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**Conversations
in Development Studies**



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CENTRE FOR NEW ECONOMICS STUDIES CONVERSATIONS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

ISDS WORKSHOP 2020



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ACCLIMATISED EMERGENCIES

ISDS WORKSHOP 2020 ACCLIMATISED EMERGENCIES

ABOUT CIDS

CIDS (Conversations in Development Studies) is a peer-reviewed, quarterly research publication produced by the research team of Centre for New Economics Studies, O.P. Jindal Global University. The student-led editorial journal features solicited research commentaries (in the range of 2500-3000 words) from scholars currently working in the cross-sectional aspects of development studies. Each published CIDS Issue seeks to offer a comprehensive analysis on a specific theme identified within the scope of development scholarship. The editorial team's vision is to let CIDS organically evolve as a space for cultivating creative ideas for research scholars (within and outside the University) to broaden the development discourse through conceptual engagement and methodological experimentation on contemporary issues. Any research commentary submission features: a) brief review of the literature on a given research problem; b) the argument made by the author with details on the method used; c) documenting the findings and relevance of them in the larger scope of the literature; and (in some instances) d) present a brief policy action plan for agencies of the state (to address the issue highlighted in the commentary). There are no pre-identified limitations or restrictions to methodological frameworks used by solicited scholars (i.e. those writing the commentary). However, the method incorporated in any accepted submission must be explained along with its relevance in context to the nature of the study undertaken.

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CONTENTS

1. About this Issue	5
2. The Nature of Crisis Afflicting Bharat's Farmers and Food- Security	9
3. The Changing Landscape of Sustainable Practices In Business & Its Social Utility	16
4. The Epistemic Movements We Need: Debating Alternative Development Paradigms	26
5. CIDS Editorial team.....	36

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

ACCLIMATISED EMERGENCIES

Warming of the planet, melting of the Arctic, increasing quantum of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, ocean acidification, and rising sea levels have failed to convince the climate change rationalists of the gravity of the planet's health. They reason these changes with the alternating cooling and warming cycles that the planet has known since its birth over 4.5 billion years ago. Given the explicit nature of these changes, there can be no debate on their familiarity. However, what we cannot afford to remain blindfolded to is the reach, intensity, and pace of these changes. What used to take hundreds and thousands of years to affect a region, now needs no more than decades to shape and spread across the globe. The increase in intensity and frequency of extreme meteorological events including cyclones, floods and droughts across the globe, fast-changing weather patterns, the decline in certain species, air quality breaching safety levels, etc are telling evidence of the same. As the visibility of the symptoms enhances, so does the inevitability and indispensability of engaging with them and addressing them.

Furthermore, the observation that anthropogenic activities since the industrial revolution have been the major contributors to the changes in the natural climatic system. Even if the advice of the sympathisers to dismount the high horse of 'moral obligation' were heeded, we would still need to respond to existential requirements. In pursuit of answers and solutions of the problems disturbing our today and threatening our tomorrow, we intend to engage with some bright minds on certain dimensions. This, we believe, would help us find a direction and take measured steps towards a healing climate system.

FOOD SECURITY, AGRICULTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate Change accelerated by anthropogenic factors has the potential to disrupt the entire system securing food for the planet. Agriculture, occupying half of the habitable land on the Earth's surface, is arguably the keystone of the architecture needed for security. The world depends on agriculture for food, nutrition, growth, livelihood and beyond. With increasing human population, uneven demographic distribution, growing urbanization and industrialization, unsustainable dietary demands fed by globalisation-led choices and information, the land available for crops is shrinking. The pressure on agriculture is immense.

Climate change could amplify this pressure. In direct terms, the availability, affordability, quality, and accessibility of input resources, whether natural or

manmade, would dwindle. The harm to production is compounded by the strained distribution and supply networks — human and material- along the long chain of forward and backward linkages. This would affect the lives and livelihoods of millions. Talking of indirect effects, erratic weather patterns adversely affect predictability. This in turn stifles the planning, management, implementation capabilities at the administrative, institutional, and individual levels.

The paradox lies in the victim also being the culprit. Agriculture threatened by climate change is itself a major contributor to it. Nitrous Oxide from fertilizers and Methane from waterlogged paddy fields are just for starters. This demands attention towards the complex interconnections between food security, agriculture, and Climate Change. Then there is the case of food security, the meaning we attach to it. Given that a part of the World is dying of obesity and another of starvation, the very concept of food security needs a revisit. Also, to be factored in this is the warming caused by food wastage, its handling. Finally, there is the case of the most important and talked-of stakeholder — the farmer. The need of the hour is a path that would be ecologically sustainable, economically remunerative, and through the food security lens, adequate. The issue here lies in the ‘how’ rather than the ‘why’. One of the increasingly pitched and vouched-for ‘how’s’ is agri-business. Through this Workshop, the team intends to explore multiple aspects and prospects along this line, finding the answer(s) to at least one significant ‘how’.

SUSTAINABILITY IN CONSUMER-PRODUCER CONSCIOUSNESS

While talking about the alarming environmental issues and questions of sustainable choices to help heal the environment, one must always deal with the two pillars of the economy i.e. the producers and the consumers. We are looking to discuss the multifaceted aspects and linkages that are there in the consumption and production patterns, especially after the rise of globalisation, with the social and environmental impact they have incurred on daily basis. It is shown in multiple studies that increasing choice-oriented consumption and excessive range of produce for similar products is contributing heavily towards the per capita GHGs emission and is the origin of manifold increase in carbon footprint. Talking about industries such as those engaged in processed food, fashion, etc. we can see that rising consumerism and the race to keep up with the changing trends is giving birth to problems like wastage of un-used fine produce, over utilisation of non-replenishable resources, irresponsible waste disposal and most importantly, the changing consumer-producer mindset.

Even taking into consideration the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), the proportion of the damage done socially and environmentally to that of what is

returned to the society and/or environment is disappointingly uneven. Being the manufacturers and part of the corporate mechanism, producers do have some legal liabilities, if not moral, but consumers on the other hand are not bound by any such legality. Hence, the enforcement is absent at the individual consumer level.

The rise in consumerism is because people (excluding BPL population) tend to buy not for necessity but for pleasure and luxury. In turn, manufacturers produce with the motivation of satisfying this never-ending demand and earn profits. This comes with the cost of environmental degradation and severe effects on the climate because such consumption and production pattern are not sustainable. But if we look at products that are sustainable, environment friendly and renewable then the problem of accessibility and affordability comes into play. Thus, we are trying to bring up the issues of raising consumerism, the dilemma of sustainable choice and producer consciousness to the larger debate and establish the linkages that are present and needs constructive remedial changes.

SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC MODELS- ALTERNATIVE PARADIGMS

The pandemic has forced human society to pause and reflect on numerous things which were otherwise 'normal'. Among them is the current economic system that thrives on a perennial cycle of demand and supply. Failing this constant scramble for 'Growth', we risk a collapse of the system. Based on the lockdown experience, production halt causes tremendous harm to employment, making the poor poorer and pulling down many people from their social ladder. The society can anytime fall into shambles and prosperity would excuse itself from our dictionaries. The system in its existing version cannot afford time for people to heal. In fact, it could not, and therefore, countries had to rush through the unlock phases. Such a precarious situation has rekindled the debate of 'Growth vs De-Growth'.

While Climate Change rationalists deny budging, two spectres of voices have emerged. On one hand, we see the class of reformists who propose amends to the Capitalist system along the lines of 'Green Growth'. This basically centres around the argument that free-market economics does not have to necessarily conflict with the health of ecology. Switching to greener, i.e. environment-friendly utilisation of resources, they argue, could enable societies to work towards 'Growth' without devastating the natural climatic set-up of the planet. On the other hand, there is the class of the likes of 'De-growth' proponents and advocates of 'Eco-Socialism'. This class rejects the claim that market economic model can be tweaked, amended, and/or reformed towards a 'Growing' society without hurting our environment. They vouch for the society's 'Progress' as

Volume III Issue I

against 'Growth'. Their broader arguments rotate primarily about a more meaningful life, less competitive social relations, and healthy work culture, among others. Together, these voices trigger a lot of questions regarding the suitable, preferred, and wiser economic system for our society. One that heals the planet without hurting the prospects of a progressive society rooted in natural human aspirations. Making a diligent endeavour to find answers to some of these questions is of immense significance for all responsible stakeholders of our society. It is in this context that the Team intends to instigate thought-provoking, insightful, and guards-free conversation about sustainable economic models for our society.

Accordingly, the CIDS Editorial Team engaged with experts regarding questions in the abovementioned fields to gauge the relevant trends and challenges each of these sectors and their stakeholders face when it comes to climate change and sustainability. The experts participated in a workshop-format panel discussion and this issue is a culmination of the major arguments posed in the same.

The Nature of Crisis Afflicting Bharat's Farmers and Food-Security

INTRODUCTION

Food is the fuel for life which we all need. With a burgeoning population, India has to feed 1.35 billion mouths. Add to it the escalating choices and aspirations in the modern, globalised era. The demand for quantity, quality and variety of food is ever increasing. At the same time, the unsustainable, irresponsible anthropogenic activities have triggered climate change at an unprecedented rate. It is in this context that the role of agriculture and farmers assumes significance. It falls heavily on the shoulders of the farmer to fight the woes of climate change and provide for food security of our people. At the same time, agricultural practices themselves are known to contribute to anthropogenic climate change.

With this, we set the stage for today's discussion, with a focus on certain key aspects that include land, pricing, market access, sustainability, and gender.

First panellist for this session was Sardar V.M. Singh, who is Former MLA and the National Convener for Rashtriya Kisan Mazdoor Sangathan and AIKSCC.

The second panellist for this session was Dr. Soma Kishore Parthasarathy, who is the National Facilitator for MAKAAM (National Forum for Women Farmers Rights) and CFR LA (Community Forest Rights Learning Alliance).

The third panellist for this discussion was Mr. Avani Mohan Singh, who is the founder of Haritika Foundation which works with the agricultural community of areas around Bundelkhand, Rajasthan.

This session was moderated by Dr. Akruti Bhatia who is the founder of PAIGAM (People's Association in Grassroots Action and Movement).

India has to serve about 17% of the Global Population with just 2.5% of the geographical area. Additionally, the country has been unable to redistribute land fairly, which is evident from the fact that over 80% of our farmers are small and marginal in terms of the land they own less than 2 hectares. Climate change further aggravates the situation and hurts the country's Food Security, a telling indicator of which is the poor performance of India in the Global Hunger Index (GHI). Above all, looming over us is the Pandemic and the cloud of uncertainty brought about by it.

Given the context, what are your thoughts about the three farm bills introduced by the Executive and what implications do they have for our farmers, and thus the food security of our people?

Sardar V M Singh: With or without the Pandemic, these are terrible times. As has already been mentioned, India is providing for a humongous population with disproportionately scant land resources. This automatically brings down the average land available, which raises the fundamental question of livelihood. How plausible and feasible is it for an individual to farm on a land of 2-3 acres or even less, spread out across not more than 2-3 bighas? The fact is that most of these people are dependent on animal husbandry. 80% of such rural poor living off 2-3 acres of land are primarily dependent on cattle and milk. The fodder for cattle rearing, the food grains and vegetables for the family's sustenance— all are managed from the same patch of land. A life not far exceeding sustenance standards for such people was being ascertained by offering a fair price for the crops they cultivated, the vegetables and fruits they grew, and the milk they provided for. With the sudden onset of the Pandemic, people were all at once locked into their houses. This led to wastage of crops and other produce including flowers. Not just agriculture, but also floriculture and horticulture were severely impacted.

In this backdrop, we were hopeful that the Prime Minister would spell out dedicated measures and a chunk of the economic stimulation package worth 20 Lakh Crores for these people— who have lost their livelihoods. But the farmers hardly got anything. We were also hopeful that whenever the Government would intervene for this section of the society, it would try and at least address the issue of debts, if not totally waive them off. Although that did not happen, efforts were seen in direction of Non-Performing Assets (NPA) restructuring of the corporate players and a sum worth over Rs. 68,000 Crores was seen to be written off, during the Pandemic.

It is sad that we fail to acknowledge the bravado of the farmer who dared the deadly disease, stepped out and harvested *Rabi* crops for us. We must realise that threshing of wheat is as harmful for the lungs as is corona.

Talking about the three farm bills, the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020, delists many staple food products including wheat, rice, grams, onions, potatoes, et cetera from the list of essential items. By implication, these items might no longer be given at subsidised rate(s) under the Public Distribution System (PDS) to the Above Poverty Line (ABL) and Below Poverty Line (BPL) categories of people. This could mean that the Government would no longer procure these items at Minimum Support Price (MSP) from the farmers, even though it might declare to do so. Basically, MSP is the tool the Government uses to intervene in the market and assure minimum income to the farmer in the event of a severe dip in prices. With MSP done away with, this

support is withdrawn from the farmer. The Act also eases and facilitates the formation of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs); while allowing them to buy farm produce unrestricted from anywhere outside the radius prescribed by Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Act. Given the poor purchasing power of the average farmer, there is a greater possibility of this provision being abused/misused by deep pocket non-farming individuals/communities. They can buy cheap and hoard them, create artificial shortages, spiking prices and then sell them dear.

The second bill dealing with the marketing of agricultural produce, Farmer's Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020, proposes what is being called as 'One Nation One Market'. The bill claims to unshackle the farmer from the current system and allows him/her to sell his/her product anywhere in the country, well beyond the current APMC *Mandi* he/she is 'tied' to. At the same time, it is assured that the existing *Mandis*— which number somewhere over 6000— are here to stay. By implication, the nation would then be having about 13000 markets then— those within and those outside the *Mandi* System. It is difficult to then understand the concept of 'One Nation One Market'. Besides, it is least likely that the farmer would benefit from such a move. The simple reason behind this is the fact that the majority of farmers are poor in our country. It is already difficult for an average farmer to afford the logistics to take the produce to the nearest *Mandi*. What often happens is that the farmer, on failing to sell his produce the same day, and not having the capacity to bring back the produce, resorts to desperate selling at an extremely cheap price to avoid wastage-led-loss. Therefore, it is the corporates that stand to gain more from such provisions.

Finally, the third bill that primarily deals with corporate farming can prove no good for the farmers, either. The American model cannot work in India because of the simple reason that the former provides subsidies worth Rs 43-44 Lakhs per annum, while the latter provides hardly Rs 6000 per year.

If not the American model, then what could be the appropriate alternative indigenous model for India?

Soma Parthasarathy: At the outset, I would like to say that the alternative model you are talking about is not new. About 60% of our people are surviving on the commons— land and water bodies primarily. However, there is an increasing alienation of people from these common resources. These resources are being seen as commodities and exploitable 'inputs', and not resources on which the communities have been surviving and sustaining.

We hear a lot about Feminisation and Defeminisation of agriculture. What are the interconnections between the gender and ownership dimensions?

Soma Parthasarathy: Gender in the field of agriculture brings us to two main aspects— recognition and ownership. Considering this, the first question that we need to ask ourselves is whether equality is enough when we look at land ownership? The problem with Indian farming from a gender perspective is that the whole narrative is male-centric. It is also worth noting that women spend more time per unit in farming activities than men.

So, this very narrative needs to be corrected. The very fact that females are not recognised as farmers makes the issue of recognition a paramount one. This is because only with recognition and acknowledgement, come all the benefits provided by the central and state government to the farming community, including access to *Kisaaan card*, subsidies, etc. So, if we talk about Minimum Support Price (MSP), who gets the benefit? Who will receive the monetary advantage from such a policy?

Given that ownership is the foremost criterion to be recognized as a farmer under our policy framework, it automatically becomes vital for females engaged in this sector. Thus, for the overall improvement of the farming community, this major chunk of participants i.e. females needs to be recognized in terms of visibility as farmers as well as the decision-makers.

In India, about 42% of the labour force comprises females. Despite this, our policy framework talks in a very gender-neutral manner and is implemented in a more patriarchal framework. Even if we look at the training program run by the government for farmers, we clearly see that the female farmers are left out. We at PAIGAM have pressured the state governments to include females into the training programs and it has worked in some states. But still, it is very limited and we see that females are incorporated as instrumental factors for production and not where the decisions are made as well as profits or benefits are shared.

Now, with reference to the current agriculture policy which focuses on the agribusiness and is advantageous for substantial landowners of the farming sector, the situation for females gets rather diabolical. They don't have ownership of the farming land, nor do they have the access to the farming resources required-artificial or natural. Thus, this aspect of gender is significant for us to prioritize because most farmer households depend on a diversified basket of activities to sustain their needs, and most of these activities to fulfil the household needs are carried out by the females of the house. Even when we talk about the most sensitive issue of the agrarian sector that is farmers suicide, we can see the burden borne by women here as well. After the untimely death of a

farmer due to debt trap or crop failure where his family depends on the income generated by the farming activities, the female left behind say, mother, wife, sister or daughter becomes responsible to pay those debts as well as provide for the family. Thus, the empowerment of women in the agriculture sector is equally important as it is for any other sector of our economy. We need not just gender equality but also gender justice to establish a sustainable, equal as well as just model that could function to benefit all the stakeholders and not just one half of it.

What are some of the techniques Haritika foundation has been experimenting with to bring sustainable solutions to the locals on the ground?

Avani Mohan Singh: We started in 1994, in the Bundelkhand region. UP, Bundelkhand, Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh are all drought -prone regions. The impacted wage labourers have suffered even more during the pandemic. I have worked here since the last 25 years and the situation in these areas is different from areas like Punjab and Haryana. In summers you will see women carrying waters across long distances.

The agricultural sector faced a lot of problems in progressing due to this resource crunch.

There are no irrigation facilities and no relief. Children and women have to carry water across long distances. Water is the major problem here, therefore all solutions are centred around the availability of water. All government schemes, including MNREGA and watershed infrastructural developments, have failed to bring the kind of relief which they should have.

This has affected farmers and the villagers considerably. Furthermore, the unique topography of this region has prevented the implementation of other common techniques like borewells. Additionally, there is also a shortage of electricity in the villages here. For electricity shortage, our organisation has implemented solar pumping for those farmers. Thereby, reducing their input costs considerably. We are working in around 900 villages to bring these solutions to the farmers.

The solutions our organisation has brought forward have been localised and cost-effective, benefitting the local stakeholders in the village. Therefore, as a part of the solution, we constructed a series of dams on the river basin. Furthermore, The earlier kings a lot of *talaabs* in this region, so our organization has renewed these *talaabs* and built some new ones. Furthermore, the soil found at the bottom and around these *talaabs* is very fertile and doesn't need any additional fertilisers.

The tribal farmers don't sow the seeds, they sow the crop. To exemplify, I will cite the case of wheat for which other farmers produce 22-25 quintals in one acre, in the same land capacity the tribal farmers cannot even produce 4-6 quintals. Therefore, another part of what we do focuses on bringing good quality seeds to the farmers. The knowledge that the farmers had about seeds and their quality is also being lost.

The tribal farmers had a self-sufficient form of livelihood dependent on the forest produce itself. To exemplify, during mahua season they used to sell Mahua for their livelihood and even get other benefits out of it for their self-use. One farmer sells around 50,000-1,00,000 Mahua in one season. *Chiranjiri* is also sold extensively. Its price is around 500 Rs per kilo, which the farmers sell instead of salt and is a very important source of income for them.

We use the Farmer Producer Organization, created by the farmers to get them better prices for their produce. The farmers who sell their produce for RS. 19 under MSP, the same produce we have been able to sell at Rs 25 through the FPO. Furthermore, under the FPO we have also launched a Seed Programme, we get the seed of these produce to the farmers to increase their income.

Furthermore, knowledge needs to be provided to the farmers. In the Bundelkhand region, many of them grow water extensive crops like Soyabean. Instead, our organization works with them to encourage them to grow crops like Jowar and Bajra which require a lesser amount of water. This way the farmers also benefit and there is lesser pressure on the ecosystem and environment as well. The farmers can get the maximum benefit out of their current resources.

For groundwater charging, we have been spreading awareness against the usage of groundwater by people so that borewells and other tube wells can operate in this area. The flood irrigation method which has been going on traditionally has to be changed since it uses a lot of water. Now we can see the adoption of better irrigation techniques more suited to this area like drip irrigation.

Furthermore, our organisation has also promoted crop diversification to tackle issues around food insecurity. In one acre we have encouraged the farmers to grow vegetables and fruits which increases their income and also makes judicious use of the soil. Therefore, multi-cropping, natural farming by gradually reducing the use of fertilizers and agricultural diversification and intensification needs to be adopted by the farmers to work in tandem with nature to promote pocket and environmentally friendly solutions.

In addition, the old practices like open grazing used to be suited to the landscape of the earlier times due to extensive forestation. However, the current trends

have made open grazing very deadly for the ecosystem. The depletion of forest cover, the extensive poaching of tigers has led to an increase in the number of or the herbivores animals and thereby increase in open grazing. Open grazing has led to further soil depletion and erosion and a lot of fields and agricultural lands are under the threat of being destroyed by wild herbivores animals. Therefore, a lot of issues arise from practices which have been traditionally important but cannot be continued due to the change in resource availability and the landscape of the region. The farmers and the locals should be educated and made aware of the resource crunch they face and how to adapt to that crunch.

The ecological balance has collapsed in this region. The farmers and the government need to work together to restore that balance. The government efforts of seeds dispensation need to increase so that all farmers can benefit from it.

The Changing Landscape of Sustainable Practices In Business & Its Social Utility

INTRODUCTION

Climate Change is a reality of our times which is impacting people and places across different regions and socio-economic strata, indiscriminately. This panel discussion tries to uncover and understand the interlinked relation between the role played by consumers, governments, and corporates in engaging with the sensitive emergencies of climate change.

The faculty anchor for the Panel is Prof. Ronita Choudhuri, who is the CEO & Co-Founder of Armadillo Digital, a creative agency and venture studio in New Delhi. Currently, Prof Ronita is also Assistant Professor of Practice & Assistant Dean at Start-up JGU at Jindal Global Business School.

Our first panellist is Ms. Aakanksha Kapoor, who is the CEO of I Say Organic, a New Delhi based organic food company that works directly with farmers across the country to bring the most trusted and safest certified organic groceries to the customer's doorstep.

Our second panellist is Mr. Subhav Duggal, who is the co-founder and COO at ulaunch, a media platform for Social Start-ups. He is an engineer whose experience spans across fields like Solar Energy and Information & Communication Technology in different capacities.

Lastly, our team had the privilege of interviewing Ms. Kanika Pal, who, after having worked in corporations like Apollo Tyres, Sony Pictures Network, is presently leading the sustainable community development programme across South Asia called "Prabhat" at Hindustan Unilever Ltd.

Through this panel discussion, our team tries to bridge the emerging narratives within the corporate base regarding consumer-producer consciousness by evaluating developments that have already taken place as well as by trying to gauge a prospective future approach that consumers and producers need to work towards.

How do you bridge the industrial narrative with that of sustainability and consumer consciousness regarding climate change?

Kanika Pal: We are presently in an era where the consciousness for sustainability exists everywhere be it amongst the villages, the urban consumers, the industrialists, it impacts all irrespective of their social strata. Furthermore, this consciousness exists because climate change translates into patterns which are much more frequent in nature and today might translate into floods in Bangalore and Hyderabad, cold spells in Delhi and the impact of this climate

change will impact the rickshaw puller as much as it will impact us who have the comfort of our houses. Therefore, climate change isn't something that will happen to the future generation, it is happening to us now and this consciousness automatically helps businesses to draw the linkages with the sustainability of the business and therefore long-term sustainable programs by taking the customers along with it. If my stakeholders are impacted by sustainability, by default businesses are automatically impacted by sustainability issues and in turn, businesses also impact the sustainability of the region and the larger context. Its a cyclical cause-effect mechanism that businesses cannot seem to avoid in today's world. Making this into bite sizes so that consumers and producers can understand and be a part of this narrative of sustainability is my job.

Do you think that the consumption side of sustainable practices is getting as much attention as the production side? If not, how can we persuade consumers to make more sustainable choices? What have you, in your experience done up until now and what else do you think can be done in the future?

Aakanksha Kapoor: I Say Organic started in 2012 and the market remains a niche one for sustainable choices and for customers who choose to buy organic produce or cleaner alternatives. However, a considerable change that can be traced since 2012 is one of customer awareness. In 2012 our conversations with the consumers were about introducing them to the concept of sustainability and organic foodstuff. However, now the conversations are led by the consumers when they approach us to demand specific organic foods and to check the availability of different organic products. Therefore, I feel the awareness regarding sustainability, the impact that conventional farming has on the environment. The pandemic has also played a huge role in mainstreaming the conversations about making a change and about the urgency of the matter. Therefore, sustainable choices are on the growth not just in the food market, but in all categories. Whether it is your cleaning products, skincare, anything FMCG, I think the customer is looking for a sustainable and organic alternative now.

There's one group of customers which is convinced but is hesitating to make that shift to sustainable choices and one who's already convinced and has been making sustainable choices and the last group that is far away from the conversations around sustainable and organic choices.

To convince the former, we strike a direct conversation about how it will impact them by driving a direct correlation between their health, lifestyle choices and the economics of it. However, this communication should be in a manner where we're able to convince the customers that, this is a lifestyle choice that you're making, this is better for you, better for the environment better for the farmer

and while there is that 10 to 15 per cent extra that they will pay the results should match their prices. Therefore, it's only a matter of time where the more consumer demand will increase, we will be able to provide better pricing for across categories as well.

Kanika Pal: I feel in the end, the question all consumers need to ask themselves is “Do I believe in sustainable choices?” if the answer is no, then advocacy needs to be done further. There needs to be a behaviour change done by repeated advocacy and also by answering the “*what’s in it for me?*” question for the consumers. In order to get non-converts on board, I feel you need to tackle it smartly by understanding the consumer mindset. Therefore, strategies must be about bringing the right product to the right consumer. As far as convincing the consumers goes, I feel a lot of it comes from within the consumers as well.

Considering the stereotype regarding organic or sustainable items being more expensive and keeping in mind the socio-economic nature of India’s demographic makeup, price can be a sensitive issue. So, while convincing consumers, what leads the narrative, is it pricing or the benefits of organic and sustainable choices to consumers, the environment and to the farmers?

Aakanksha Kapoor: So, to convince the customers it is not the price. At the end of the day, the price is going to make a big difference, but to convince the customer it is truly communicating that what we are providing is an authentic, most trusted produce that a farmer can produce and that you can consume. I think for an Indian consumer it is very difficult to trust organic because of the number of choices that are available in the market, it makes it difficult to ascertain the authenticity of the product. Therefore, that is where a lot of the brand’s communication comes in. With most customers who have already converted and are coming back to us on a regular basis, price is not such a big issue and not because they can easily afford it but because they are making a conscious decision for their health. We’ve had multiple conversations with our surveys with our regular customers who may not necessarily be from the highest socioeconomic backgrounds, but it’s a choice that they’re making and they’re investing in their health by choosing organic produce which is a great thing to hear. Furthermore, there’s also a farmer’s side to it. Organic products are better for the land and it is better for the farmers as well. In our model, we work directly with the farmers. We push this narrative as well. Now price is not at the forefront of our discussion although we understand it is an important factor when it comes to the decision of the consumers. However, on our end, there is not much we can do since we run on a for-profit business schedule.

Kanika Pal: I feel sustainability can be affordable as well. It depends on your product, innovation, and the audience you are catering to. I personally believe that the rural or the so-called “socio-economically backward” populous in the

most remote places are leading the movement of sustainable practices. In 2018 I went to Nagaland and did a homestay in two districts. I was blown by the self-sustainable practices of those villages. They segregated their waste and practiced the most effective waste management systems. Furthermore, when talking about sustainable choices being expensive, it is more about bringing the right product to the right person according to their affordability margin. Not all sustainable choices are out of reach for the poor, rural strata. To exemplify, I think Godrej's idea of a paper-based mosquito repellent is great for rural pockets. It is a biodegradable product which needs no electricity and generates no smoke. It is an environmental and pocket-friendly product. It goes a long way in bringing sustainable, eco-friendly and pocket-friendly products to the rural setting. Therefore, I personally believe sustainable choices do not have to always be on the more expensive side suited for a certain socio-economic stratum, the simplest of practices can go a long way in cultivating the culture of sustainability.

How do you communicate with customers that help grow awareness and education for sustainable life choices and better life choices? What are some different advertising, PR, social media strategies to help customers make better sustainable lifestyle choices?

Subhav Duggal: The entire communication spectrum that exists in the corporate stream from advertising, branding to PR is a major chunk of investment and resource allocation at my firm. We have seen some very successful campaigns however when sustainability comes into the equation, I think it can be categorized into two major verticals. So first there are the established firms that have quite a huge market share and which have been established for decades and some of them have even been here for centuries. On the other hand, there are other emergent players which are the new start-ups that have not been here for the past five-ten years. Therefore, depending on their outreach and consumer base, both have taken to different methodologies for bringing sustainability into the equation. I think the primary thing that we have observed is about the emergence of sustainable advertising where firms try to bring out the green factor into the equation as they go for green messaging. Therefore, that is one of the developments which has taken place. For example, you would have seen on the pet bottles that we should recycle or throw in the dustbin as a part of green advertising. Therefore, this type of subtle messaging exists already. Furthermore, there is "go green," "save electricity" that has become quite ubiquitous. However, lately because of the higher emphasis in the consumer consciousness companies are going a step further with sustainable packaging

I think it is the need of the hour because we know how a bigger problem, the ocean plastic patch, is affecting the climate. Therefore, we know of firms who are adopting measures like popularising sustainable packaging sustainable

cutlery. If we see from a macro perspective of an average person, consuming traditional media, tv ads, newspapers billboards, do we come across any truly sustainable product that is out there or do we see any of the major firms marketing sustainability or stressing that this is the ultimate sustainable choice? I think that is a major thing that is missing at least from the Indian scenario. Furthermore, companies with deep pockets and who have the resources can bring about real-time change.

Kanika Pal: Advertising and PR are all tools, you and I as people are privy to these consumerism tools but consumerism, in the end, answers “what’s in it for me?” or “what’s in it for my family?” or if you’re more socially conscious you’ll probably ask “what’s in it for my community?” If your campaign is not answering these questions simplistically, everything else can fall flat. Let us talk about the most recent movement of #Metoo movement, which was the sustainability of gender rights in the end. Gender becomes important for climate change because women are known to make choices which impact the environment more positively. Therefore, if gender is not mainstreamed in the climate change narrative, then we must rethink our priorities and approach. Now, why the #Metoo movement became an international war cry for female equality is because every woman at the end of the day either identified or empathized with the #Metoo movement, either there was something in it for every woman or they could emotionally relate to it. These two questions become the recipe for using advertising and PR in the larger mandate of sustainability within the industrial context as well.

Either you draw an emotional connection or you directly hit the nail on the head by connecting it to something from which the consumer can take something back, and this could be something as simple as gratification as well. As simple as someone buys a bamboo toothbrush for RS. 60, thrice as much as the normal toothbrush, but if at the end of the day the “hashtag” of “NoPlastic” is having an emotional connection with that person, then they will buy the product. Furthermore, if the company can show how it’s giving back to the environment or how the use of a bamboo toothbrush is able to save a particular waterbody then it becomes something substantial for me as a consumer too.

I think this is what brands are doing by highlighting social missions through PR and advertising, trying to look at the purpose of brands and companies. It is helping consumers understand the larger connection that individual choices have on sustainability and that’s the value and power of advertising and PR. Making an individual choice of a consumer feel substantial in the larger narrative of saving the climate can go a long way and this power to an individual consumer is given by advertising and PR, which makes them feel like a substantial stakeholder in something bigger like climate action.

What is in it for me? and an emotional connect are two factors which will go a long way in converting the unconverted.

The rising consumerism in India is now giving a boost to supermarket chains and this trend is causing issues like food wastage, overutilization of resources etc. to name a few. To solve these pressing issues can we shift to a more sustainable model? Do you think technology can play a role here?

Aakanksha Kapoor: I think it is twofold. Food waste has to be looked at from the organization or a supermarket perspective as well as from the consumer side. There is a change in consumer behaviour that we need to bring about and from a supermarket's perspective, there are regulations or systems that they need to be put in place that will help drive that change in the customer as well. Therefore, it's sort of cyclical wherein the changes in the customer bring about a change in the supermarket and vice versa. For example, if there is a very big new supermarket coming up in the city and if that supermarket is equipped with "bring your own bag" messaging which is everywhere in the space as soon as you enter and there are machines that help you return your glass bottles, there are systems that they've put in place that already help facilitate that then I think automatically the change in consumer behaviour will start happening. Furthermore, to think from the government-policy perspective, if a supermarket change is coming up and if there are regulations in place that make it compulsory for a new venture to adopt sustainable practices then that would go a long way too.

Kanika Pal: I think technology is extremely important, we are in a very technologically connected world.

How we use technology to our benefit is something we have to define and decide. Use of technology needs to be done in a balanced way wherein the overuse will take the humanness out of this process. In the end, sustainability has to do with people and the planet so these aspects cannot be taken out and replaced by technology. To exemplify, refilling stations for shampoos in Malls have been started by Unilever to discourage consumers from buying new bottles. This process saves the use of virgin plastic, plastic going to landfills and the consumer also gets gratified. These refilling booths are technologically equipped and promote a win-win solution for consumers, for the environment as well as for the producers. However, if consumers are approached by robots to visit these refilling booths versus a human intervention conversing and relating to the consumer, the responding capability and chances are definitely higher for the latter.

Therefore, to conclude technology married with human intervention is a great recipe for sustainability to be mainstreamed.

From a policy perspective, is there enough regulation and incentive for the corporate sector to choose and prioritize sustainable production practices or is the environment still subservient to the “Right to Development?”

Subhav Duggal: I think the government is doing a lot of things. It is trying to bring and build an ecosystem, it is trying to be an enabler to drive the entrepreneurial spirit of the Indian citizen and it is trying to harness it to channelize it in a positive manner. Furthermore, the government is also trying to provide an entire infrastructure for the ecosystem approach. Additionally, it has been trying to bring about various schemes like Atal innovation mission for skill development, therefore, there have been many schemes and policies that are being driven and trying to connect and it has there have been I can like to say that GEM—the government e-marketplace where for the entire supplies of the government stationery and others promote women entrepreneurs. However, the implementation part of it sees a disconnect. I think that is one of the significant things which can either make or break you know some of the successful schemes is its effective implementation. This is where issues around accountability come in. I think there is scope for more and to address the various interlinked issues especially about the environment and to address the internet issues that arise because of not pursuing sustainability.

Aakanksha Kapoor: I think governments can be more involved in setting regulations for organizations that work in this space. There are of course already a lot of organizations that regulate a lot of the practices but in terms of communicating that further to the customer and making them more aware by the communication that is coming from the government. Furthermore, from an organization's perspective, I think if there can be some sort of reward system to run more sustainably. For example, access to low-interest capital just so that there is more economic feasibility for an organization to want to run in a more sustainable manner. There can also be a more consultative approach, not a broad-based consultation process I think that can make a large difference.

Kanika Pal: More than policy every corporate house is governed by rules like environmental clearances have to be met, all your statements are audited owing to the larger governmental structure to any operating corporative, Ministry for Corporate Affairs defined how any corporates can function in this country, they have to comply not only to the government mandate but also respect the socio-economic landscape to have their operation running. However, today more than compelling policies, corporates are bound to adapt themselves to the changing geo-cultural sensitivities of the area they operate in. Corporates have no choice since we live in a global village sensitizing to the socio-cultural setting you open your business in is a must. Furthermore, the widespread awareness amongst the consumers and the role of social media and technology in spreading news rampantly has something to do with the way companies are taking sustainability

more seriously, whether mandated by policy or not. Therefore, I think rules and government policies are the very first foundation for any business to start. However, for businesses to sustain and to become successful it is necessary to incorporate the consciousness around geo-cultural sensitivities of your value chain participants as well as the voices and opinions of your stakeholders. Where you're operating, what time you are operating in and who you're operating for become important navigators and guiding questions for firms. Today civil societies are also more active, student-led movements like Greta's are demanding climate action and these are our future consumers. Therefore, corporates who are responsible have been conscious of this turn within the youth and will adapt to and adopt these measures. Therefore, this issue around sustainability for firms goes beyond policy and government mandate into a realm which is unwritten and unmandated yet compulsory and required. Since issues around sustainability are embedded beyond policy within the very consciousness of the makeup of social action by youth and social movements, companies who are responsible will adapt to it as and when times ask for it, without awaiting a policy mandate. Furthermore, I believe policy and government mandates will fail if civil societies and advocacy platforms do not do the needful in spreading the relevant awareness about these issues amongst the populous.

However, like the other panellists mentioned, we see a huge lacuna when it comes to sustainable practices not being translated as something substantial action on the ground. I think that is primarily because the people lack consciousness and awareness about the emergency, we are all facing. Therefore, even if the cost of the sustainable measures is low people are still reluctant to adopt these measures.

Take the example of policy and subsidy in rainwater harvesting. For example, rainwater harvesting was mandated by states like Tamil Nadu after the water crisis that hit us two decades ago. Following that many municipalities also subsidized rainwater harvesting. However, despite subsidies and policy intervention these were not effectively translated into action amongst the population. That is primarily because people lack consciousness and awareness. Therefore, there is very little the government can do without capacity building, awareness, and consciousness.

What are your thoughts on Rural India and their forms of sustainability? Are we seeing a boomerang effect wherein the older and Asian way of connecting with the centre is coming into vogue again? How are you seeing the dynamic between the urban and rural regarding sustainable lifestyle choices?

Subhav Duggal: Majority of the rural way of living is sustainable to a large extent. The ecological footprint as shown by the reports which cite that if the eight billion people living in the world adopt the western/developed lifestyle, it

would require more than five Earths, whereas if everyone starts living the average Indian way, it would require 0.7 Earths.¹ Therefore, I think the rural way of living is largely in sync with nature. It is sustainable. Of course, we should try to minimize the “blind aping” by blindly copying the methods of the urban elites and the first world countries. I believe rural India holds a lot of potential to drive their growth for the Indian GDP.

Kanika Pal: I feel the rural space is far ahead in the aspect of sustainability as compared to the urban landscape. Issues like rainwater harvesting through bunds and check dams, segregating of waste and the idea of giving back to nature are all traditionally ingrained in the rural psyche. I would like to recall the example of a village in Nagaland and its effective waste management system. Furthermore, there has been a lot of advocacy by the civil societies in the rural spaces to spread awareness which translates into action and implementation from their end. Furthermore, I completely agree, traditional Indian lifestyle is quite sustainable. Take the example of the “Pattal” or the banana leaf which is used by many. It is a very sustainable practice which has replaced the plastic plates. However, not many of us actually adopt such practices. When a western company adds some technology to it and compresses it to sell it as another product, we will be fascinated by it. I feel the rural setting is much more onboard and are more pro-sustainability as compared to those of us in the urban setting. The building of check dams and linking issues of rainwater harvesting to MNREGA injects sensitivity and awareness amongst the people.

CSR is an inherent component of all businesses. So how do we bring in the narrative of sustainable choice and climate consciousness as a component of CSR? Is there a feasible marriage between the two?

Kanika Pal: I think it already is an inherent component of CSR. No company can be sustainable if it's not responsible and no responsible company will be unsustainable.

In India, we view CSR as an extra 2% spend because it is mandated like that. However, actually, any matured company will not wait for that 2%. Responsibility around sustainability is embedded in the very makeup of a company, from what product you're manufacturing to how you are manufacturing that and what impact these products have in the society and in the environment, what is your engagement pattern with your stakeholders, transparency about the way you do your business etc. Therefore, corporate social responsibility is nothing but all of this put together. In my mind, the 2% mandate by law is only a small component of CSR. In my mind, Indian businesses are

¹McDonald, C. (2015, June 15). How many Earths do we need? Retrieved November 18, 2020, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-33133712>

Volume III Issue I

very progressive and conscious. Civil society in our country is very strong. It takes one small incident for bad press to happen. With social media and technology issues around the responsibility of a corporate spread like wildfire. We are aware of the case of the Tanishq advertisement.

Responsible businesses would look at sustainability at the very heart of it like Unilever does and therefore, it does not have a separate team for CSR. Responsibility whether towards the environment or stakeholders within the business is inherently present within the makeup of the corporate house by default. Responsibility and sustainability go hand in hand.

The Epistemic Movements We Need: Debating Alternative Development Paradigms

INTRODUCTION

The discussion weaves around a somewhat Utopian central question— What would the Indian Economy in a Climate-friendly model look like?

Our first panellist was Mr. Leo Saldanha who is a full-time Environmental advocate. As our second panellist, we had, Professor Abhayraj Naik who is an Environmental Academic. Lastly, we had Professor Divya Karnad, who is a Professor of Environment Studies at Ashoka University. The Panel was moderated by Professor Atreyee Majumder, who is an Associate Professor at Jindal School of Liberal Arts & Humanities and also a Legal Researcher and Practitioner.

We hear a lot about the ‘Growth versus Development’ debate. Development is somehow supposed to be more equitable than the Growth model. In this Growth versus Development versus Degrowth landscape of intellectual debate, where do you stand?

Abhayraj Naik: The ‘I’ gets split up into the intellectual, philosophical and nominative ‘Me’ and the very human -less than ideal- and materialist ‘Me’. The yearning — both in my thinking and in my activities, would be for an imagination that is quite aligned with a *Degrowth* approach although I wouldn't necessarily use the word *Degrowth*. My own articulation of it would probably be more in tune with a Gandhian imaginary, a cosmology that Adivasi people and indigenous communities from across the world live out in their day-to-day practices. Furthermore, I believe the essence to it is problematizing and destabilizing the word ‘Growth’ itself. The other two words being *Progress* and *Development*, I think this trinity has acquired a holy figure in our imagination of economic thinking and societal institutional structuring. Together, they make the base or the common root idea of a movement in a linear fashion that requires material accumulation. This idea has an imbalanced relationship with the non-human and allows everyone and everything to be ascribed a quantified number or marker. Inherent in such an idea is a relative ranking.

This kind of an imagination I totally reject and I would like nothing better than a world where our relations with the non-human are far more respectful of our connectedness with the non-human. Material consumption and accumulation should not be the source of being powerful, strong, and respected. A local,

democratic, respectful of nature and *Degrowth* type of model should be the way forward.

I realise that in my own living, I am still far removed from such an imaginary. A zoom subscription, driving around the car, and smoking cigarettes exemplify my *Capitalist* engagements. More importantly, these are indicators of how my own conditioning is heavily influenced by a predatory *Capitalist* logic. So, a lot of work is left in reformulating myself.

Divya Karnad: I agree with Abhayraj and let me introduce another term into this discussion— *Limits*. There have to be some *Limits* on how we achieve this kind of *Progress* and *Development*. In almost every aspect of our lives, there is some sort of regulation and perhaps this is something that we need to consider even when we are thinking about economics.

This brings us to another interesting aspect which is the politics of Limits. Would you like to briefly comment on who gets to decide these Limits? What would the parameters be in your imagination?

Professor Divya: I am not exactly sure how large capitalist organizations work because until now I have not had very much to do with them. My work has been primarily with the fishermen and direct resource users who work with physical resources. My interactions with them have shown that to a large extent people within those spheres themselves recognize the need for *Limits*. People capable of thinking about the long term and future are actively limiting themselves and regulating themselves.

Then there are also some lessons on offer by the Covid crisis. The Pandemic has demonstrated how people are willing to limit themselves. For instance, during this lockdown, the fisheries sector was deeply troubled initially. This was primarily because it wasn't made clear right in the beginning whether they could continue or not. At that time the government had intervened to ensure access to essentials including food and rations. The export markets had shut down. Things had kind of gone back to a moment in time when we were fishing for ourselves, for the local economy. For a short period, things were very close to what any conservationist or environmentalist would want. There were *Limits* on how much they went into the sea, how much they caught, and what they were catching— it all played out beautifully during that short period. It seems that it was a small experiment on the *Degrowth* model which worked out well in harmony with the environment.

Moving from a local level Degrowth model, let's talk about a larger level Degrowth or Gandhian model, as one of our panellists termed it. What would the model look like in contemporary India? What are its defining characteristics and how would it be employed or deployed in India?

Leo Saldanha: The Pandemic is a stark reminder of the kind of risk society we now live in. But we can't live like this. We can't live constantly being worried about our lives. It's not like anyone wants to perish but we must live intelligently out of this Pandemic. The fact that we live like this is an indicator of us having crossed the *Limits* that we have been talking about.

Talking of education, we think that we can cram it all into our brains and then perform as if we are machines, for the rest of our lives. But the first thing that I learned from people who have worked on the field is the importance of *Unlearning* every day. We have so much packaged and conditioned in our heads that we end up simply asking questions like what is the *Gandhian* model or what is the *Marxian* model, et cetera. But it is not and should not be a question of prototypes. So let's imagine that we are all aliens visiting this planet. As we come close to it, we observe that there are millions of organisms doing different things. Let's imagine that as aliens we have the capacity to compress 5 million years on earth's time scale into an observation of a few moments in alien time. Then we can see how things change. We'll find that there is one species which is frenetic and the rest of them are rather still— trees are slowly flowering, leaves are slowly being put out, and the rhizome is slowly sprouting.

There are very few species that have as explosive growth as humans. The point we have to get to is the concept of *Stillness* as propounded by the Gandhian Economist, J.C. Kumarappa. The idea is basically about being gradual. *Stillness* does not mean inertia. Instead, it is the capacity of humanity to be gradual, to be slow, and to find peace in that process and evolve. It should be about evolution into something better. That's what this beautiful 'pale blue dot' as Carl Sagan said is all about. But frenetic is to be rapid. Rapidness resonates with *Capitalism* as well as the so-called *Communism* that we see. The kind of industrial-scale disasters that the USSR has gone through is clear evidence of the same. In fact, the cases of Russia and China are not quite different from the U.S. Rivers are burning everywhere. This 'anxiety-based living' is totally unnecessary because it's finally very destructive. It's destructive of the human body because it's not meant to be all the time anxious. When you can peacefully live for 75-80 years, you suddenly die of a heart attack at the age of 40 or even less. Everything has become so material and chemical for us. We forget that even chemicals have a tendency to create life. Carbon and water molecules have been generating life for over billions of years now. We tend to forget this miracle of which we all are part, which is quite beautifully brought out in the amazing essay 'H₂O and the forgetfulness of Water'. It focuses on the 'sacredness of water', but to us, water has become material.

It is through such wisdom that the idea of *Limits* comes through. This brings us back to the question of *Degrowth*. *Degrowth* could be understood simply as unlearning and being still, and not dismantling.

India has often been criticised for getting away with the carbon footprint debate by hiding the environmentalism of the poor. One example could be a report brought out by the Centre for Science and Environment in the '90s. That the poor contribute a lot to India's reduced average carbon footprint and the rich contribute very little by consuming as much as the West is conveniently pushed under the carpet. This brings us to the question of the poor. What happens to their livelihood and aspirations in a Degrowth model?

Leo Saldanha: So much as we tend to valorise and romanticise the poor and their frugality, it is important to note that living as they do is not a matter of choice. They have no other option but to be frugal. What is essential to realise is the idea of living meaningfully with what is necessary. The state in which our planet is, it is far more necessary today to be conscientious, to actually descend away from the mainstream. Individual actions, however insufficient, must be persisted with. We are all waiting for the opportunity when such individual actions can transform into a critical mass action at some point in time.

Divya Karnad: What kind of aspirations are we talking of? If we are hinting towards luxury, then it is sad. Luxury is technically just another word for waste. It is not anything that we need. It is ridiculous how we program people to aspire to waste. The *Degrowth* model is in some ways not just turning this economic idea on its head but also turning the social idea on its head. So, the question that we should be asking is why do the poor need to aspire for a 'better' life? Why can't we aspire to live lives wherein we just live within our means? What makes our lives any 'better' than theirs?

Abhayraj Naik: Building on what both the previous speakers said, I think the question has an inherent assumption regarding accumulation as desirable. Although it does regularly occur in discourses around *Sustainability* and transition to non-*Capitalist* imaginations. There's no easy resolution to it. Going out on a pulpit and pronouncing that we need to abandon the aspirations of having a house or having food from zomato or a dunzo or even saving anything more than ₹10,000 in your bank account is bound to elicit legitimate questions as responses from people. They would ask who are you to say that after having enjoyed a good life so far? One cannot just simply and suddenly ask people to rewire their legitimate aspirations. We cannot decide one fine day to expect from people to embrace the South American concept of *Buen Vivir* or 'living well', asking them to lead a life, not of material accumulation, but of knowledge, affectivity, spirituality, resolving the separation between humans and nature.

This is something that does not look resolved in my conversations with all kinds of activists, academics, philosophers, and even indigenous elders. The transition or movement from the messed up, separated, corrupt, and defiled way of living to a pluralistic vision accommodating different worldviews like the Zapatistas would have us believe as possible, is going to be messy. It is going to require some people to say that we will give up on these aspirations or it'll require some people to say that you don't have to give up on these aspirations, we will in fact let go of all of our accumulation.

There are certain resources that talk of alternatives- alternatives to the homogenizing capitalist imagination. One of the best resources on this is a book called 'Pluriverse'— a post-development dictionary by Ashish Kothari and others— which has a plethora of word entries from across the world as alternative economic or material or well-being paradigms. However, if we are encouraging folks to abandon a capitalist imaginary, especially those people that are the first generation material achievers of their family, then, we have to engage in that conversation with them. We have to reassure them that the world we are suggesting is good and possibly will be even better than this feeling that she now has. Dialogue is the way ahead.

If the Economy goes on the gradual mode, then large numbers of small jobs will stop being relevant. Then, other than engaging in dialogue with those people who will lose jobs what can the architects of the economy do to provide alternative systems or opportunities or infrastructures of survival to these people?

Abhayraj Naik: I think what I am trying to say is that the notion of jobs as they exist today will disappear in this transition. Manish Jain will use the word *aliveness* and not livelihood. He'll use the word *aliveness* because the jobs we have today are not livelihoods, but they are *deadly hoods* or dead hoods— we just despise the work we do and wait for Saturday to plug out. This is an essential constituent of the accumulative capitalist imagination. So, in the transition, there is no question of substituting that income. For, then we are still stuck in the language and the imaginary of that which you're trying to break down. You don't need a job because the alternative system or *aliveness* that we are talking of, would provide you food, water, the green space, laughter, music, love and care, and the joy. You're no longer interested in having the job that you lost in the transition. What you're really interested in is being in the moment and living and loving life. Your survival needs, community needs, sense of purpose— all that someone like Maslow would describe as the hierarchy of human needs from survival to the self-actualization— will be realized in this new system. A Buddhist monk does not worry about his job, about the income that comes into his account. He is just totally immersed in the activities of the monastic order that he is a part of and his needs, simple though they might be, are provided for through that system.

What governmental steps need to be taken towards making this kind of climate-friendly journey towards a utopian horizon? Given that dialogue that has been flagged by all three of, what are your demands of the governmental system in this regard?

Leo Saldana: When the framers of Indian Constitution were confronted with this dilemma of having to escape centuries of enforced poverty and devastation through colonization and the need to speak to the aspiration of millions, much of the country was not as integrated in terms of communication and road and rail network as we now have. These were obviously only for the super-rich. The question perhaps to them was regarding the model of development that could bring all together. Because division had happened on religious lines to be celebratory of the syncretic spirit which we lived in this region. So, the idea of India was an imposed construct in many ways because the idea of India did not exist as we now know it before 1947. It was created as an outcome of British colonization as we well know. Shashi Tharoor writes in his book *'In era of darkness'*, about the nature of the economy as it existed in pre-colonial India and he says India's share of global GDP when the East India Company stepped in was 28 per cent. The point is this: what were they making? Let's go back to Tony Joseph's book *'The early Indians'* where he closely examines what was the Harappan civilization all about. One of the amazing features of the Harappan civilization I was fascinated by was that there's a continuous account of living in what were densely populated cities of those times and all the archaeological evidence points to the fact that there is no weapon of war. In the 700 years of documented history that they have traced through excavation in 130 sites spreading from what is today's Gujarat to Haryana to Afghanistan and in between, the spaces there are no weapons of war. But it was a flourishing society and it did not collapse because of war but by almost a long drought. But some of the technologies which were evolved then for harvesting water are used even now. And one of the most significant efforts ESG has invested in is to try and protect what we call the tank edition system which has a history of 5000 years. You will find that very intelligent system in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and across South Asia.

And it was not necessarily something that was adopted in subsequent times to build equity and social justice. If you use the same technique to go back 5000 years and you will realize that there was perhaps deep thinking of trying to create an egalitarian society because why would you want a weapon of war if you can actually trade. So, to return to the 28 per cent figure that Shashi Tharoor, gives the type of trade that took place, which was not low skilled, rather it was extraordinarily skilled. There was a system of economy which flourished out of extraordinary skills which did not come from the means of production which the factory represents. For example, if you go to the Dhaka museum you will see

one of the finest ivory woven Sari. And now if we wish to have such finest craftsmanship, is it available?

Now to connect it to the 1947 to 1950 constitutional debates and finally the adoption of the constitution article 39 which says, *the means of production should be such that it should not arrogate wealth to the few it should be to the benefit of many*. It's a simple thing to say. To explain it further let us take the Chinese example. I have had an occasion to travel there and what surprised me when I interacted with government representatives in a conference, was that they cannot speak openly there what we speak openly here. In the main conference they would not speak anything to me but the minute we stepped out they would talk and more so if we went out and had a few drinks. So, one can see that there is a sense of repression that comes with amassing power and control. So, capitalism is a system which is anti-life and anti-earth but so is communism as is practiced in USSR or Russia. We must be very critical of these types of systems of organizing governance and we need to think beyond that. And that is the challenge for us because we don't have time as we have new challenges which are rushing at us. Take the American climate disaster that happened this year, forest fire to high magnitude typhoons. I always keep saying to myself four years ago the Western Ghats had 800 fires in just the Karnataka stretch and then we had the Kerala floods. What if we have a combination of fires in summer and floods a month later, what are we going to do? We don't know the answer to that because we are not even putting the question on the table. In fact, we are not even making it a problem that we must start looking at and consider as a reality. If we take all metropolitan cities, not a single city has been spared with one or the other catastrophe. The word catastrophe has become normative, but in the 80s catastrophe was something that would happen in the 21st century and we wanted to avoid it. Now we are living it and we are kind of comfortable with the fact that the type of liberties that have been interwoven through the 48 charter of human rights and through our constitution after thousands of struggles and judgments are the ones we are easily willing to abandon and not even struggling to reclaim.

So, I think there is this reality we have to deal with even as we have to contend with the fact that we have to look beyond nation-state boundaries. In India, we have 78 per cent wealth in the hands of one person and if you take the top 10 per cent people in terms of income earning, 95 per cent of the wealth goes to them. Meaning 90 per cent of people are living off 5 per cent of the wealth. This very state of inequality shows us that we have created a far more catastrophic society than what the British left us with. So, I think we have to acknowledge that this is the reality and there is no escape from it. And during the Pandemic we have realized that our cities can crumble, our homes can crumble because people who keep us propped up decided to leave.

The terms like Green Growth and Green Capitalism have been gaining immense popularity today. Do you think these are totally opposed to the climate-friendly paradigm? What do you have to say about it?

Divya Karnad: Thinking about things in terms of trying to fit them into existing models which we already know have problems and don't work. It perhaps reflects a very single-minded way of approaching problems. But we know that we need a more holistic approach to solve problems. I think trying to fit our solutions into the same model itself is a problem. Because this kind of *Green Growth* may perhaps reduce carbon emissions, which of course a lot of work has shown that it doesn't, it perhaps just shifts the carbon emission from the point of the individual consumer to the point of factory level production of these solar panels or whatever else is being promoted in terms of *Green Growth*. But even otherwise, even if we were able to solve this particular crisis in doing so, we are definitely going to produce another crisis of some other sort which we have not foreseen. This is exactly what has been happening in the past and there is no way in which it is not going to happen in the future. Because this is exactly the model that has been creating crisis after crisis which all we have been doing so far is sort of some patch-up job to handle the crisis while automatically creating another. So, I personally do not think that *Green Growth* can be the solution. We do need to think outside of this box in order to come up with a real solution.

Abhayraj Naik: I am in total agreement with Divya and I just want to use the opportunity to share this really beautiful essay by *Bayo Akomolafe* which is titled *What does climate collapse ask of us*. The main point that I take away from him is that it is time and something ancient is asking us to take heed of the fact that human centrality in modernity and this civilization is dead. So, what he is effectively saying is that the only way for wiser worlds to emerge is for the civilization to die gracefully. The approach of *Green Growth*, Geoengineering, the UN's Sustainable Development agenda, et cetera are all based on '*we can balance it out*'. But we really need to get rid of all vestiges and remnants of an accumulation-centric and separated culture. Until we heal that separation which is a very modern separation of humans and nature, there will be a big schism.

Green Growth is not going to heal that wound. What is going to heal that wound is possibly going back to what Leo said getting rid of war and weapons. Why does India need to stockpile more weapons? India is planning to be a player in the military scene while people are dying and do not have food and other basic resources. So, our imagination has to change and a fake solution like *Green Growth* or even smart cities paradigm will not provide the solution that's required.

Leo Saldana: Terms are abused, and terminologies are abused for the convenience of those in power. The image that sticks in my mind is when our

blessed prime minister Narendra Modi walks into this space which is going to be this great temple and the way in which he walks in there. The place in Indian history which has caused so much torment and pain and agony and distrust, is turned into a sign of valour?

To me, it is a manifestation of power that comes from a capacity or a willingness to be part of an aggrandization movement, aggrandized power, aggrandized wealth, and aggrandized resources. There is no humility in the way in which they represent the people which they do, or they claim to do. So, in the same way, *Capitalism* for instance is the most extraordinary example of how people managed to accumulate wealth. There are very few exceptions but across the world like Azim Prem Ji. I've seen the man up close and I've not had the chance of interacting with him but I've seen that he finds himself as a part of the machine in which he managed to accumulate wealth. But how many people like him do you find who do not use that openly at least to abuse that power to manipulate politics? Look at Ambani and Adani and perhaps Jindals as well, and ask the question openly and critically. Do they actually come within the framework of article 39 of the Indian constitution?

In order to actually transform the world, such people need to surrender such accumulation of wealth. Power is an unfortunate thing which gives you the capacity to feel larger than yourself, but you are really, totally insignificant. And such awareness is necessary. I think it is possible to find that kind of leadership which will use the appropriate terminology. So *Green Growth* is obviously a corruption and a deliberate act. There's a paper I wrote two years ago stating that Azim Premji gave 100 crores to Andhra Pradesh's critical climate-resilient zero budget natural farming and then I found almost three billion dollars would be poured in from European investors to create natural farming in Andhra Pradesh. So, what I find difficult is that this *Green Growth* becomes like a catch-all phrase. Like these solar parks, you take the utility scales for our parks today. What were 170 gigawatts of ambition has now become 450 gigawatts of ambition for so-called renewable energy. When hydro becomes renewable, hydro is never renewable, just because the water flows and continues to flow does not mean it will continue to flow. It will get stuck. The amount of muck that three gorgeous projects have gathered is sufficient to devastate hundreds of kilometres of so-called civilization. So, we have set ourselves up for a high-risk society, we have set ourselves up for collapse. The natural farming system is contrived by artificial infusion of capital which is based on a loan. So, if that collapses, the farmers pay the brunt of the cost and they will continue to commit suicide. 4,00,000 can become 8,00,000 because that model is being propagated by Niti Aayog. I find a lot of NGOs with large infusions of cash which talk about air pollution, climate, sustainable transport etc, but they are not talking about the structural changes that are essential. They are not talking about the principles of article 39. They are not talking about spreading wealth. So, it is like a lot of rich people will

Volume III Issue I

say we will teach you how to live. I just want to add one point here and that comes from Marx. He said 'man lives from nature, that is nature is his body and he must maintain a continuing dialogue with it if he is not to die' meaning that man's physical and mental life is linked to nature. Engels does it even more beautifully by highlighting the original appropriation, the monopolization of the earth by a few; the exclusion of the rest from that which is the condition of their life. This was written in the 18th century- the concept of modifying earth, and making it like a cheap thing that you trade with. We are witnessing how an essential and most natural resource like water has now become a commodity.

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