

Ecological Justice is Contextual and Concrete¹

A Case for Ecosystem approach to Ecological Democracy

Background:

Two major ground level struggles concretise the basis for the propositions given in this paper . The first being the struggle that culminated in the passing of the Forest Right Act 2006. Of essence is the recognition of the need to correct Historical Injustice given in the preamble of the Act. The second is the nine month farmer's struggle that resulted in the scrapping of the Farm Law Bills. While the forest struggles emanated from the way the Government dealt with the issue of destruction of forests, seeking to uproot local communities, the Farm Laws emanated from the rising subsidy bill for Food Security and Minimum Support Price given to farmers. The response of local communities brought upfront the systematic way in which local communities have been marginalised by the subjugation of the basic interests of local communities to the interests of Capitalist production. In Socialist countries too, one finds links between the destruction of nature and the limited concerns reflected in anyhow enhancing production to meet the 'needs' of society (Annexure 1).

The Five Primary Communities:

The closest to nature are those directly engaged with nature for their livelihoods namely primary producers. Forest dwellers and Forest Dependant communities, Pastoralists, Small and Traditional farmers and fishers and Wage Labourers originating from the village. The last being either deprived of direct access to land or not being able to make a sustainable livelihood from the land they own. The Study report *Marginalised but Not Defeated* by Tarun Kanti Bose show how these five communities are being progressively marginalised by the working of the Capitalist economy. The necessity for struggle none the less emerges from conditions that limit alternate employment options forcing them to engage with natural resources in some form or the other to eke out a livelihood. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme initiated in 2005 on the lines of the Employment Guarantee programme of Maharashtra came in the wake of the suicide deaths in Vidharbha and Andhra Pradesh when groundnut and cotton prices crashed on the International Market to way below the cost of production. Can this guarantee for employment be used by Local Communities differently in a way that restores their broken ties with the natural resources on which they traditionally depended ? (Annexure 2)

The Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030)

The road to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) begins with the Brundtland Commission Report: *Our Common Future* published in 1987. This was followed by the Rio Declaration in 1992, the Millennium Development Goals in 2000 and Aichi Targets in 2010. As part of the Millennium Development exercise, Millennium Assessments were conducted in different ecosystems across the world which help develop a multi disciplinary, multi layered assessment process which is now known as the Millennium Assessment tools. This

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advancement in research methodology makes it possible to examine the links between Socio - Economic Development and Ecology at the Ecosystem level. These studies make a case for resource optimisation rather than productivity maximisation at the cost of environment. Keeping the formulation that gram sabha is the smallest unit of governance and the ecosystem the smallest unit to understand climate change, it has been possible to identify key thematic sectors that impinge on communities being able to exercise their rights to local self governance in tune with nature. (Annexure 3)

Ecological Footprints:

The report *Ecological Footprint Framework: A Comprehensive Analysis of different development sectors with some Case studies across Diverse Eco- Regions of India* by Dr Leena Gupta and Ritesh Nair provides a comparative analysis of the existing Capitalist Development Paradigm and that of community led initiatives. Given the fact that community led initiatives are based on a declining/ degrading natural resource base it is our contention that modern scientific tools and principles can identify the essence and contextualise these with the active support and participation of local communities. People's engagement with science has been made possible by modern Geo- Spatial tools, mobile and internet. These are taking different shapes and exposing multiple possibilities which is possible to knit together with a different type of local, regional, State, National and Global leadership committed to both communities and the planet.

Annexure 1

The five policy briefs on the Forest Rights Act:

<http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/AIFFRS-Policy-Brief-1-Overview-of-status-of-FRA-and-Way-forward.pdf>

http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/AIFFRS-Polcy-Brief-2-Perspective-on-Mangrove-Forests_Rights-of-Fishers-and-other-Forest-Dwellers.pdf

http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/AIFFRS-Policy-Brief-3-Perspective-on-Pastoralism-__Case-study-of-Himalyan-Region.pdf

<http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/AIFFRS-Policy-Brief-4-Protected-Areas-and-Sanctuaries.pdf>

http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/AIFFRS-Policy-Brief-5-Perspective-on-Forest-Dependent-Communities_Case-study-of-communities-issues-strictly-not-coming-under-FRA.pdf

Note to the tribal minister following the study of 14 States and the five policy briefs

<http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Note-for-the-Tribal-Minister-for-discussion-on-16th-August.pdf>

The Five Marginalised Communities:

<http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Note-on-Unorganised-sector-labour.pdf>

<http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/MARGINALISED-BUT-NOT-DEFEATED-ebook.pdf>

<http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Facilitating-Development-of-Federations-for-Local-Self-Governance-in-Three-States-of-India-Case-study-of-Forestry.pdf>

<http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Discussion-on-the-role-of-Forest-in-Social-Security-and-as-a-Social-Safety-net-for-local-communities.pdf>

http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Report-of-World-Wetland-Day2024_IELA-Partners_FINAL-compressed.pdf

<http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/IELA-recommendations-to-the-task-force-on-grazing-ecology.pdf>

<http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Participatory-Action-Research-for-Ecologically-Sound-development-in-a-Tribal-Region-of-Gujarat.pdf>

http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Leena_IFA_report_Sept18.pdf

The Sustainable Development Goals:

http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Ashankur-Agenda-2030-_22nd-24th-August-2022-compressed.pdf

http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Action-Research-Training-and-Orientation-Workshop-at-Ashankur-_23rd-25th-Novembert-2022.pdf

http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/A-Participatory-Ecosystem-Assessment-of-issues-in-Ahmednagar-region_Relevance-of-Geo-Spatial-tools-to-enhance-community-participation.pdf

http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/On-the-question-of-Womens-Empowerment_-_Case-Study-of-Ashankurs-journey-in-the-realisation-of-SDG-5-and-SDG-10.pdf

State Case Studies

<http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Jharkhand.pdf>

<http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/IELA-Report-Sikkim.pdf>

<http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/IELA-Report-Maharashtra.pdf>

<http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Goa-CFR-report-2016-1.pdf>

<http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/FinalReport2015.pdf>

<http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/West-Bengal.pdf>

http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/ip104_aaravs.pdf

Thematic Reports:

http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Relevance_of_Ecosystems_Approach_to_Sustainable_Development_12-13Sept2022_PPT.pdf

<http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/wildedible.pdf>

http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Ecosystems-approach-to-land-use-ecology-and-livelihoods-in-Rajasthan_A-policy-brief.pdf

Ecological Footprints:

http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Framework_Eco_footprint_22July25-.pdf

<http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/History-of-Wildlife-in-Mewar-by-Dubey-S.-and-Tehsin-R.H.-NPs-TRs-WLSs-and-Biodiversity-of-India-Vol.2-2023.pdf>

http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Valuation-of-Ecosystems_-_IELA_Habitat_Case-studies-from-different-States.pdf

http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/The-Ozone-hole_Soil-not-Oil-compressed.pdf

<http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Update-on-Laudato-Si-from-Udaipur-Diocese.pdf>