition of the four-horned antelope to create dung heaps as large as the hills around! (The bovid leaves piles of droppings as scent markings wherever it goes.)

And, thus, one hears the Soliga people singing:

Weave, spider, weave that web…

Doddasampige, my Lord,

Safeguard and protect me, O Lord!

Weave, spider, weave that web…

O laughing dove of Boodipadaga,

The one that cannot be trapped!

Behold the sloth bear of my forest…

http://www.daktre.com/2012/10/the-biligirirangan-hills/#more-571
http://jlrexplore.com/explore/from-the-field/soligas-people-of-the-forest
http://indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/Traditional%20knowledge.pdf
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laughing_dove
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four-horned_antelope

A Cherokee Fable

Beyond the Confict of Inner Forces

An old Cherokee is teaching his grandson about life:

"A fight is going on inside me," he says to the boy. It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is evil – he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority and ego."

The grandfather continues: "The other wolf is good – he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith. "The same fight is going on inside you – and inside every other person, too."

The grandson thinks about it for a minute and then asks his grandfather: "Which wolf will win?"

You might have heard that the story ends like this: The old Cherokee simply replied, "The one you feed."In the Cherokee world, however, the story ends this way: the old Cherokee simply replies, "If you feed them right, they both win."

And the story goes on:

The grandfather continues: "You see, if I only choose to feed the white wolf, the black one will be hiding around every corner, waiting for me to become distracted or weak so that he may jump to get the attention he craves. He will always be angry and always fighting the white wolf. But if I acknowledge him, he is happy and the white wolf is happy and we all win. For, the black wolf has many qualities – tenacity, courage, fearlessness, a strong will and great strategic thinking – that I have need of at times and which the white wolf lacks. But the white wolf has compassion, caring, strength and the ability to recognise what is in the best interest of all.

"You see, son, the white wolf needs the black wolf at his side. To feed only one would starve the other and they would become uncontrollable. To feed and care for both means that they would serve you well and do nothing that is not a part of something greater, something good, something pro-life. Feed them both, and they will stop fighting for your attention. And when there is no battle inside, you can listen to the voices of deeper knowing that will guide you in choosing what is right in every circumstance. Peace, my son, is the Cherokee mission in life. A man or a woman who has peace inside has everything. A man or a woman who is pulled apart by the war inside him or her has nothing.

"How you choose to interact with the opposing forces within you will determine your life. Starve one or the other or guide them both."

http://www.awakin.org/read/view.php?tid=927#sthash.MoMQNHti.dpuf

Aboriginal Creation Myth

Earth Dying - Earth Reborn

Once, the earth was completely dark and silent; nothing moved on its barren surface. Inside a deep cave below the Nullabor Plain slept a beautiful woman, the Sun. The Great Father Spirit gently woke her and told her to emerge from her cave and stir the universe into life. The Sun Mother opened her eyes and darkness disappeared as her rays spread over the land; she took a breath and the atmosphere changed; the air gently vibrated as a small breeze blew.

The Sun Mother then went on a long journey; from north to south and from east to west she crossed the barren land. The earth held the seed potencies of all things, and wherever the Sun's gentle rays touched the earth, there grasses, shrubs and trees grew until the land was covered in vegetation. In each of the deep caverns in the earth, the Sun found living creatures which, like herself, had been slumbering for untold ages She stirred the insects into life in all their forms and told them to spread through the grasses and trees, then she woke the snakes, lizards, and other reptiles, and they slithered out of their deep hold.

As the snakes moved through and along the earth they formed rivers, and they themselves became creators, like the Sun. Behind the snakes mighty rivers flowed, teeming with all kinds of fish and water life. Then she called for the animals, the marsupials, and the many other creatures to awake and make their homes on the earth.

The Sun Mother then told all the creatures that the days would from time to time change from wet to dry and from cold to hot, and so she made the seasons. One day while all the animals, insects and other creatures were watching, the Sun travelled far in the sky to the west and, as the sky shone red, she sank from view and darkness spread across the land once more. The creatures were alarmed and huddled together in fear. Some time later, the sky began to glow on the horizon to the east and the Sun rose smiling into the sky again. The Sun Mother thus provided a period of rest for all her creatures by making this journey each day.

http://www.crystalinks.com/dreamtime.html

Gond Katha

Why Men and Animals no Longer Talk

Ahir - Panderwa, Bilaspur District

In the old days, all the animals – cows, tigers, dogs, bears, goats and jackals – would graze together and talk with Kawar Rawat, who took them to the forest. At that time, humans and animals talked together freely. Kawar would graze his herd of animals on the Dumketi Kachhar hills daily, talking and laughing with them.

One day, because his wife was pregnant, Kawar wanted to go home early. He asked the cow, "Is your belly full yet? If it is, we will go home; if not, we will go further in the jungle."

The cow said, "No, my belly is not full; I still am hungry."

Meanwhile, at home, Kawar's wife began labour pains. She sent a boy to call her husband.

So Kawar said to his herd, "Come brothers, let us go home. My wife is about to have our child."

But they said, "Our bellies are not full. We will not go yet."

So Kawar took a stick.

First, he beat the cow so hard that, even today, one side of her body has a hollow place and only one side is full.

Then, to the tigers and bears he said, "Go away into the jungle! I will graze you no more."

To the other animals he said, "From today, you will be dumb! I don't want to hear you talk again."

And Kawar drove the bears and tigers into the jungle and took the cow home quickly.

And the child was born.

This is why humans and animals no longer talk together.

http://gondanimationworkshop.blogspot.in/p/gond-folktales.html

Tale of the San people

The sun, the moon and the stars

For the San, the sun was once a man, from whose armpits shone rays of light. He dwelt alone in a hut and would be asleep, so that his light shone only for himself.

So some children of the first Bushmen were sent to throw the sleeping sun high up into the sky. And now, from there, he shines upon all.

In the evening, he draws his blanket of darkness over himself to keep warm. But the blanket is old and has many

little holes in it. So, at night, the sun shines through them, which we see as stars.

Another story tells of the stars. A lonely young girl awaits the return of her hunter companions. To light their way in the dark of night, she throws up a handful of white wood ash. This becomes the stars of the Milky Way which, even on a moonless night, shines light to guide the hunters home.

In another tale, the moon, say the Bushmen, is really an old shoe belonging to Mantis (a human-like being with special powers who looks like the praying mantis), which Mantis lost while running errands for the gods. That's why, as the moon rises early on summer evenings, it is coloured red – because the red dust of the Kalahari is on it – and is cold to the touch, like old leather.

The Namibian Bushman also says that the sun is jealous of the moon, when it is full, because the moon is then challenging the sun's brightness. So, the sun, with its sharp rays, cuts bits off the moon until there is just a little left, when the old moon cries, "Oh! Oh! Please leave a little of my backbone for the children!"

Then the sun goes away but, soon, the moon starts growing back, little by little, to its normal size and the cycle starts all over again.

Some Bushmen also say that, when the moon was hollow and young, she was weighed down with the spirits of the dead, which she would carry. The clouds that passed before her were really the hair of the dead, and the wind blew to sweep the footprints of the dead from the sand.

http://www.gateway-africa.com/stories/Sun_Moon_and_Stars_San.html

Six must-watch films
to understand India's indigenous people

Preeti Prakash

These 6 films are the best way to learn about the lives of the 105 million tribal people, belonging to 31 different tribes, that are in India.

India is home to over 105 million tribal people, belonging to 31 different tribes. Tribal populations enter the realm of mainstream attention only when crisis – from land displacement to gender violence – manage to hit newspaper headlines. But how much do we really know about them as people – their lives, their traditional wisdom, cultures and struggles?

Here is a selection of award winning films made by Independent film-makers on indigenous communities in India covering a range of subjects, from the need to preserve their traditional forms of knowledge, to the threat to livelihoods, the environment, and their uneasy relationship with development.

The films bring us closer to people who are at the margins of our consciousness, finding little space and attention in mainstream media, far away, physically and mentally from cities and city people.

There Is A Fire In Your Forest, 2011

53 mins Director: Krishnendu Bose

The film focuses on the untold story of Kanha, in Madhya Pradesh. Known more as a tiger conservancy, Kanha was also the site that witnessed the first wave of adivasi relocation in the early 1970s. A must watch for anyone wanting to understand the adivasi side of the story in India, the film has as its central character, a wildlife photojournalist, who visits Kanha and finds a change in his understanding of 'conservation'.

India's Silent War, 2011

48 mins; Director: Imran Garda

Al Jazeera's journalist Imran Garda examines a underrported 40-year war that has claimed thousands of lives in the heart of our country but remains largely ignored by urban Indians and the world outside. The Adivasis, the original inhabitants of the land who populate our impenetrable and remote jungles are caught in the middle of a conflict between the governement and Naxalites or Maoists. The film takes us to Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa, and West Bengal to introduce us to this 'hidden war' in our background, bringing us face to face with rebel fighters and the nameless victims of this terrible conflict.

The Red Data Book – An Appendix, 2014

72 mins; Director: Sreemith Shekar and Pradeep K P

The documentary, 'The Red Data Book-An appendix' highlights the increasing infant mortality within Adivasi communities in Attappady, Kerala. As the community faces extinction, the film questions if infant mortality is due to malnutrition as the State claims or because of our inability to comprehend their way of life. The activist filmmaker Sreemith captures the everyday rhythms of Adivasi life to try and find answers. The film was a part of the prestigious IDSFFK 2014 film festival in Trivandrum this year.

In the forest hangs a bridge, 1999

39 mins; Director: Sanjay Kak

Set deep in the forested hills of Siang Valley of Arunachal Pradesh, the residents of Damro Village get together to build a 1000 foot long suspension bridge from cane and bamboo in the distinctive style of the Adi tribe. Their only tool is the dao, a machete or blade made of tempered steel. The film then becomes a metaphor for the strength and fragility of the tribal community as they set about this challenge.

Acting Like a Thief, 2005

15 mins Director: P. Kerim Friedman & Shashwati Talukdar

The film is about a tribal theatre group in Ahmedabad. The Budhan Theatre, inspired by the work of Mahasweta Devi, it has transformed the lives of adults and children who belong to the Chhara tribe or community. The film chronicles the arrest of one of its playwrights and harks back to 1871 when the tribals were notified as 'natural criminals' by the then British Raj. Even post independence, little has changed for these people, for despite being denotified, they are still unable to shake off the shadows of their past.

Only An Axe Away, 2005

40 mins; Director: P. Baburaj and C Sarathchandran

The film chronicles the efforts of a social movement to save the Silent Valley in Kerala. Declared a national park in 1984, the state plans to build a dam across river Kunthi that could flood the valley if the hydroelectric project begins. In the film, environmentalits and the people share their anxieties that the move would ruin the evergreen forests forever.

Preeti Prakash *is a communications consultant in Bangalore. She is interested in contemporary Indian culture. Her work spans documentary film, radio, video, writing and more.*
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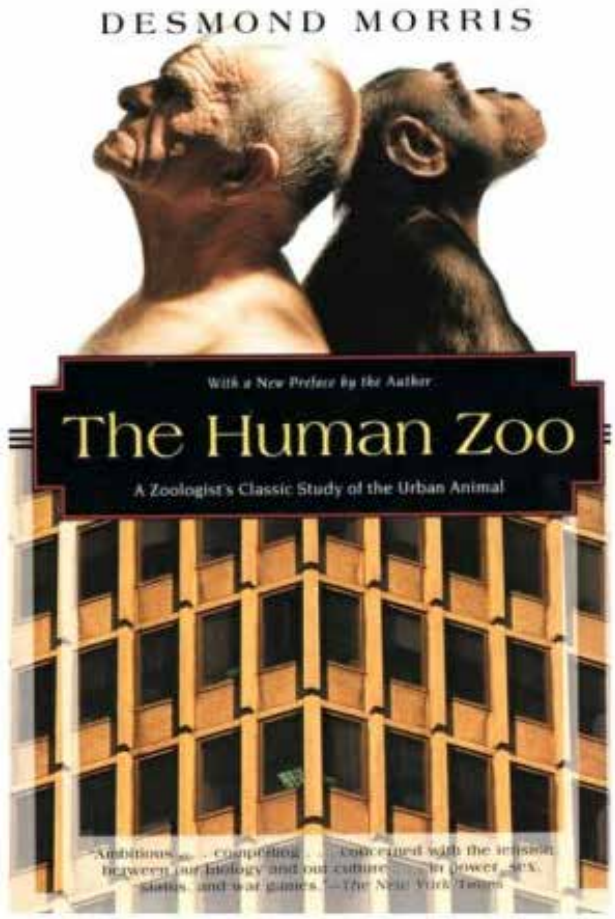
The City is not a Concrete Jungle but a Human Zoo



Look closely and you'll see that the city is hardly a concrete jungle and more a human zoo, says ethologist Desmond Harris in his book The Human Zoo, reviewed here by Manu Sharma.

In "The Human Zoo", renowned zoologist/ethologist makes uncanny comparisons between the patterns of human life in cities with those of animals held in captivity.

A while back, *The Hindu* had profiled a bunch of people who left the city to live and work closer to nature. It reminded me of a book about life in the city that I read a few years ago. One which left a deep impression on me.

It's called "The Human Zoo" by Desmond Morris, the renowned zoologist/ ethologist (ethology is the study of animal behaviour) published in 1969 and re-published in 1994. Morris is better known for "The Naked Ape" but I consider this little known gem of his to be of far greater significance.

In "The Human Zoo", he makes uncanny comparisons between the patterns of human life in cities with those of animals held in captivity. Sample the introduction from page one:

When the pressures of modern living become heavy, the harassed city-dweller often refers to his teeming world as a concrete jungle. This is a colourful way of describing the pattern of life in a dense urban community, but it is also grossly inaccurate, as anyone who has studied a real jungle will confirm.

Under normal conditions, in their natural habitats, wild animals do not mutilate themselves, attack their offspring, develop stomach ulcers, become fetishists, suffer from obesity,, or commit murder. Among human city-dwellers, needless to say, all of these things occur. Does this, then, reveal a basic difference between the human species and other animals? At first glance it seems to do so. But this is deceptive. Other animals do behave in these ways under certain circumstances, namely when they are confined in the unnatural conditions of captivity. The zoo animal in a cage exhibits all these abnormalities that we know so well from our human companions. Clearly, then, the city is not a concrete jungle, it is a human zoo.

The comparison we must make is not between the city-dweller and the wild animal, but between the city-dweller and the captive animal. The modern human animal is no longer living in conditions natural for his species.

Trapped, not by a zoo collector, but by his own brainy brilliance, he has set himself up in a huge, restless menagerie where he is in constant danger of cracking under the strain.

I first read the book around five or six years ago. I came across it at a time when I was beginning to question whether a vast conglomeration of

millions of people over a small area, namely in a city, that necessitates a) centralised supply of food, water, cooking fuel, transportation fuel, clothing, building material and so on from sources far away, and b) consumed at a rate that is constantly increasing; can ever be sustainable. Desmond Morris comes from a completely different perspective, that of a zoologist, and looks at patterns of human behaviour in cities to lucidly illustrate "the increasing price we have to pay for indulging [our inventive urges] and the ingenious ways in which we contrive to meet that price, no matter how steep it becomes."

It's the most fascinating account. Re-reading bits and pieces of the book now I see how much I have forgotten and perhaps need to read again. What I remember most from the book is the second chapter on status struggles titled "Status and Super Status" which relates closely to my interest in consumption patterns in our society. Morris says that in any organized group of mammals there is always a struggle for social dominance. Each adult individual has a particular social rank, giving him his position, or status, in the group hierarchy.

He then goes on to provide ten commandments of dominance, the first of which states: "You must clearly display the trappings, postures and gestures of dominance." Then he goes on to show how this holds true for Baboons and Humans alike. What's truly insightful is what Morris has to say about the consequence of status struggle in a group:

The general result is a constant condition of status tension. Under natural conditions this tension remains tolerable because of the limited size of the social groupings. If, however, in the artificial environment of captivity, the group size becomes too big, or the space available too small, then the status 'rat race' soon gets out of hand, dominance battles rage uncontrollably, and the leaders of the packs, prides, colonies or tribes come under severe strain. When this happens, the weakest members of the group are frequently hounded to their deaths, as the restrained rituals of display and counter-display degenerate into bloody violence.

This, to me, accurately describes the pattern of events unfolding in this country and elsewhere in the world.

Photo Credit: Toshihiro Oimatsu

The book transcends the narrow vocabulary of concepts through which we perceive today's reality. It's a reminder of the need to abandon single, narrow frames of looking at the deep malaise in which we find ourselves. It also illustrates "the increasing price we have to pay for indulging [our inventive urges] and the ingenious ways in which we contrive to meet that price, no matter how steep it becomes."

I do not endorse everything in the book. It has its limits. But what I really like about it is that it transcends the narrow vocabulary of concepts through which we perceive today's reality. It's a reminder of the need to abandon single, narrow frames of looking at the deep malaise in which we find ourselves. There are so many of them and each one is useful. But I have a problem when a proponent of any given frame argue that it alone is the defining frame from which to understand our predicament: Capitalism vs. Socialism, Globalisation vs. Localisation, Stupid Policies vs. Smart Policies, Stupid Political Class vs. Smart Political Class, Growth vs. De-growth, Fossil fuels vs. Renewables, 1% vs. 99%, West Vs. East, Monetary System vs. Gift Economy, and so on.

One thing I've learned after reading the Russian book series by Vladimir Megre is that no matter how confident we may be about our *Weltanschauung*, we must always leave scope for new ways of perceiving and understanding reality. Sometimes there are explanations we may never have considered before in our wildest imagination which may be equally valid than the one we hold dear.

Also recommended is the BBC TV documentary series "The Human Animal" which takes Desmond Morris around the world to reveal that patterns of human behaviour are common across national, regional, and racial differences. It is differently organised than the book and contains material from his other works as well. Like the book, the series is little known and also rated highly.

Manu Sharma *lives on the outskirts of New Delhi in a house around which his family has planted about a dozen trees, half of which are fruit bearing. They also grow vegetables in the backyard and on the terrace.*

His past work has been in the area of climate change policy, technology, investment, and business sustainability. More recently he is devoted to a transition back to the land. Manu blogs at OrangeHues.com.

A World of the Unknown

Being with the indigenous is a moving experience that creates a shift in consciousness within one, says **Reva.**

For several months now, I have been visiting and living with indigenous people in our land (whom we often call "the tribals"), travelling into the interiors of India and meeting others who have lived and worked for years with them.

Richness is deeply ingrained in tribal life but very little of it is visible in photographs. Their artifacts and designs are a representation of the beauty they have internalised from their surroundings, and their culture and way of life hold many solutions to the crises that the modern world is facing. But, above all, their beauty, I think, lies in their humility, in their not knowing the power they hold. This, I believe, made them take me in so graciously and quickly make me an insider.

"Indigenous"

What is "indigenous"? Is it a mere geographical or anthropological concept? Or does indigeneity exist in our very consciousness? Would we be indigenous even if we were nomads?

The term "indigenous" is understood and used differently by different people – "native," "tribal," "scheduled tribes," "adivasi," "original inhabitants of the land," "the people before colonisation," "those who have lived in one region for generations, connected to the soil, the people of the wild." And so on. An international conference, "Narrativising Indigeneity" (organised by Centurion University in Paralakhemundi, Odisha during 24-27 Feb 2016), articulated this in various ways.

A friend, Narendraji, who has spent around three decades living and working with the Abujmaria tribe of Chattisgarh, puts the way of life of indigenous people like this:

Where contours are enmeshed

Where there is no distinction between "me" and "Nature"

Where the wild and the human blend with each other

Where there is not too much of a need to know

Where not many words are used and human activity is minimal

Where there is the silence of one's surroundings

An example that Narendraji gives is of the Abujmaria definition of "home." The small bamboo hut in the middle of a forest is just a *raen basera*, a night shelter – for the father, mother, grandparents, children and a few pigs, goats, cows and hens. "Home" is the whole forest outside this hut. The bamboo hut is just for the night because, during that time, the forest is meant for nocturnal creatures and one's ancestors, gods and spirits. (The darkness of nighttime is not the absence of light but the presence of a much more powerful realm.)

An integral state of being

Indigenous people never describe themselves. Others do. As far as they are concerned, they exist: they are in a state of being. Also, they hold the individual's, the collective's and the planet's wellbeing equally at the same time, intuitively, unconsciously. Being and living are cyclical, as in Nature. They live the art of maintaining a balance in the ecosystem. Their way of life runs in their blood. They do not talk or write about it, nor do they have a need to preserve it. They just live it.

Invisible boundaries

Thus, the subtle tends to be sensed easily. Very little literal explanation is needed. Rituals, customs and symbolism simplify complexities elegantly. Trust in one's ambience is palpable. There are no boundary walls, locks or doors – no spaces that exclude others. Ownership is shared. The houses – made of bamboo, mud and hay – last not more than three or four years and demand continuous care. Life revolves around seasonal changes and basic human functions – caring, feeding, etc. Impermanence is embraced as a way of life and a welcoming openness and humility are a consequence.

The world outside

It may be this openness that has allowed the modern world to seep into theirs, reducing their numbers, destroying their craftsmanship and causing their indigenous knowledge to die. And they are losing faith, respect and a sense of the future – their very souls.

The resources meant for them are being mined away to feed the greed of "development" and the conquest of "civilisation." Their sense of original abundance, contentment and wellbeing is being taken over by scarcity, violence and indignity.

***Reva Malik** has been working in the field of education and learning for the last 15 years, involved in projects on relooking at and reimagining learning spaces and natural learning.*

Co-founder of Existential Knowledge Foundation, she is working on research and revival of existential knowledge and integrating it in the learning spaces and processes.

Photographs - Reva

Systems Thinking and the Cobra Effect

Barry Newell and Christopher Doll United Nations University

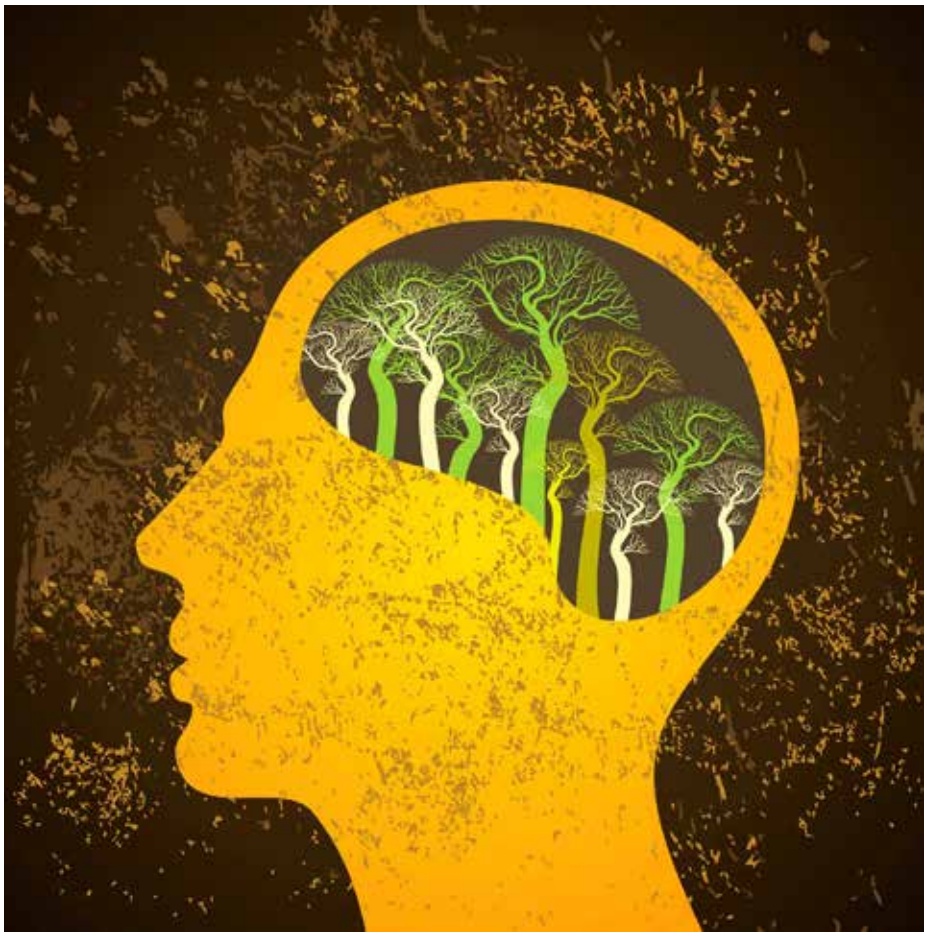


Photo: rawfoodplanner.com

Using systems thinking, policymakers can avert the 'cobra effect' where simplistic policies came back to bite us with unintended outcomes.

A famous anecdote describes a scheme the British Colonial Government implemented in India in an attempt to control the population of venomous cobras that were plaguing the citizens of Delhi that offered a bounty to be paid for every dead cobra brought to the administration officials. The policy initially appeared successful, intrepid snake catchers claiming their bounties and fewer cobras being seen in the city. Yet, instead of tapering off over time, there was a steady increase in the number of dead cobras being presented for bounty payment each month. Nobody knew why.

Right from birth, we start to see connections in the world around us. A meal cures hunger; sleep relieves tiredness; problems have causes, and eliminating the cause will yield a solution. What we are doing (whether we know it or not) is forming mental models of the way that cause and effect are related. Our mental models exert an incredibly powerful influence on our perceptions and thoughts. They determine what we see, tell us what events are important, help us to make sense of our experiences, and provide convenient cognitive shortcuts to speed our thinking.

However, they can lead us astray. Most of our cause–effect experiences involve very simple, direct relationships. As a result, we tend to think in terms of 'linear' behaviour — double the cause to double the effect, halve the cause to halve the effect. In reality, as we will see with the cobras of Delhi, the world is often more complex than we realise.

Counter-intuitive behaviour

We live in a highly connected world where management actions have multiple outcomes. When action is taken, the

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Experience with such models can alert decision makers at all levels to the potential for feedback forces to cause policy surprise. For example, it would be a significant step forward if all decision makers recognised the potential for balancing feedback structures to cause the well-known phenomenon of 'policy resistance', where people push on a system and the system pushes right back to resist their efforts. This, after all, is the essence of resilience.

Given the increasing complexity of human–environment systems in the 21st century, the need for practical ways to promote and use feedback thinking has never been greater.

intended outcome might occur, but a number of unexpected outcomes will always occur. Developing methods to help us visualise and understand cause-and-effect relations in complex systems is of great importance. We need ways to progress beyond linear thinking. In particular, we need to understand the concept of feedback and appreciate the dominant role it plays in determining system responses to management initiatives.

Reinforcing and balancing feedback

There are just two forms of basic feedback loop: reinforcing and balancing. Figure 1 provides an example of 'reinforcing feedback' (also called 'positive feedback'). This diagram expresses the hypothesis that an increase in the availability of active-transport opportunities will increase the extent to which community members 'see' the benefits of active transport. An increase in the visibility of benefits leads to increased community commitment to active transport, which leads to a further increase in the availability of opportunities for active transport. Similarly, if the level of any of the variables in this reinforcing loop is decreased, this change will propagate around the loop to decrease that level further. This amplifying effect, which can drive accelerating growth or collapse of the active transport system, can be triggered by an increase or decrease in any of the variables in the loop.

The other basic cause-effect loop is 'balancing feedback'. Balancing feedback (also called 'negative feedback') is 'goal seeking'. It is the basis for artificial and natural control systems and system resilience. Figure 2 shows a case where the goal is to maintain a sustainable level of resource consumption — high enough to meet the community's needs, but low enough to ensure the long-term viability of the resource. If, for example, the actual level of resource consumption rises above the sustainable level, then action is taken to reverse the change. The feedback loop works to minimise the difference between the two levels — ideally the difference will be maintained close to zero.

Simple dynamical models

There is, however, a type of modelling that can improve decision making in almost all situations. Efforts to build extensive working models of complex business systems have led to the discovery of simple feedback structures that occur over and over again in many different contexts. These 'system archetypes' have characteristic behaviours that can provide feedback-based explanations of behavioural patterns that are commonly observed in human–environment systems and are relevant in real-world policy-making and management contexts.

Take, for example, a Fixes that Fail feedback structure (Figure 3). This archetype captures the common tendency

Reinforcing and balancing feedback

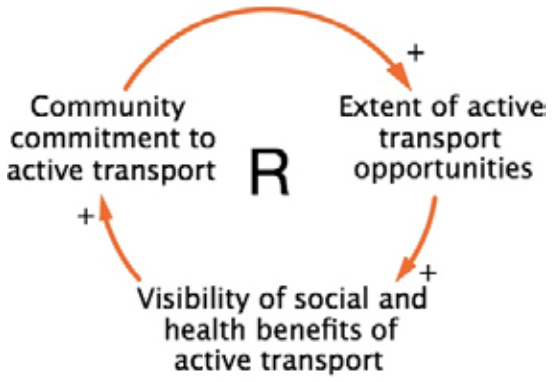

Figure 1. A Reinforcing Feedback Loop. In this influence diagram the blocks of text represent system variables and the arrows represent the processes or mechanisms by which a change in the level of one variable affects the level of another variable. A plus sign on an arrow indicates that a change in the variable at the tail of the arrow will cause the variable at the head of the arrow to eventually change in the same direction. The upper-case R in the centre of the diagram indicates that this is a reinforcing loop which generates feedback forces that act to amplify change.

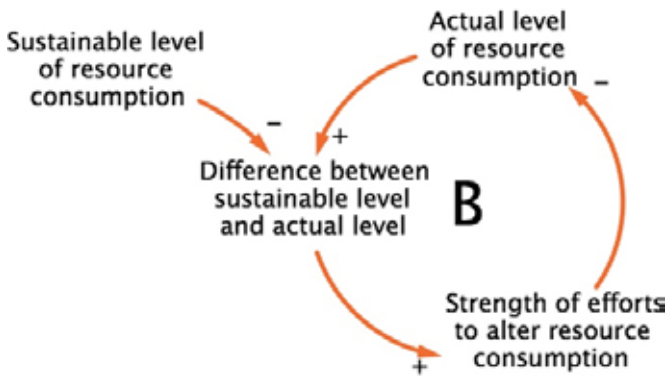

Figure 2. A Balancing Feedback Loop (B), which generates feedback forces that act to oppose change. A minus sign on an arrow indicates that a change in the variable at the tail of the arrow will cause the variable at the head of the arrow to eventually change in the opposite direction. The signs shown in this diagram are appropriate for the case where actual consumption exceeds the sustainable level.

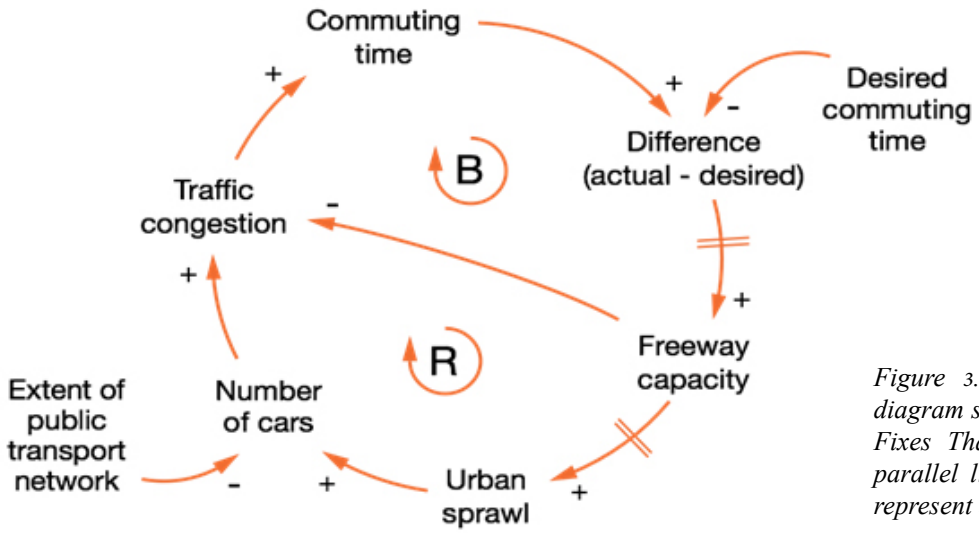

Figure 3. Freeway Feedback. This influence diagram shows a specific example of the generic Fixes That Fail system archetype. The short parallel lines drawn across two of the arrows represent delayed effects.

of decision makers, when faced with a problem, to apply a 'fix' that reduces the strength of the problem. While it seems to work in the first instance, the fix fails in the long run because it has an unexpected outcome that amplifies the problem.

The dynamical story told in Figure 3 concerns the development of freeways as a means to reduce traffic congestion. As existing roads become congested, so too commuting times increase. Commuting times in excess of the desired time frustrate the community and eventually lead to corrective action — the 'fix'. In this case, the fix involves constructing new freeways. As soon as a new freeway is opened to traffic there is an immediate reduction in commuting times, and everyone is happy. Then, with a delay, the existence of the freeway (with its short commuting times) encourages people to move out to the peri-urban areas at the end of the freeway. So, the new freeway triggers urban sprawl. More people, more cars, and more congestion. Once again commuting times become a problem, even on the freeway. What to do? Well, last time we had this problem we built a new freeway…

Experience with such models can alert decision makers at all levels to the potential for feedback forces to cause policy surprise. For example, it would be a significant step forward if all decision makers recognised the potential for balancing feedback structures to cause the well-known phenomenon of 'policy resistance', where people push on a system and the system pushes right back to resist their efforts. This, after all, is the essence of resilience.

Given the increasing complexity of human–environment systems in the 21st century, the need for practical ways to promote and use feedback thinking has never been greater.

The cobra effect

By now, you may have figured out what happened in the Delhi anecdote with which we opened. Realising that the cobra bounty converted the snakes into valuable commodities, entrepreneurial citizens started actively breeding them (a similar and well-documented event happened with the French who tried to eradicate rats from Hanoi).

Under the new policy, cobras provided a rather stable source of income. In addition, it was much easier to kill captive cobras than to hunt them in the city. So the snake catchers increasingly abandoned their search for wild cobras, and concentrated on their breeding programs. In time, the government became puzzled by the discrepancy between the number of cobras seen around the city and the number of dead cobras being redeemed for bounty payments. They discovered the clandestine breeding sites, and so abandoned the bounty policy. As a final act the breeders, now stuck with nests of worthless cobras, simply released them into the city, making the problem even worse than before!

The lesson is that simplistic policies can come back to bite you. The next time you hear a politician proclaiming a simple fix to a complex problem, check for the feedback cobras lurking in the bushes!

Dr. Barry Newell *is a Visiting Research Fellow at the United Nations University International Institute for Global Health in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, A physicist who focuses on the dynamics of social-ecological systems, he has particular interest in the critical importance of shared language in trans-disciplinary investigations of system behaviour. His work involves developing practical ways for groups to use systems thinking and focused dialogue to improve their decisions and policy making.*

Christopher Doll *is a Research Fellow at United Nations University Institute of Advanced Studies. His research interest focuses on using spatially explicit datasets to support policymaking for sustainable development with application in areas of urbanisation and biodiversity. Born and educated in the UK, Christopher holds a PhD in Remote Sensing from University College London.*

It's time we make farming renewable

Vandana Shiva

Photo: Francesco Fiondella

A new fraud is being played against India in name of genetically-modified crops. Earlier we used to spray poison from above, now genes are introduced into the plants to express poison. Bt is a toxin that is present in the gut of caterpillar. Likewise, herbicide tolerant gene, being introduced in GM Mustard, is also toxic.

Just focusing on energy can't solve climate change crisis. If not handled properly, it can spiral into massive conflicts like those in Syria and Nigeria

Climate change talks are often centered on renewable energy. Nobody talks about making farming renewable. Around 50 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions are due to chemical farming. It emits carbon dioxide from burning of fossil fuel required to make chemicals. To prepare 1 kg of urea, 2 litre of diesel is burnt. When used in farms, urea produces nitrogen oxide which is 300 times more harmful than carbon dioxide for the earth. So a question comes why do we use these chemicals?

Around 50 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions are due to chemical farming. It emits carbon dioxide from burning of fossil fuel required to make chemicals. To prepare 1 kg of urea, 2 litre of diesel is burnt. When used in farms, urea produces nitrogen oxide which is 300 times more harmful than carbon dioxide for the earth.

The origin goes back to World War II, when those manufacturing explosives using nitrogen realised that the same can be used to make fertilizers. After the world war, the factories could have shut down but those gotten used to profiteering did not want to quit. A whole new science of farming was raised and farmers were told that nitrogen fertilizers are good.

If we give it a thought, our pulses fix nitrogen as well. Their roots have rhizobium bacteria which fix nitrogen and give us good nutrition as well. But the green revolution did not have pulses. It focused on rice and wheat and the result is for everyone to see. Not only it cheated the earth of natural nitrogen fixators, shortage of pulses also led to rise in their prices.

Another means of greenhouses gases is the industrialised meat industry. In western countries, more animals than humans are in prison. Cow loves grass, but it's getting soyabean. In India, we are treating chicken like that. Estimates suggest that for production of every single unit of animal protein, we spend 10 times the grain, which is also grown with 10 times more input. In west, 50 per cent food produced is wasted, which contributes to methane. So when you consider all this, half of climate change problem is due to this type of food system which is dependent on chemical farming and industrial food production.

Listen to the talk

On the other hand, natural and chemical-free farming gets us 2-10 times more produce from a single unit, provided we respect the five elements. Why we should grow corn and soya bean? Around 75 per cent of the hybrid corn we grow is used as poultry feed. So, we are diverting mother earth to torture hens. In the whole world, only 10 per cent of corn and soya is eaten. Of the rest 90 per cent, a lot is going for biofuel which gets subsidy. To prepare this biofuel, you need more fossil fuel compared to how much is substituted.

Let's go back to the Second World War again and we see that it also gave

us poison gas which is the earlier form of pesticides. The Bhopal gas tragedy of 1984 told us how pesticides can kill humans.

A new fraud is being played against India in name of genetically-modified crops. These are the plants which produce poison and I am not talking against science here. Earlier we used to spray poison from above, now genes are introduced into the plants to express poison. Bt is a toxin that is present in the gut of caterpillar. Likewise, herbicide tolerant gene, being introduced in GM Mustard, is also toxic.

And we have seen that GM crops don't stop pests as claimed. Our farmers in Punjab experienced that this year when whitefly destroyed 80 per cent of the cotton crop. Protests against crop failure were hijacked and converted into religious protests when somebody desecrated Guru Granth Sahib.

Modern farming and terrorism

Such conflicts are not just happening here. Till four years ago, there was no ISIS. Syria's story is not of ISIS. It's of the failure of chemical farming which killed the soil and water and displaced farmers. During the drought of 2009, 10 lakh farmers moved to cities of Syria and protested. Due to binding clauses of the World Trade Organisation, which forbids help to farmers, Syrian government could not support them. Protests increased, firing happened and the whole nation dived into civil war.

Another place from where we get such disturbing news is Nigeria where Boko Haram group has emerged. This was also not heard of before 2011. It originated from the area which had the largest lake of northern Africa. Spread over 22,000 sq kms in 1966 with four countries surrounding it, Lake Chad served 3 crore people. Of these, nomadic pastoralists were Muslims

So when we keep attacking the earth, it will die, water will die, people will get displaced. We have to stand up for change. At other places people are taking to guns, our farmers are instead taking to poison to die. That's also violence. But the solution lies within our tradition.

If you give the earth proper organic matter, then it will give you lot of food. A 0.5 per cent increase in organic matter in the soil helps with 80,000 metre increase in moisture retention. That's the solution to climate change, to drought.

while settled agriculturists were Christians. The pond started drying up very fast post 1984 when it reduced to 2000 sq km. In 1994, it further shrank to 1,000 sq km. The reason was that the rivers which fed this pond had been diverted and dams built to provide for more water required to nurture chemical farming. Drought and climate change made matters worse resulting in conflict between pastoralists and farmers. But the "intelligent" people call it religious conflict which in fact was about access to vital resources.

So when we keep attacking the earth, it will die, water will die, people will get displaced. We have to stand up for change. At other places people are taking to guns, our farmers are instead taking to poison to die. That's also violence. But the solution lies within our tradition. Our Vedas have already said: "We should preserve this earth from where our existence came, so that food, fuel and home, remain always available. But if misused, the whole earth will be ruined and that will lead to downfall of human race."

Farmers as climate mitigators

Our farmers never saw farming as means of production before green revolution- it was only the means to care for earth. And if you give the earth proper organic matter, then it will give you lot of food. A 0.5 per cent increase in organic matter in the soil helps with 80,000 metre increase in moisture retention. That's the solution to climate change, to drought. Our work at Navdanya has shown that we can give good nutritious food to population twice the size of India if we go organic, use traditional seeds, save biodiversity and give full remuneration to our farmers. They are our "annadaata", our doctors, as well as our climate mitigators- they don't do just one work.

Chemical farming has put our farmers into debt, crops are failing, pulses are not growing because the seeds we are getting are not reliable. The thinking of corporates is that only four companies should control farming. Our thinking is to put forth the 300 crore diversity we have, which has intelligence, which knows how to organize.

With organic farming, emissions will drop to zero and the pollution of earlier times can also be handled as these plants will absorb the atmospheric carbon through photosynthesis. Estimates suggest that if whole world turns organic, climate change can be dealt in 10 years. So it's very important that we think beyond solar or wind energy because even the best of that is not based on life. They can't do photosynthesis.

It's high time that even if governments don't take initiatives, people and societies do their bit. We are the only society, which when talked about peace, talked about peace for the wind, the space, plants, earth, everybody's peace because unless we think about complete peace, humans won't have peace. We have got so much from this country, from this civilization. We need to focus on its ideals more.

Dr. Vandana Shiva *is a philosopher, environmental activist and eco-feminist. She has authored more than 20 books and over 500 papers in leading scientific and technical journals. She was trained as a physicist and received her Ph.D. in physics from the University of Western Ontario, Canada. She was awarded the Right Livelihood award in 1993. She is the founder of Navdanya (www.navdanya.org).*

Dr Vandana Shiva was speaking at the National Conference on Global Warming and Climate Change held at Bhopal on November 21, 2015.

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FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD

Photo: Aasif Iqbal J.

T.Vijayendra looks at organic farming from a marxist perspective and gets real as to what young people interested in farming ought to do.

How Much Land Does a Man Need?

Today there are many young people who are attracted to the idea of moving to a small town or to rural areas. Some people who have had some years of exposure to mainstream well paying jobs have also felt that this is not what they want to do. Many people faced with the prospect of recession and loss of job, are attracted to the idea of organic farming.

In the past many people tried it with mixed results. Many could not do it. Farming is a skill and requires hard work and learning. In the initial years it cannot be mixed with other preoccupations. Many ended up with orchards which gave them steady income. Many who had ancestral land and who went back to it also ended up with orchards or other cash crops. Few succeeded in producing grains, dals and oilseeds, the essential triad of the food basket.

Organic Farming

To most people organic farming means farming without chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Some better informed people will include rain water harvesting through contour bunding, mixed crops, crop rotation etc. While all this is correct it does not adequately cover the contemporary sensibilities of which organic farming is a part.

Contemporary Sensibilities

The core statement of this can be stated as:

- Equality
- Scaling down the use of resources
- Ecological Restoration

Equality

The demand for equality is as old as the class society, that is several thousand years. In the field of agriculture, which is the basis of survival of all human societies, the demand for land reform, the demand for ownership of the land by the farmers, the slogan 'land to the tiller' has been around for more than a century and is still valid for India.

How much land a tiller should own? This has been worked out by the peasant movement, political parties representing them and various expert committees for different regions of the country depending upon the productivity of the land. No one should own more land this. For Deccan region it will be less than 3 acres depending upon the kind of land and irrigation facilities.

Scaling down the use of Resources

Due to the logic of capitalism, there is a tendency for consumerism, of increased use of resources. This has led to a catastrophic environmental degradation and can, if not checked immediately, lead to the destruction of most life form on earth and water including human beings.

A big chunk of this pressure of consumerism has fallen on agriculture and on land. Today agriculture not only produces food for the farmers and other villagers, it has to feed an increasing urban population and produce raw material for industry. Some of the products of these raw materials are either harmful (narcotics, tobacco) or useless (floriculture for export and for political functions) or are in excessive amounts (sugar and alcohol). The need of contemporary sensibilities is that agriculture should produce mainly food – say not less than two thirds of the

produce should be food and in food also basic food – grains, pulses and oilseeds – again let us say two thirds of the total produce and the remaining should be fruits and vegetables. Again as a thumb rule the marketable surplus should not be greater than one third. These figures are indicative of the spirit behind these proposals, the actual figures may vary around these figures. The point is that today agriculture is being used for purposes other than food and the rural people, the producers; themselves are starving and some of them are committing suicide.

Ecological Restoration

Mankind has over exploited natural resources and in the process the human population has exploded in the 20th century. There is a need to restore ecology and stabilize human population. For that agriculture should not only be organic, it should also be more efficient, so that we can produce same or more food from less land. The science of agro ecology has to be developed to its full potential. The aims could be:

1. Return one third of the agriculture land back to nature – to forests, wet lands, grass lands etc.
2. Restore forest and water bodies back to their health.
3. Specific conservation projects for critically endangered flora and fauna of the region.

Acquiring Land? How much?

In the light of above, if land reforms are carried out or if we believe in land reforms, actually there is hardly any land available. The excess land is owned by rich people and they should be deprived of it without compensation and the land should be given to landless peasants. Or there is distress sale by poor farmers due to loans etc. and we should help them to restore their economic situation and not take advantage of distress and make them landless. Finally if somehow we do acquire land, say 3 to 5 acres, what chances are there that we can succeed as farmers? Most of us do not have the skills and acquiring it at a later age is difficult. The common dream of making a commune of a few urban close friends has, as a rule failed. The reason is that there is varying degrees of motivation and readiness to adapt to the rural situation and the group breaks down.

So what can we do?

Once again, this is addressed to a specific urban group. Evidently, overnight they will not become socialists/communists and work for land reforms. If some of them do well and good and they won't need this article.

Majority are attracted to the idea of shifting to a low consumer base, to a simpler life. This is indeed a good thing and should be encouraged. In fact they should move to rural areas or to small towns (taluk/block towns) on an experimental basis and get to know the rural areas and experience it.

One should try to be clear about objectives. If one eventually acquires some land, one should be prepared to be a farmer himself. Otherwise one can still stay in rural areas, do some basic kitchen garden and be a useful citizen in rural areas using one's strengths – teaching, running library, organising meetings, running a shop etc.

Now there are several options and many of them can be tried concurrently. First to meet as many people in the area who have a similar background to yours and tried out similar ideas. One can learn much from them, both in terms of successes and mistakes committed. One can even stay with them and work for a longer time if they have been 'successful'. Some go for a tour around the country to meet famous organic farmers.

But a more important thing to do is to understand farmers and agriculture. This one can do only by meeting ordinary farmers. One could take a house -rent/buy/build in about 5 to 10 cents of land and start the basic kitchen garden. Many components of organic farming can be learnt this way. Composting, nursery, planting, irrigation, harvesting, seed collection and preservation etc. Since the scale is small, it will take less time and energy and mistakes will not be expensive.

Concurrently one can make friends with the local farmers and other villagers. Village society is complex and it will take time to figure out what is happening. Only then one should plan and decide what one is going to do.

In case of choosing agriculture, probably the best way is to collaborate with a poor farmer who is in distress and with whom you have developed a good personal relationship over a period. Then one can enter some kind of agreement – you pay of his/her loans and lease in land and carry on agriculture in partnership etc. This way one can learn and even teach the farmer from what one has learnt from the books and over the years develop a good relationship.

Many are attracted to the idea of shifting to a low consumer and simpler life. This is indeed a good thing and should be encouraged. But a more important thing to do is to understand farmers and agriculture. One could take a house or build one in a town and start a basic kitchen garden. Many components of organic farming can be learnt this way; composting, nursery, planting, irrigation, harvesting, seed collection and preservation etc.

But as has been said above, agriculture is not the only thing that happens in rural society. One can have one's kitchen garden and be still a useful person/family in the rural areas and lead a low consumption life and do something useful.

T. Vijayendra *lives on an organic farm in the western ghats or in the city of Hyderabad. He has traveled widely within India and is well versed in Hindi and the literature, languages and cultures of the central parts of the country. He has been deeply involved with various people's movements and in causes for social justice and has written articles on a variety of subjects of topical interest in Hindi, Bengali and English.*

He has also written booklets on occupational health issues of textile and coal workers and on how to run hobby bookshops (in Hindi and Telugu). He may be reached at t.vijayendra@gmail.com

Power in India:

Radical Pathways to Local Self-rule

Movements and local organizations are using the ancient concept of swaraj, or "self-rule", to spread a radical ecological democracy throughout India. **Ashish Kothari and Pallav Das** write about the adivasi, dalit and other groups that are taking charge of local governance to deal with economic and social inequities

"Our government is in Mumbai and Delhi, but we are the government in our village."

— Mendha-Lekha village, Maharashtra.

"These hills and forests belong to Niyamraja, they are the basis of our survival and livelihoods, we will not allow any company to take them away from us."

— DongriaKondh adivasis (indigenous people), Odisha.

"Seeds are the core of our identity, our culture, our livelihoods, they are our heritage and no government agency or corporation can control them."

— Dalit women of Deccan Development Society, Telangana.

These three assertions of "ordinary" people in different parts of India suggest the basis of a radical restructuring of political relations and a significant deepening of democracy.

The village of Mendha-Lekha, in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra state, has a population of about 500 Gondadivasisi, "tribals" or indigenous people. About thirty years ago these people adopted the principle of decision-making by consensus at the full village assembly. The villagers do not allow any government agency or politician to take decisions on their behalf, nor may a village or tribal chief do so without full consultation. This is part of a "tribal self-rule" campaign underway in some parts of India, though few villages have managed to achieve complete self-rule (swaraj, an Indian concept we discuss below).

A struggle in the 1980s against a major dam that was to displace Mendha-Lekha and dozens of other villages highlighted the importance of self-mobilization. Since then, the village has conserved 1,800 hectares of surrounding forest, and recently gained full rights to use, manage, and protect it under the Forest Rights Act 2006, reversing centuries of colonial and post-colonial forest governance. The community has moved towards meeting its basic needs in terms of food, water, energy and livelihoods through, among other things, the sustainable harvesting of bamboo.

In 2013 all the village land-owners decided to place their lands in the "commons", effectively ending private land-ownership, using the long-forgotten Gramdan Act of 1964. Decisions at the village assembly are taken on the basis of information generated by abhyas gats (study circles) on a host of topics, in which villagers combine their own knowledge and wisdom with the knowledge of civil society organizations (CSOs), academics and government officials who are sensitive to the villagers' worldview.

Faultlines in Indial Democracy

Experiments that attempt to usher in a new future like the one mentioned above are strongly confronted by an entrenched power dynamic in India. At the national level this has seen a worsening of inequities in many forms.

For instance, the richest 10 percent in India hold 75 percent of total wealth, and 370 times the share of the poorest 10 percent. As Kothari and Shrivastava pointed out in Churning The Earth, "the per capita ecological footprint of the richest one percent in India is 17 times that of the poorest 40 percent, already above the global acceptable limit of 1.8 global hectares of consumption of earth's resources". The picture for the underprivileged is in complete contrast. Thirty years ago, before it opened up the economy, India accounted for about 20 percent of the world's poorest. Today, this number is close to 33 percent, or about 400 million people.

With the rapid and indiscriminate expansion of economic liberalization, adivasi and other forest-dwelling communities are increasingly losing forest areas to so-called development projects.

One of Mendha-Lekha village's mechanisms for direct democracy is decision by consensus. Until every person in the assembly has agreed, no decision is taken. Even this is clearly subject to inequities of articulacy, time, and social factors, albeit much less prevalent in adivasi or indigenous populations than in others.

In the example given in this essay, civil society or government officials may at times play a mediating or facilitating role for such processes, especially where traditional power structures are inequitable. The work of organizations or movements such as Timbaktu Collective in Andhra Pradesh, or Maati women's collective in Uttarakhand, illustrates such facilitation.

Moving Beyond the Local

The local and the small scale cannot by themselves make changes at the macro level, and direct democracy would obviously not work at larger scales. Many functions need to be coordinated and managed well beyond the local level, such as railways and communication services. Many problems (such as toxics and pollution, desertification, climate change) are at scales much larger than individual settlements, emanating from and affecting entire landscapes (and seascapes), countries, regions, and indeed the planet.

In a radical democracy scenario, larger-level governance structures need to emanate from the basic decentralized decision-making units. These are envisaged as clusters or federations of villages and towns with common ecological features, larger landscape-level institutions, and others that in some way also relate to existing administrative and political units of districts and states.

Landscape and trans-boundary planning and governance (also called 'bioregionalism', or 'ecoregionalism', among other terms) are exciting new approaches being tried out in several countries and regions. These are as yet fledgling in India, but some are worth looking into.

For a decade, the ArvariSansad (Parliament) in Rajasthan brought 72 villages together to manage a 400 km2 river basin through inter-village coordination, making integrated plans and programs for land, agriculture, water, wildlife, and development. Its functioning has weakened in recent times, but it provides an important example from which to learn.

In the state of Maharashtra, a federation of Water User Associations manages the Waghad Irrigation Project, the first time a government project has been completely devolved to local people. This has led to a much greater emphasis on equity in water distribution and access, and greater possibility of public monitoring, compared to more centralized irrigation governance systems. Examples of this kind are found in other countries, including Australia, where the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative seeks to integrate governance and management of landscapes over 3,600 km2.

Over time, however, national boundaries would become far less divisive and important in the context of genuine globalization. The increasing networking of peoples across the world, both traditional and digital, is already a precursor to such a process. Cultural and ecological identities that are rooted in the people or community to which one belongs and the ecoregion where one lives, as well as those being formed through digital media, may gain in importance, defined by celebrating diversity, with the openness to mutual learning and support.

Across all levels of decision-making there is the need to ensure that representatives are accountable. Lessons could be learned from ancient Greek and Indian democracies, and from experiments in Latin and Central America such as the consejoscomunales (communal councils) in Venezuela and the Zapatista-governed region of Mexico. These examples include highly constrained 'delegated' responsibility whereby representatives are subject to clear mandates given by the delegators or electorate rather than attaining independent power, they can be recalled, must report back, among other obligations.

An increasing number of companies and cooperatives, run democratically and with the ability to gain some level of control over the market, now exist in India...

Power is not only Political: Towards Eco-Swaraj or Radical Ecological Democracy

An increasing number of companies and cooperatives, run democratically and with the ability to gain some level of control over the market, now exist in India, such as Dharani Farming and Marketing Mutually Aided Cooperative set up by the Timbaktu Collective in Andhra Pradesh, the textile producer company Qasab and others in Kachchh, Gujarat, and the SWaCH cooperative of wastepicker women in Pune, Maharashtra. These projects are still marginal, but they show the possibilities of countering the trend towards privatization and corporatization.

Interesting notions of localized economies, their fundamentals akin to Gandhi's notion of self-reliance elaborated by the economist JC Kumarappa, have been put forward by organizations and individuals. These include the former dalitsarpanch of Kuthambakkam village, RamaswamyElango, and the organization Bhasha working in adivasi areas of southern Gujarat, both of which propose clusters of rural (or rural and urban) areas in which all or most basic needs are produced and exchanged locally, reducing dependence on outside state or market systems.

Simultaneous to economic democratization is the need to challenge other social inequities, including in India those of caste, gender and class. Here too, a number of grassroots initiatives are showing some pathways; the Dalit women farmers of Deccan Development Society quoted in at the start of this essay, for instance, have thrown off their socially oppressed status (combining caste and gender-based discrimination) by a achieving a remarkable revolution in sustainable farming, alternative media, and collective mobilization.

Finally, and as a base for all of the above, there is an urgent need to move towards ecological sustainability.

Several analyses of the impact of economic globalization and centralized governance have shown that India is already on the steep descent into unsustainability. This can be seen in the continuing decline of forest quality and plunging of groundwater levels.

India is the world's third largest carbon emitter as is its ecological footprint, and ecological damage is already causing turmoil and dispossession in the lives of tens of millions of people. No amount of restructuring of power relations will work in the long run if the very ecological foundations of life are undermined; by the same token, the protection of these foundations also requires that people at the grassroots can take power into their own hands.

Ashish Kothari *is a founder-member of Kalpavriksh, a 30-year-old environmental research and action group. He has been a member of people's movements against destructive development projects, including the Narmada dams. He coordinated the Technical and Policy Core Group to formulate India's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan.*

Ashish is also a member of the panel of advisors of Bhoomi College.

Pallav Das *is also from Kalpavriksh.*

Don't Believe the Budget Hype - *Farmers Have Been Short-Changed Again*

Photo Courtesy: Kannan Muthuraman/flickr

Agriculture has become unviable not because it is unproductive or does not pay enough but because it has deliberately been kept impoverished for many years, says **Devinder Sharma.**

In 17 states across the country, the average income a farmer earns from farming activities, including what he keeps for his family's consumption, is Rs 20,000 a year. This means the monthly income of a farmer in these states is a paltry Rs 1,666.

Put yourself in this situation. If you were a farmer and made only Rs 1,666 a month, what would you do?

When, in February 2016, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, while presenting the Budget in parliament, said, "We need to think beyond food security and give back to farmers a sense of income security", I was hopeful. But when all he promised was to double farmers' income by 2022 — five years away — all my hopes came tumbling down.

Mr Jaitley wants the farmers to wait five years for their income to rise to Rs 3,332 a month, if the promise is realised. I can imagine the 2022 Economic Survey proudly stating the success. Certainly, economists will praise the "achievement." But the reality is that, by 2022, adjusting for inflation, the doubled income would be equivalent to what a farmer makes now.

This is the income security the government has promised.

The challenge of income security

At a time when the agriculture sector is in deep crisis, having faced great distress over the past several years — a fact detailed in the Economic Survey of 2016 — I would expect the government to perform an immediate surgical operation. Considering that the number of farmer suicides nationwide rose to an average of 52 a day in 2015, the farming sector requires urgent attention. But simply mentioning agriculture numerous times in the Budget speech provides no succour to a sector that is languishing in neglect and apathy.

The current crisis is not an outcome of low agricultural productivity. Farmers are aware of how to increase crop productivity But if this is not backed by remunerative prices, they will continue to suffer. Take, for instance, Punjab, India's frontline agricultural state. Punjab's farmers produce 4,500 kg/hectare of wheat and 6,000 kg/hectare of paddy — a very high crop productivity indeed — in an area that has 99 percent assured irrigation. All development indices projected by the government in this year's budget, including expanding irrigation, already exist in Punjab. Yet, according to calculations by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices, the net income from a hectare of cultivation of wheat and paddy (the usual cropping pattern followed in a year) is about Rs 36,000, i.e. a monthly income of only Rs 3,000. Compare this with the basic monthly salary of Rs 18,000 a peon will get after the Seventh Pay Commission is implemented.

Photo Courtesy: Prabhu B Doss/flickr

While the salaries of employees has risen phenomenally over the past 45 years, farmers have been starved of their legitimate dues. If only the wheat price had been raised by the same yardstick — perhaps by 100 times — the MSP for wheat would have been at least Rs 7,600 rupees per quintal.

The Economic Survey is therefore wrong when it says that the central challenge to Indian agriculture is low productivity. The primary challenge is what Jaitley spelt out but failed to address: income security.

Penalising farmers to check inflation

I was appalled to see how panelists in Budget discussions on several TV channels were visibly disappointed at the emphasis on the word "'agriculture" in Jaitley's Budget speech. What many fail to understand is that agriculture has become unviable not because it is unproductive or does not pay enough but because it has deliberately been kept impoverished for many years.

In 1970, the minimum support price (MSP) for wheat given to farmers was Rs 76 per quintal. By 2015, this MSP had increased a mere 19 times, to Rs 1,450 per quintal. In the same period, the basic salary (plus dearness allowance) of government employees increased by as much as 150 times; for college teachers and university professors, 170 times; for school teachers, 320 times; and for top corporate executives, a whopping 1,000 times.

While the salaries of employees has risen phenomenally over the past 45 years, farmers have been starved of their legitimate dues. If only the wheat price had been raised by the same yardstick — perhaps by 100 times — the MSP for wheat would have been at least Rs 7,600 per quintal.

A common argument is that if wheat prices go up, food inflation will skyrocket. Thus, farmers have been penalised merely to keep food inflation in check. This is the reason the government has backtracked on its promise to provide farmers a 50 percent profit over the cost of production.

To make up for its anti-farmer image, the government could have announced an economic bailout package for the farming community and set up a commission to ensure that farmers get a guaranteed monthly income. Were this done, the wheels of economic growth would have spiralled. More income in the hands of the nearly 60 crore farmers would have not only provided them with income security but have also created a huge domestic demand, thereby leading to the revival of industrial growth.

This, in reality, is the only prescription for Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas.

More income in the hands of the nearly 60 crore farmers would have not only provided them with income security but have also created a huge domestic demand, thereby leading to the revival of industrial growth.

Photo Courtesy: Subro Sengupta/flickr

***Devinder Sharma** is a food and trade policy analyst and an award-winning Indian journalist, writer, thinker and researcher. This essay is part of a series of excerpts from the* State of Power 2016 *report, published by the Transnational Institute this week.*

Devinder is also a member of the Bhoomi Advisory Board.

Photo Courtesy: Deepak Bhatia

A woman from the nomadic Bakarwal tribe in ladakh

...life is sacred. And through gratitude to life we are enchanted and inspired and happy. Caring for the Earth community, which includes the human community, is a matter of joy, and not a matter of compulsion. Ecology or environmentalism is a way of life, not a way of crisis management.

If we live well, all shall be well

Eco Spiritual leader Satish Kumar spells out a much needed philosophy of joy and caring for nature and humans in times when gloom and doom stories are rife in the world today.

NOT ONLY THE world of politics and business, but even much of the environmental movement is driven by fear. "We should take care of planet Earth, or else!" "We should reduce carbon emissions, or global warming will bring an end to civilisation." "We should use less petroleum, or the oil will run out." These are the fears behind much environmental thinking. Many of the books published in the past few months rest on the premise that the end of the world is nigh unless we change our ways.

Fear seems to rule our lives, our politics and our world. Fear of terrorism, fear of death, fear of old age, of loneliness, of illness, of being attacked or abused: fear, fear, fear.

Because of fear we build nuclear weapons and then to save ourselves from nuclear weapons we build nuclear bunkers! Because of the fear of scarcity we pursue economic growth; economic growth causes global warming; to save ourselves from global warming we want to cover the Earth with wind turbines or nuclear power stations, which take out land from food production, which causes scarcity ... The karmic vicious circle of fear goes round and round.

As Albert Einstein said, you cannot solve a problem with the same mindset that caused the problem in the first place. Fear is the cause of environmental problems, which cannot be solved by fear of global catastrophe.

In the past we used to be told, "Be good, or you will go to hell." Now we say, "Be environmentally friendly, or civilisation will come to an end." Fear is a bad reason for being a good environmentalist. There are better reasons to care for the Earth. Living in harmony with the Earth is good in itself. Sustainable, frugal, simple and compassionate ways of living are fair to all beings – humans and other than humans. A culture of nonviolence, respect and reverence for life has to become part of our psychological make-up. Even if there were no global warming and no shortage of oil, we should not be destroying life, because life is sacred. And through gratitude to life we are enchanted and inspired and happy. Caring for the Earth community, which includes the human community, is a matter of joy, and not a matter of compulsion. Ecology or environmentalism is a way of life, not a way of crisis management.

Questions of global warming, population, organic growing and international terrorism are all issues that need to be faced and understood in the context of the intrinsic value of ecological lifestyles, and not as a response to scare stories.

SATISH KUMAR *has been the guiding spirit behind a number of ecological, spiritual and educational ventures around the world. He is the Editor-in-Chief of Resurgence & Ecologist Magazine and the co-founder of the Schumacher College, U.K. He is also a member of the Panel of Advisors of Bhoomi College.*

If we live well all shall be well featured in Resurgence issue 237. This article is reprinted courtesy of Resurgence & Ecologist. *All rights to this article are reserved to Resurgence & Ecologist.*

Little Millet Delicacies

Arun Kaulige

'Saame' or little Millet is high in healthy fats in addition to all the general millet characteristics such as being gluten-free, with low glycemic index, high fibre, etc. It also has the smallest grain-size and so cooks faster than the other millets. Arun Kaulige offers three variations of South Indian favourites using *Saame*

Little Millet is also called Same (in Kannada), Samai (in Tamil), Samalu (in Telugu) and Kutki (in Hindi)

Little Millet Kesari Bhath with Pinapple

Tasty Little Millet Kesari Bhath to accompany Upma to make Chow-Chow Bhath – the pineapple adds a twist to the recipe.

Ingredients

- 1 cup Little Millet Rava
- 5 cups Water Adjust to change consistency
- 1/4 cup Ghee
- 1 cup Sugar
- 1 cup Chopped Pineapple
- 10 pieces Broken Cashew nuts
- 10 nos Raisins
- 3-4 nos Clove You can use Cardamom instead of Clove
- 1 pinch Saffron I did not added in this preparation

Instructions

Heat Ghee in a pan (low flame). Add the Cloves. Fry Cloves for couple of minutes in Ghee and let it release all its flavours. Add Little Millet Rava and roast in low flame. Continuously stir the rava to ensure it does not get burnt. Roast for about 10 minutes. Add Cashew nuts and raisins and roast for a minute.

Add boiling water to this mixture. Add sugar, pineapple pieces and Saffron. Stir well. Close the lid and cook in low flame for about 10 minutes. Open the lid and stir the Kesari till the desired consistency is reached.

Recipe Notes: I have seen Kesari Bhath recipes where the rava is not roasted. You can try that too.

Little Millet Kheer

Ingredients

- 1 cup Little Millet Rice Cooked to a soft texture
- 1/2 cup Condensed Milk
- 1 cup Milk If you would like the kheer to be of thin consistency add more milk
- 3 tbsp Ghee
- 1/4 cup Sugar if needed
- Cashews, Almonds, Raisins For Garnishing, lightly roasted
- 2 nos Finely powdered Cardamom

Instructions

To the already cooked Little Millet rice, add condensed milk, milk, and sugar. Bring it to a boil, add Cardamom powder and cook for 3 minutes under reduced flame.

Stir continuously. Once the mixture reaches the desired consistency, add ghee, Cashews, Almonds, and raisins. Mix thoroughly and take it out of the flame.

Kheer can be served hot or cold. Experiment with adding vanilla, Rose Water, Gulkhand, pineapple slices, etc.

Bisibele Bhath using Little Millet

Ingredients

- 1 cup Little Millet Rice
- 1/2 cup Toor Dal
- 8 cups Water
- 1 tbsp Urad Dal
- 2 nos Carrots Cut into 1 inch fingers
- 10 nos Beans Cut into 1 inch fingers
- 1 no Potato Chopped into 1/2 inch dices
- 1 no Knol Khol or kohlrabi Chopped into 1/2 inch dices
- 1/2 cup Fresh Peas
- 1-2 nos Capsicum Chopped into 1/2 inch dices
- 1-2 nos Onion Chopped into 1/2 inch dices
- 10 nos Curry Leaves
- 1 cup Tamrind Extract Adjust according to taste
- 2 tbsp Bisibele Bhath Masala MTR Masala
- 1 tsp Red Chilli Powder For Extra Spiciness
- 1 tsp Mustard Seeds
- 3 tbsp Ghee Cooking oil will do
- 1 tbsp Salt To Taste

Instructions

- Chop all vegetables before starting the cooking
- Cook the vegetables in boiling water with salt. Dont overcook the vegetables. They have to be firm so that it does not get dissolved when Bhath is prepared. Take it out of the water and keep the cooked veggies aside. Use the broth for cooking the millet and lentils
- Wash Little Millet Rice, Toor Dal and Urad dal. Add 8 cups of water & salt to taste. Use the broth that is leftover after cooking the vegetables. Note: More water can be added to vary the consistency. Cook this in pressure cooker for 4 whistles. 1 whistle in full flame and 3 whistles in low flame. (about 10-12 minutes). After removing from flame and leave it aside for about 10 minutes and let it cook in its own steam. Mix Tamrind extract and add 2 tbsp Bisibele Bhath mix (First add 1 tbsp of masala mix well and see if you like the taste and then add more masala as per your taste). Add Red Chilli Powder if you like it to be spicy. Stir the mixture thoroughly so that the spice is evenly mixed. You can add more water to change the consistency. We should aim to get this to a pasty consistency.
- For seasoning, heat Ghee and add Mustard seeds and Curry leaves. When Mustard seeds have popped, add diced Onion and Capsicum. Onion & Capsicum should only be half cooked. Just when the Onion & Capsicum starts changing colour, take it out of flame and add it to the cooked millet & lentil mixture. Put this on a low flame and bring it to a boil.

Things to keep in mind:

- Note 1: The millet lentil mixture has a tendency to stick to the bottom of the vessel and burn. Hence, continuously stir the mixture when on flame.
- Note 2: As the name suggests, have it hot. Bisi = Hot.
- Note 3: When the bhath becomes cold, it may harden. You can mix small amounts of boiling water and get it back to the desired consistency.

Arun kaulige *is a food historian and social entrepreneur. He has been a keen observer of changes in food trends during the past decades. His dream is to reinvent and adapt and present small grains, known as millets, to suit the modern palate.*

His current efforts are towards reviving and popularizing these millets via the social enterprise Kaulige Foods (www.kaulige.com), which specializes in millet cooking workshop, catering and healthy bakes.

The Bhoomi College

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- April 18 - 23 — **Sankalan Programme**
  - Inner and Outer Ecology
  - Holistic Leadership
- May 21 — **Fireless cooking for Children**
  by Pushpa
- June 4 — **Organic Gardening Workshop**
  by Raghu Rao and Pushpa
- June 18 — **Relating to and learning with the whole child**
  Rema Kumar and Farah Khan

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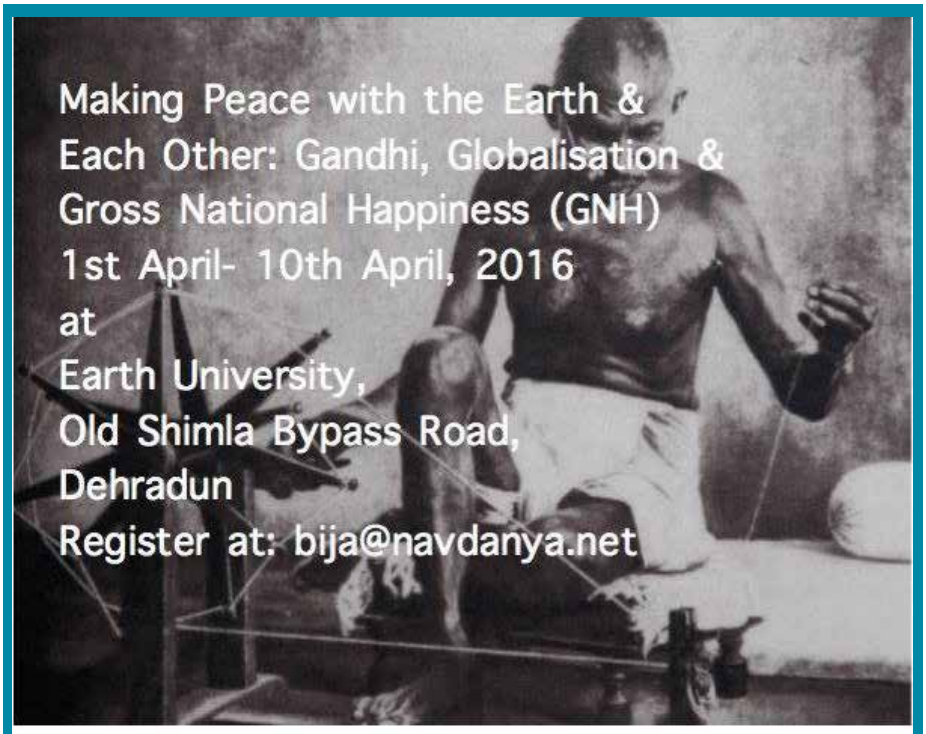

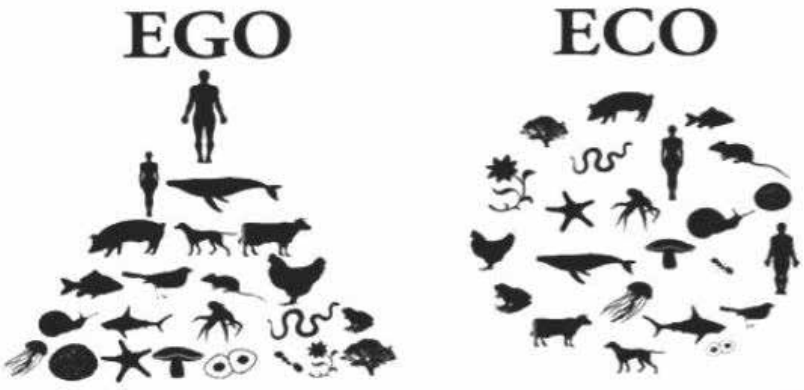

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Apart from the holistic curriculum Bhoomi College provides, it is a meeting ground for students with some wonderful teachers who have done path-breaking work. The generosity and wisdom of these great teachers have made Bhoomi's courses more exciting and valuable.

Bhoomi's courses are much more than educational courses - they provide a space to discover new avenues of adventure, of giving back to the world through meaningful work that would nourish your spirit as well

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Bhoomi College *offers two one year diploma courses*

- Science and Management for Sustainability
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Sankalan Summer Programmes - 18 to 23 April 2016

The purpose of these programmes

Today, what we need is not only technical knowledge and skills for sustainable living. The greater challenge is fostering new kinds of leaders with the vision and ability to co-create groups, organisations and communities that focus on positive action collaboratively and creatively.

Bhoomi College has focused on nurturing and supporting such aspiring leaders through intensive group participative, experiential sessions. Through integration of concepts from interpersonal process work, ecology, systems thinking and organisational behaviour, these programmes offer opportunities to explore complex issues of building organizations which foster a culture of ecological and social wisdom within communities.

The Sankalan programmes during the summer event include:

1. **Inner and Outer Ecology:** A programme on applying Nature's principles to ourselves & our relationships.
2. **Holistic Leadership :** What can leadership be like if we think like members of an eco-system?

Other programmes that will be offered in Winter and other events include Deep Ecology, a Retreat in the Sharavathi Rainforest, Systems Thinking and personal vibrancy and Building Eco-wise Communities.

All of the above are 6 day residential programmes (offered in April/ Nov every year) that can support those who wish to be anchors / facilitators in schools, NGOs. The first of these programmes can be attended as a separate programme also.

How will these programmes help me as a facilitator in a school or a manager in an NGO?

The group processes are participatory, reflective, inclusive and lively – making it a rich experience that can connect us more deeply with Nature and to others in the group / community. These programmes are anchored in offer a holistic approach, giving equal importance to practical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual aspects of ourselves.

A deeper exploration and understanding of oneself and one's patterns of thinking, feeling and action is of great value to facilitators in any situation. Co-evolving perspectives of your own supports you with frameworks and mental models to work in a more wholesome and meaningful way with groups and communities.

For more information log onto www.bhoomicollege.org or email : bhoomi.college@gmail.com

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Starts July 2016

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- Knowledge and skills for pursuing green careers
- An ecosystem for operationalising your entrepreneurial ideas

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- ***Starts July 2016***
- What this programme offers :
- Opportunities and support to explore concepts and philosophies in education, culture building and holistic learning
- Multiple possibilities to build on one's psychological, interpersonal and knowledge based strengths
- Hands-on engagement with children and adults to work with processes of co-evolving and co-creation in learning and living.
- Principles and practice of holistic thinking.

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