

Past Present and Future Converge

What will Emerge ?

Edited by Viren Lobo

An Especioza Trust Production



Jesus is placed on Mary's Lap

Foreword

During discussions with Shannon Olson founder and Global Director of Echo Network the issue of the mismatch between top down and bottoms up approaches came up in discussions. We in IELA are trying to seriously address this mismatch and hence have used our resources in an attempt to bridge that gap. One of my colleagues, Seema Upadhyay, looking at the initiative from outside, offered to write a note on one aspect, namely the health programme and its implementation at the district level.

<https://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Note-on-Ahmednagarsu.pdf>

This spells out the view from top down as being observed by the government in terms of the agenda they have in mind for the district in relation to health.

And then have a look at where we are at on this subject with respect to engaging with local communities.

https://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Action-Research-Training-and-Orientation-Workshop-at-Ashankur--7th-14th_February_2024_Final-compressed.pdf

The issue is intricately linked up to an alternative development perspective related to Biodiversity Conservation and Livelihood as its core (still knotted up wrt to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as its relates to how an NGO (Ashankur) is engaging with local communities on these issues in real time.

Clearly a big mismatch exists at present. Our thesis is that the use of Geospatial Tools will help bridge this gap in real time for which first Ashankur and now the local community is being exposed to the tools and techniques.

As we have pointed out earlier. While a definite approach is guiding progress, there is a very thin meeting point (hourglass is an appropriate conception given to this globally) between the top down and bottoms up approaches.

Shannon is facilitating a discussion between key stakeholders of Echo network on how we can work together in partnership mode on the common goals we share. Will keep you updated.

regards

Viren

Background

The Origins of the subject matter of Maan Samaan Ki Baat is shrouded in mystery. While it is definitely linked to the picture on the cover page since we are talking about mutual self respect here, there are many starting points for this dialogue. However as they say *All Roads Lead to Rome* or in this case *Ayodhya*, we take up the matter from there. Restoration of the lost pride of India and freedom from the thought process enforced by conquerors. Quite a tricky process as power brings with it, its own thought process, one that transcends countries and language barriers too. For the purposes of this dialogue a cue has been taken from Shakespear with a twist. What that twist is we shall evolve over time, certainly the Brechtian technique to overcome alienation is at play here. Credit goes to Fr Cyril Desbruslais my mentor and the one who placed the first clue in my head as to how to interpret the Bible in relation to the advancements made by science in general and evolution in particular.

In relation to the Culture and Civilisation of India, I pick up from the observations of the Historian D D Kosambi: A history of conquerors, not the hinterlands of India where culture and and civilisation remain untouched for centuries following a very slow process of change. One such was traced by Kosambi in relation to Pandharpur. There is no need to go into it here. John Keay learning from Kosambi made some very pertinent observations relating to the transfer of knowledge from generation to generation, in the form of rituals which were more lasting and folk lore which had a smaller time span. One of the major observations he makes is to wonder why the Ramayan a much older text criss crosses the entire country while the Mahabharat a younger text is confine to Northern and Western India. He gives his explanation consistent with the findings of D D Kosambi but they are not relevant here. What is relevant is that it fits perfectly with the current logic of establishing the birth place of Lord Ram in order to place Hinduism on a grounded footing on Indian Soil. There is no need to go into the contradictions that a monolithic conception of Indian history entails, suffice to say at the moment that it related to lack of unity that Hindus faced in response to the global collective culture displayed by Christianity and Islam. That there are contradictions here too is out of the scope of this narrative at the moment.

There were historians who closely examined the Vedic and other texts and in tandem with archeological discoveries were able to establish the exact time period in which the same were written. Later archeological discoveries indicate that the status of development is not uniform, pointing to some very advanced cultures and civilisations predating the discovery of paper and the consequent transfer of knowledge through written texts (as against the pervious practise of writing on Stone).

During the 38 years of professional life, have visited all but three North Eastern States and Sikkim. After having been exposed to Kosambi and actively working on the question of correction of historical injustice to tribals I keenly observed the origin of villages and their deities which almost always started as a stone (Nirakar), later having eyes and then moving towards more human features and the connection with the Gods and Godesses we now know. I do not claim to be an expert on this, so I am sure that there are theological explanations that have been given. However these are not the subject of discussion or debate here.

Since this is slated to be circulated on Good Friday of 2024, the day that Jesus died to save all of us, am using the idiom of the Stations of the Cross in the 15 Episodes we now cover (one futuristic, depicted by Easter). In line with the call of the Amazon Synod (again of which I am not an expert) and the appeal for a participatory and inclusive church, am taking the liberty

of going beyond the bounds placed by Christian Doctrine and in line with the need to include people of all beliefs (including atheists). In my understanding spirituality is the relationship between thought and the material world and the contextual bounds of thought. The essence of the teachings of the Bible in general and Jesus Christ in particular cannot be fully understood without placing it in the concrete history in which it was born.

This independent thought of mine first came when wondering why when God is one, his children were fighting over Jerusalem, a more developed version of this thought gripped me during the period prior to demolishing Babri Masjid. I was able to place these thoughts more concretely when I learnt that the Goddess Laxmi resided in the dung, there was no place for her anywhere else in Surabhi/ Kamdhenu the Cow. At the time when this understanding was developed, most certainly money was not in the form and circulation it is now, so my understanding is that it depicts the wealth derived from the intricate relationship between the common and private lands. How this is very contextual today we shall see.

So much for now. Happy reading. We hope to develop this into a serial one day (given resources), hence the format keeps that in mind. It is open ended in the sense that only a sample of observations have been taken, so the reader is free to relate to his/her own experiences and create the scenes differently from what has been described here.

Viren Lobo

On behalf of the The CGA- VERRM

(So called because of its insidious nature of getting under our skin: A version of naturopathy still evolving, natural version of plastic surgery to change the way Human Beings respond to mother earth)

Dedication



Usha Mehta 25th March 1920 _August 11th 2000

Remembering Usha Mehta, founder of Congress Radio and an unsung hero of the Independence Struggle on her 104th Birth Anniversary yesterday 25th March 2024.

<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/ae-watan-mere-watan-usha-mehta-biography-sara-ali-khan-congress-radio-9230758/>

In her later years she commented. Even though there is much to be lauded about in 'Free India', this was not the India we struggled and were willing to give our lives for.

Two important take homes.

a. Gandhism has been given a twist. A modern invention at that time namely the radio used to galvanise the entire country in tandem with Gandhi having united the country by using the railways to reach every corner of India. Distinct from the military and commercial use that the British had put it to.

b. Concept of love where country and fellow countrymen put above spousal love. In today's context where the concerns of Capital overshadow that of human beings love for fellow human beings and nature across the world provides the larger motivation.

Given this the call of Quit India movement has a new contextual reality. Quit exploiting/destroying fellow human beings and nature.

Viren Lobo

Part I

Man Animal Conflict: Man versus Nature



Krishna and Kallya the cobra

Extracted from a discussion on the Internet

The historical development of man required collective action to protect human being from animals . The vagaries of rainfall and consequent partaking of nature's bounty required the development of technology to provide security. This is unfortunately currently controlled by a few, though internet and mobile puts the world at your doorstep. Advancements in renewable energy make it possible for decentralised processing to happen, obliterating the distinction between urban and rural while considerably reducing the necessity of transportation and consequently displacement and destruction of biodiversity.

The Cobra and other snakes are needed to maintain the balance in nature's cycle reducing the population of rats. Vultures help to dispose of dead animal carcasses but diclofenac reduced their population to such an extent that now pollution, stench, bacterial illnesses an issue.

Pollution is nothing but a disruption of the Nature's cycles. Nature knows how to deal with it by spreading bacteria and virus to decompose waste. Human beings being a part of nature are learning too. The Shuddhikaran of human beings no longer required to that extent as robots/ machine are made to such tasks.

Yet the mind has not progressed to the point where wealth from waste is routine. Early human beings discovered that the Goddess Laxmi resides in the dung. Yet today this has become the private property of a few. Why?

Delhi is working on a solution where no child lives in thrash

<https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/delhis-no-child-trash-safe-spaces>

Yet... There is plenty to be done and miles to go before we sleep.

We have taken on the Herculean task of collecting all the thrash in one heap so that it can viably processed. As is part of such tradition, the collectors of such trash have the choicest names designated to them. They also have to steer clear of the Emperors and bigwigs of society earning of their unclean presence.

The World has changed much since those days. Gandhi began partaking in their work and Ambedkar followed up by converting to a religion, rooted in India but part of the historic struggle to end exploitation by the pandits and the ruling class.

So much for now. On which side of history you will belong, time will tell. For me, the dustbins of history are where Laxmi can be found and restored to her traditional residing place.

The one that the sea God Varun gifted to her as dowry. The one where a Goddess is the owner of the property. More on the unique traditions of that Glorious land of Kalinga that changed the heart of Emperor Ashoka.

Part II

A Perspective on Ecology and Livelihood



[The Sal tree/ Supratim Bhattacharya: Curse of mining/Hundru Falls](#)

An important development

Action research Study in Jharkhand on the relevance of the ecosystem approach for sustainable development building on the following report <https://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Jharkhand.pdf> This study indicates that coal is not benefitting either the Government of Jharkhand or electricity consumers in Jharkhand, yet it is being used to deny the rights of forest dependant communities and wildlife. Renewable energy implementation for Jharkhand is lagging behind. Can the ecosystem approach provide sustainable answers to the local communities? Review of literature and work done by local communities to protect and conserve the forests for their own livelihood.

25 students from XISS Ranchi applied for this. We in IELA shortlisted eight students. Came to Ranchi on 16th March. Finalised five candidates for assignments and worked on the outlines of the collaboration with XISS Ranchi.

The five assignments

Assignment 1:

Develop baseline information on issues in Ramgarh District related to the following

- Issues related to mining
- Issues affecting Damodar river flowing through the region
- Status of implementation of FRA in the district
- Any other issue related to natural resources and agriculture in the District that may be important.

Field work will be in a selected area of Ramgarh District based on the information emerging from the baseline data, the detailed outline of what is to be studied in Ramgarh, where and how will be discussed with the reporting officer designated by IELA.

Final report clubbing the above and emerging with a road map on the way forward.

Assignment 2:

Two parts to the assignment

- a. Study of issues related to Elephant Corridors in Jharkhand and in manifestation in select field areas which will be worked out in consultation with the reporting officer from IELA on the basis of information being generated from the study.
- b. Study of a remote region in Ranchi District (Barita: Hope I got the name correct.).

Issues to be studied

- Agriculture: Kind of crops grown, relevance of local indigenous species in the cropping pattern.

- Forests: Nature of dependency on the forest by the local community, local indigenous wild species
- Herbal remedies and nutrition: Based on the local indigenous species and potential for developing health and nutrition centres in the region based on the local biodiversity.
- Status of FRA and potential for Access and Benefit rights from the forests based on Community Forest Rights.

Final road will attempt a road map on how study and progress on the two issues can be further done.

While developing the outline for the two independent studies in Ramgarh and Ranchi districts, The two students will interact with each other so that there is cross learning and help defining an approach to decentralised governance of the two regions based on the findings of the two studies. Its reflection in the recommendations of the two studies will however be different due to the different conditions prevailing in the two regions.

Assignment 3:

Study related to Water Governance in Garhwa and its implications for Natural resource management in the region and related issues namely forest protection and management, relevance of the ecological approach to natural resource management and livelihood with selected case studies of relevant highlighted issues.

Since the topic is vast, the IELA reporting officer will first examine what has currently been done by the student to suggest what is doable within the two months and with an eye on what can be done subsequently.

While the focus will be on water, it will provide a different angularity to the studies being done by the other interns, hence close guidance will be provided to ensure that the findings in Garhwa provide insights to the overall plan related to decentralised governance of natural resources emerging from the five studies.

Assignment 4:

Field study location Ranchi

Two aspects to be studied by him covering the District

- a. Relevance of millets in the basket of indigenous food crops grown in the region.
- b. The nature of natural resources in the region and their contribution to the livelihoods of local communities

Field study will be worked out based on what is emerging from the baseline information gathered from desk review and preliminary consultation with practitioners based in Ranchi city.

The final report will outline the potential of millets in the local diet and the scope for enhancement of its production through proper appreciation of its relevance and value addition.

Assignment 5:

Development of an approach to climate resilient agriculture: Significance of local indigenous species, ecosystem approach to land management, Significance of permaculture approach, Natural farming and organic agriculture incorporating recycling principles in nature and relationship between the common and private lands in particular.

Study area to be decided after desk review and consultation with the designated reporting officer from IELA.

There is an overlap in these two studies and with the first two as well. The two students need to interact regularly among themselves and with the other two groups as well to be able to understand and define the common threads emerging.

The five studies will be knit together by IELA to understand how they can be taken up further as part of their ongoing dissertation work and as a part of the proposed collaboration between XISS and IELA, discussions for which will start after the Summer Internship is completed.

Part III

Spiritual/Ecological Connections & Our Common Home



Sonam Wangchuk surrounded by supporters on 17th day of hunger strike, March 22, 2024. SONAM DORJE/AP PHOTO

At 11,500 Feet, a ‘Climate Fast’ to Save the Melting Himalaya

Sonam Wangchuk has long worked to help people in India’s Ladakh region adapt to climate change. In an e360 interview, he explains why he fasted for 21 days to pressure the government to grant legal protections to the region’s fragile ecosystem and its life-giving glaciers.

BY JONATHAN MINGLE • MARCH 28, 2024

This month, Indian activist Sonam Wangchuk conducted a 21-day “climate fast” in his native Ladakh in the Himalaya. He had two objectives: to call the world’s attention to the rapid meltdown of the planet’s “third pole” and to pressure India’s government to grant Ladakhis the power to legally protect the region’s resources.

For centuries, Ladakhis have survived and thrived in the “rain shadow” of the Himalaya, where the only water comes from melting snow and ice. But in recent decades, they have witnessed rapid glacier loss, increasingly erratic snowfall, and disasters caused by unprecedented cloudbursts and glacial lake floods.

An educator and an engineer, Wangchuk has pioneered the construction of passive solar-heated buildings throughout the region, as well as “ice stupas,” in which meltwater is refrozen for later irrigation use. But he is painfully aware such efforts can’t solve the bigger problem, which is why he has become one of India’s most prominent voices for climate action.

For three weeks, Wangchuk, whom *Yale Environment 360* interviewed on day 19 of his fast, consumed only water and salt and slept outdoors at 11,500 feet in subfreezing temperatures. Thousands joined him in their own day-long fasts and in mass protests in the Ladakhi capital to call on Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government to designate Ladakh as a “tribal area” under a provision of India’s constitution, which would guarantee local autonomy over land use and resource management. Entrusting Ladakhis with this authority, says Wangchuk, is the only way to protect this fragile, cold-desert ecosystem and Ladakhis’ way of life.

“In Ladakh, we are in a very important position to be messengers from the frontier,” he says. “We have a responsibility... to tell the world what’s happening with us today, and that tomorrow it will be happening to you.”

Part IV

Politics of different kinds



Behind the Fascade of Jat Violence in Haryana

Behind the fascade of caste based violence in Haryana

<https://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Haryana-Chapter-3.pdf>

Please have a look at the draft third Chapter on Haryana related to Dalit issues in the State. The Chapter highlights the fact that beneath the sharp and increasing conflict between the upper castes and the Dalits lies the following

a. Crisis in agriculture faced by the upper classes (Jats) and upward mobility of the Dalits (Valmikis and Chamars in particular). Their growing influence on the politics of the State has caused the Upper Castes to rise in concerted opposition to this, reflecting the flash points of violence against Dalits outlined in the case studies. A closer examination of the case studies indicate premeditated attacks on the rising Dalit force with connivance of the administration. Have asked Tarun to examine our emerging hypothesis carefully in consultation with Comrade C D Sharma. Would also appreciate any feedback any of you can give. The methodology that is emerging is crucial to our further examination of these issues in Rajasthan as well. Due to Tarun's Ill health the study of Rajasthan has been delayed. We plan to take this up after the Haryana study has been completed.

Part V

Health, Happiness and the Hope Gene



Jesus Dies on the Cross



Jesus is made to carry his cross



Jesus meets his mother



Veronica wipes the face of Jesus



Jesus meets the women of jerusalem



Viren Lobo who was influenced by liberation theology during his college days did an MBA from Institute of Rural Management Anand. He has been working the development sector since he passed out from there in 1985. Employer, employee and other contradictions observed by him during his thirty year stint at Society for Promotion of Wastelands Development (SPWD) forced him to examine the relevance of Marxism as a way of looking at reality in relation to change he sought to bring. During the course of his work covering more than twenty States, he noticed a link between the livelihoods and ecology which he pursued strongly as Executive Director SPWD. The limitations of existing organisations to deal with the complex questions society posed motivated him to set up Institute of Ecology and Livelihood Action as the transition needed to address issues he was looking into at that time. The contradictions arising out of the a series of Bills that were passed during the last five years encouraged him to use the enforced sedentary life imposed on him to use his creativity to write plays. These were the first of a series which have helped serve the purpose of putting on paper the complex dilemma and diverse social opinions he came across.

About Especioza Trust:



Especioza Trust is named after my great, great grandmother who widowed at an early age brought up her only son Aogustinho (seated in centre). Shortly after a family reunion in December 2013, we got news that the family home at 84 Porvorim had been illegally sold to a builder. My aunt Marie stepped in and after getting the required mandate from the family not only got the family home back but the previous ancestral home of 85 Porvorim as well. Since then it became her project in memory of her widowed great grandmother till her death on her mother Amy Lobo's 117th birthday (25th July 2019). Since the informal trust set up by her could not achieve fruition I decided to keep the struggle and memories alive by carrying on her mission to bring unity within the family and dedicate the work of the Trust to all widows and single women of the world. My Aunt/Cousin Hazel Cardozo the daughter of Liban Pinto one of the two brothers born on my birthday (6th September) has helped me to give this project shape. The other brother Lucian in whose name the house was, also happened to be born on my birthday as well. The spiritual connection and the necessity for me to step in also come from a lot of other quarters which need not be documented here.

Viren Lobo