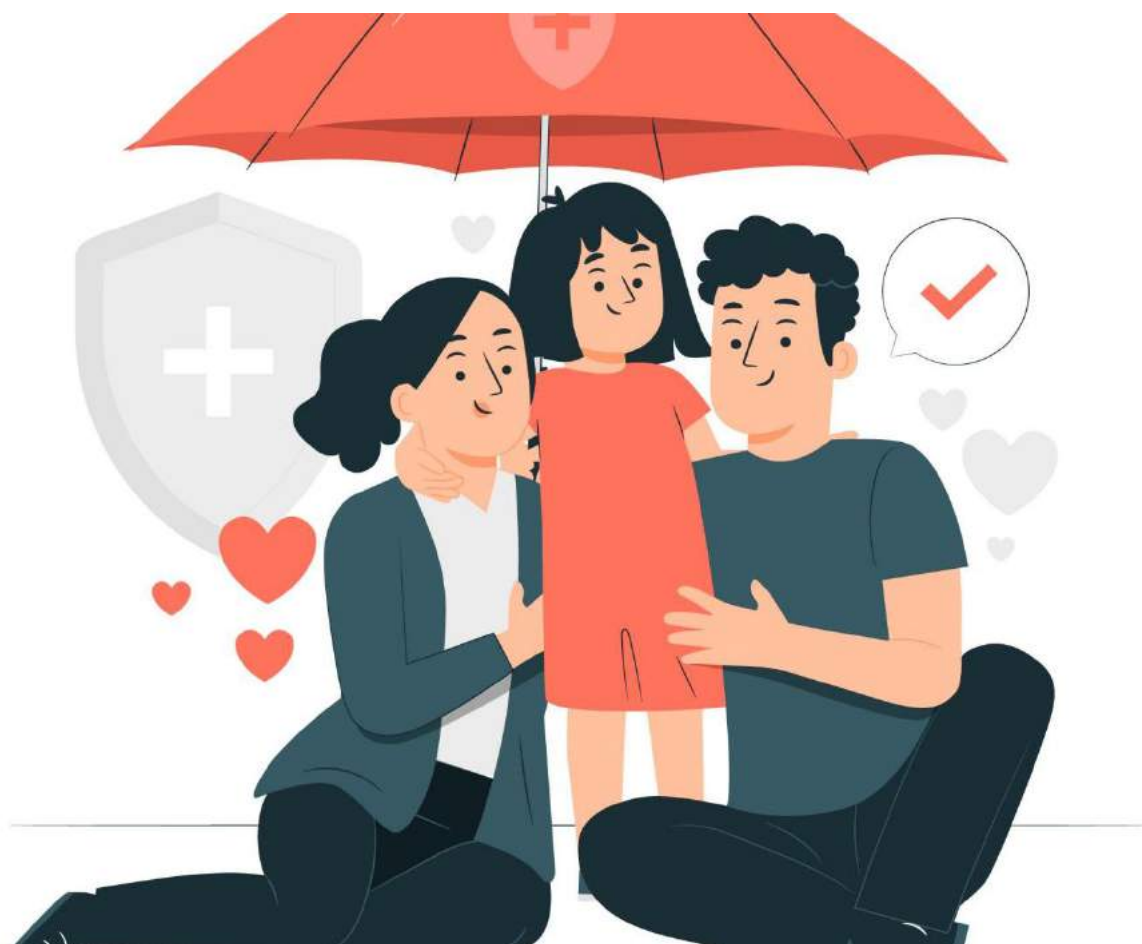


V Dog on the question of Social Security

A glimpse from India, US and Canada

Edited by Viren Lobo

An Especioza Trust Production



Family Security an illustration from Freepik <https://www.freepik.com/free-photos-vectors/social-security>

Foreword

The subject matter of Sociology as a science emerged in the 19th century to deal with questions posed by the emergence of Capitalism where the Social security umbrella provided by the monarch in feudalism was not adequate to address issues related to unemployment, old age, the destruction of the family and many other issues. Auguste Comte is considered the father of sociology. <https://upscsociology.in/auguste-comte-father-of-sociology/>

A brief history of social security is placed below:

<https://www.ssa.gov/history/briefhistory3.html>

In the early 90s the term Social safety net surged in popularity, particularly among the Bretton Woods Institutions which used them often in their social restructuring programmes.

<https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/insights/industry/public-sector/social-safety-net-for-social-care-system.html>

<https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/43746/309309-occa34.pdf>

<https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/august-2021/redesigning-canadas-social-safety-net-for-the-post-pandemic-economy/>

<https://www.nutritionintl.org/project/optimizing-indias-social-safety-net-programs/>

However there are issues which refuse to go away

<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/growing-apart-a-political-history-of-american-inequality/a-tattered-safety-net-social-policy>

Safety net for India's poor or a waste of public funds

<https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/127381/1/dp564.pdf>

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/checkup/is-it-time-to-repair-canada-s-social-safety-net-1.3075235>

Comparison of the Social Safety nets of Canada and the US

<https://www.nber.org/system/files/chapters/c11149/c11149.pdf>

<https://canadianlabour.ca/covid-19-has-exposed-wide-gaps-in-canadas-social-safety-net/>

This paper is not meant to be an answer to everyone's prayers over the centuries, rather a cross section of issues that can help develop our own thought and actions on this burning topic.

Background

Institute for Ecology and Livelihood Action¹

COVID Transformation and Relevance of Decentralised Governance

Background:

On 24th March, as a result of the impact of the world wide pandemic COVID19 Government of India first announced lockdown for an initial period of twenty one days. As we know this lockdown has not been fully revoked as yet. While the lockdown has severely hampered movement and resulted in numerous issues related to health and livelihoods, it also provided a challenge to seriously operationalise the concept of decentralised governance made possible by advancements in communication technology. It also provided the impetus for looking more closely at local health solutions related to stressing the importance of local foods in the light of the scientific evidence of their nutritional value.

As a supporter of a National Initiative called Gram Sabha Jagrukta Abhiyan launched by Indian Community Activists Network, Institute for Ecology and Livelihood action helped prepare the concept note and strategy paper for the movement. With the help of partners in Gujarat, Rajasthan and Jharkhand IELA also helped facilitate the process on the ground in various ways through trainings on the collection of secondary data, documentation and facilitation of RTI applications.

Separately in the first quarter, IELA helped in completion of the Nation-wide study on the status of the Forest Rights Act being done by All India Forest Forum for Forest Rights Struggles (AIFFRS), supported by Indian School of Business (ISB). Based on feedback from ISB, IELA helped in the preparation of five policy briefs summarising the study and highlighting the implications in different contextual situations on the ground. The five briefs brought home the fact that one size does not fit all and solutions have to be tailor made to suit the ground conditions. In the process it indirectly pointed to the relevance of local self governance processes as a way to capture the nuances on the ground. As a result it recommended that a process of Federating as the District/landscape level be used to provide gram sabhas with the wherewithal to raise their voice on governance issues affecting their livelihood concerns at village and landscape level. Suitable modifications to this basic structure was also recommended to articulate the concerns of specific interest groups like pastoralists, fishers, Internally displaced persons, Primitive tribal groups who had migrated to other States and did not tribal status in those states and specific concerns of local forest communities based on the nature of ecology and potential life support systems that could support them.

With the focus shifting to the gram sabha as a whole and to issues related to the entire community at a very crucial time like COVID,, the need to address issues related to provision

¹ Extract from IELA Annual Report 20- 21

of employment, nutritious healthy food, promotion of kitchen and health gardens became a priority along with the push to ensure that communities realised the importance of the local biodiversity in their life support systems and as a result worked towards the preparation of Community Forest Rights claims and Village Biodiversity protection committees.

Having facilitated the participation of partners in the National Inclusive Children's Parliament (NICP) at Delhi in Jan- Feb 2020, around the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), a process of helping create children's parliaments was initiated in Rajasthan and Gujarat. With the help of an intern from Symbiosis Law College Pune, IELA, slides highlighting the importance and relevance of each SDG were prepared. IELA also helped to develop a perspective on SDGs relevant to the rural areas. The key difference between the rural and urban approach is that access and governance rights on the natural resources were more important in rural surroundings while rights to basic needs and amenities are important in the urban context. As a result IELA was able to bring an entirely new perspective to the issue of the way the SDGs were being looked at. Due to COVID 19, progress on this matter has been slow but issues related to the relevance of local foods as a way to tackle nutrition, health and overall well being concerns of local communities in rural areas has been highlighted.

Considering the focus on Nutrition, Health and Overall well being, IELA was also able to highlight the centrality of women in dealing with these issues. Accordingly with the help of partner organisations, a concept note on the same was developed which is helping to guide IELA and partner interventions in the States of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The last quarter focussed on consolidating the activities in these States so as to develop a comprehensive programme capable of addressing more global concerns related to Climate Change, sustainable livelihoods and governance. This approach has been crystallised in a note on Theory of Change. Further work on how this can be used in different fields is being further explored.

Dedication

For Yvette

My Dad's cousin Yvette died of COVID 19 in tragic circumstances

No bed, Fiola got the last bed available

No medicine, after much running around an alternative could be administered after two days

Fiola her daughter was distraught

Could not do as much for her mother as she liked

Though with all human effort she tried

Yvette lived a happy life

Though one with lot of turmoil within

The bird that dared to spread her wings

Leaving her father's dream child

For two elder sisters to handle

Yet in a time of distress she too lit the candle

Hostile take over prevented

Mater Dei reinvented

Was it just a life of the ordinary

Or a life to be evaluated through contrary

Like Peter at her sister's Edna's funeral she stood

One of those in the garden of Getsemanie

Watching silently from afar

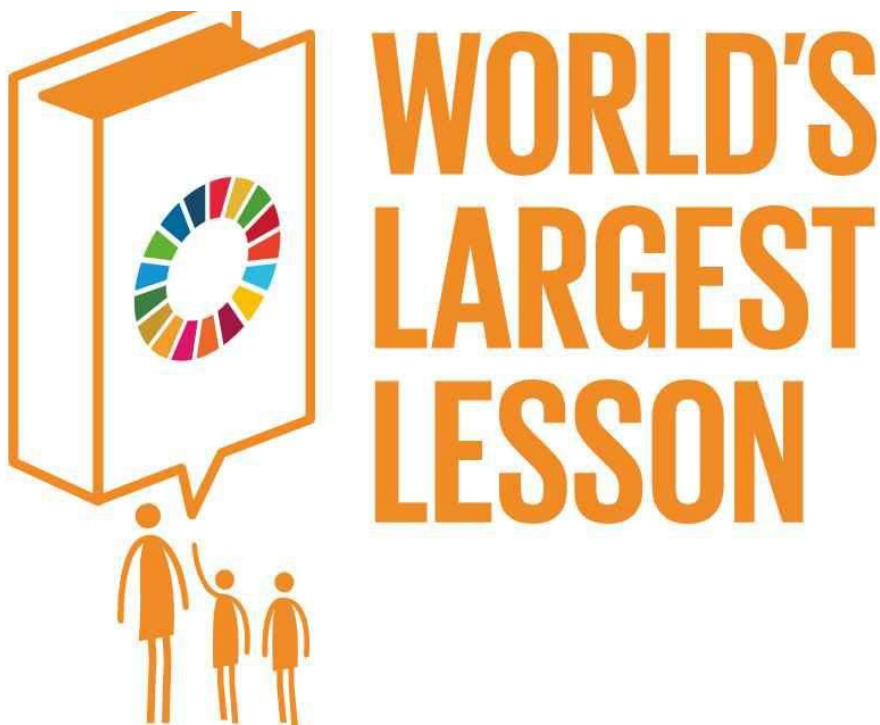
Heart strings pulled

Family ties stronger and thicker in adversity.

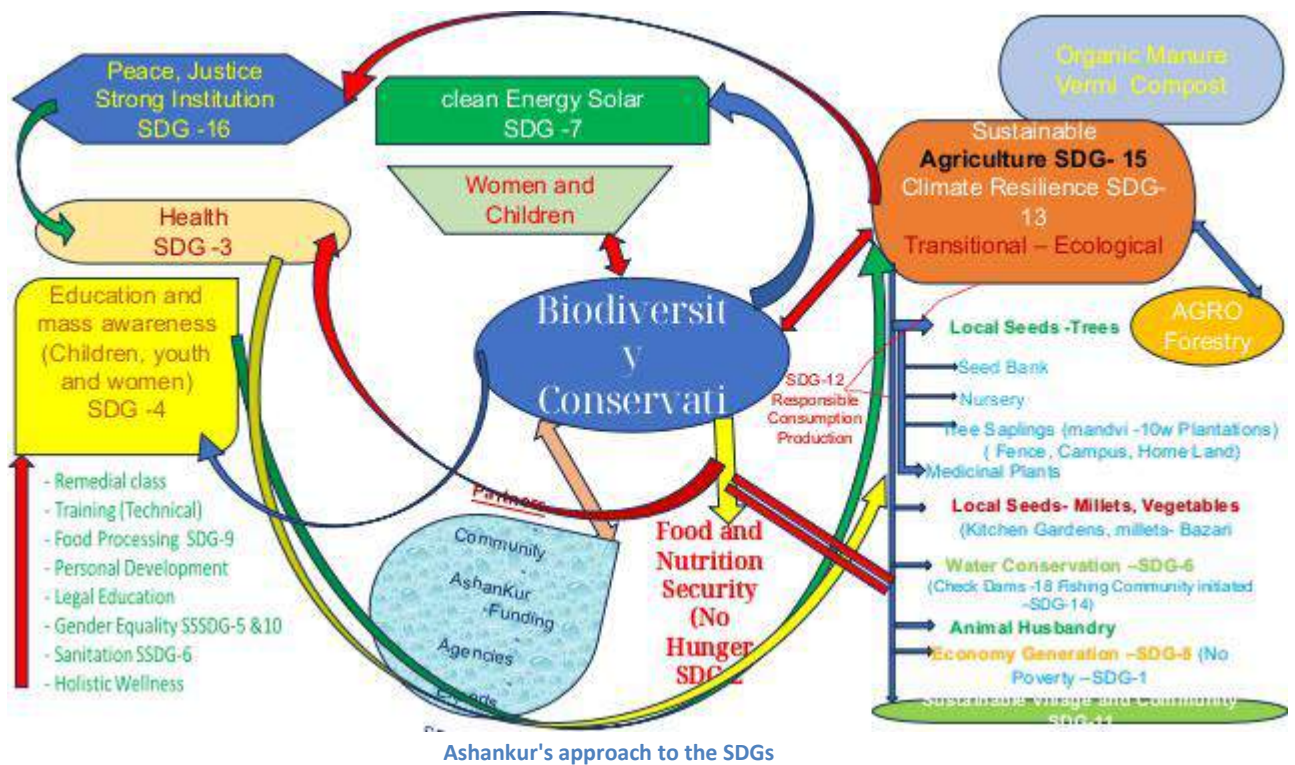
Part I

Education for All

This slogan minus the social wherewithal means nothing



Education about the 17 SDGs touted as the World's largest lesson: All SDGs for all people



The url below is an output of the action research training programme at Ashankur where Ashankur attempted to consolidate the work it is currently doing in relation to education and place it in the larger context of SDG 4 related to education for all

<https://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/SDG-4-Education-Atul-Sabita-Sunil.pdf>

This work is still work in progress as the detailed documentation done by Ashankur still needs further consolidation as also using Note Cam and google earth to map the centres and area of influence of Ashankur's work related to education. Since the work taken up relates to Ashankur's identification of the critical issues to be taken up in this regard, Ashankur's current understanding related to education and its relation to SDG 4 still have to be integrated as Ashankur is now collaborating with schools to engage with the elder children (Class 5- 9) as well. Where this education relates to the empowerment and upliftment of the girl child one of the areas where gender discrimination is taking place also has to be factored in.

https://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

While dealing with this issue, it was observed that market orientation was putting pressure on men in a manner accentuating gender differences. The next few months have been devoted to correcting some of these anomalies to the extent they can be. Advancements in technology such as geospatial tools and computers provides the space to address some of this if properly utilised. The url below is the report of the action research agenda identified by Ashankur to bridge these gaps. This too is work in progress which shall be completed over the next few months.

https://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/12_10_2023_Technology-compressed.pdf

Part II

Nutrition, Health and Overall Well being



Savita Avare displaying local food cooked by her on ashankur campus

Agenda for nutrition, health and overall well being²:

A study in collaboration with Wisconsin University, USA was proposed and facilitated by IELA. Since the actual study took place with Hanuman Van Vikas Samiti, it is not being reported here, only the outcome is. The points related to this are being reported here.

- a. The study was proposed as part of a larger effort towards women's empowerment of which HVVS, Prayatna Samiti, SPWD and IELA are part of the team working towards this goal.
- b. There are conceptual issues related to the research design. Given our experience we have found that suggestions do not come forward from the people in the same form of rationality that we expect them to. The process of facilitation as we know in relation to NREGA has first started with micro plans made for roads, then expanded to cover NRM and lastly proposals related to common land development came forth. This is due to the fact that external facilitation was required to sort out internal issues preventing full consultation with the communities. In the absence of this, programmes get decided by a limited coterie in the village who have close ties with government and political functionaries and plans designed to suit their interests first.
- c. In the specific matter under question, what emerged was a roundabout route to empowerment covering many facets that could help communities explore their own potential. As the study pointed out, the options that people could come up with by themselves were limited and when directly questioned said that they would be happy to depend on the market for their needs, indicating that they did not see solutions to their own issues within the existing framework. The community however enthusiastically responded to the engagement with IELA as local forgotten options were put before them, jogging their memory. However they did look to IELA for concrete suggestions to specific problems faced by them indicating both a breakdown of traditional knowledge systems and their application to new problems being faced by them.
- d. We call this issue people science interface, where people are informed of the larger issues and concerns and are facilitated to make informed decisions rather than solutions thrust on them from above or limited options given the level of exchange between people and the need to connect to the knowledge of elders which has been sidelined due to the operation of the market forces.

Simultaneous to this and following this exercise, there was engagement with local communities (urban and rural) on this issue in other parts of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Delhi. It has also been noticed that the government and donors are paying attention to the question of development of kitchen and nutrition gardens and incorporation of local foods in the diet of the mid day meal scheme. IELA got an opportunity to develop this further during discussions with XINRM and Social Centre as also partners of the Pune Jesuits. Accordingly

² Extracted from IELA's Annual Report 21-22

a tentative plan has been made with SADDAC in Daund. SADDAC is associated with a group of 100 women Self help groups having a total of 1000 women from six hamlets of Daund. Proposals for development of model herbal and kitchen gardens on campuses of Social Centre and its partner NGOs was also explored.

Part III

Ecological Governance of Our Common Home



Village ecological map of Nani presented by the children of that village at the training programme in Bekhadiya

Study on Local Self Governance and impact on Communities³

Since this study was sponsored and facilitated by ABMKSS, the details are not being reported here. What is of relevance is some of the findings and observations from the study.

- a. Tribals, small and traditional fishers, pastoralists, small and marginal farmers are being further marginalised due to the destruction of the habitat (common lands) and traditional management systems on which they depend. While struggles to preserve these spaces exists, the battle appears to be a losing one. These communities are still not yet defeated due to the fact that their survival itself depends on these resources with wage labour and migration not providing adequate options as the government might have us believe from the way development plans facilitating displacement and destruction of natural resources are being put in place.
- b. The need for decentralised options and collective response to diverse individual struggles is becoming more and more apparent as Industrial models based on centralised command and control systems do not work. Revival of traditional systems is faced with the additional problems that the process of commodification has placed namely fragmentation of the local communities, replacement of nature based knowledge with market based ones and promotion of individual versus the collective, reinforcing exploitative relations based on centralised command and control systems for profit maximisation rather than meeting community goals.
- c. The destruction of habitats is based on the non recognition of the historical relevance of the biodiversity in the life support systems of local communities, rather making them dependant on an uncertain and bureaucratic government largesse for the same.

Restoration of these processes as a part of decentralised ecological governance requires local communities to understand the significance of developments in renewable energy and technology that have the potential to restore aspects of traditional decentralised governance systems in way conducive to ecological restoration of landscapes and enhance employment potential based on the potential for local value addition, reduction of pollution due to the enhancement of potential for recycling through application of nature's cycles at more local levels.

³ Extract from IELA Annual Report 21-22

Part IV

Politics of different kinds



Sad Refugee woman from Syria

Ten years into the struggle Syria tops the list of refugees

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/12/16-photos-that-capture-the-devastation-of-the-refugee-crisis/>

<https://www.unhcr.org/innovation/10-infographics-that-show-the-scale-of-the-global-displacement-crisis/>

The media has been actively covering UNHCR's recently released [Annual Global Trends Report](#) which highlighted the insane fact that worldwide displacement is at the highest level ever recorded. António Guterres, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, said in the report that the world is entering an era "in which the scale of global forced displacement as well as the response required is now clearly dwarfing anything seen before."

The numbers coming out of the report are staggering to say the least. Worldwide, one in every 122 people on the planet is now either a refugee, internally displaced or seeking asylum. 59.5 million people were forcibly displaced at the end of 2014 compared to 51.2 million a year earlier and 37.5 million a decade ago.

The Taliban Overrun Kabul

<https://apnews.com/article/taliban-takeover-afghanistan-what-to-know-1a74c9cd866866f196c478aba21b60b6>

<https://www.cnbc.com/2021/08/16/how-afghanistan-fell-to-the-taliban-so-quickly.html>

<https://www.livemint.com/news/india/will-india-s-investments-in-afghanistan-amount-to-anything-11630281437354.html>

<https://www.policyforum.net/how-the-taliban-is-affecting-indias-trade-with-afghanistan/>

https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Chaudhuri_Shende_-_Afghanistan.pdf

<https://southasianvoices.org/two-years-after-taliban-takeover-what-is-indias-afghanistan-policy/>

Impact of development on tribals in India

<https://thewire.in/rights/over-the-last-75-years-struggles-of-indias-tribal-communities-have-multiplied>

<https://www.undp.org/india/stories/landless-landowners-helping-tribal-communities-claim-their-rights>

<https://en.themooknayak.com/tribal-news/tribal-community-bears-the-brunt-of-increase-in-crimes>

Status of Dalits in India

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/india-dalits-still-feel-bottom-caste-ladder-n1239846>

Part V

Health, Happiness and the Hope Gene



Genevieve with terrance Lewis at Singapore Airport



Lizenca celebrating Diwali in Pune



Strawberry Girl Lizenca



Bridget and Evelyn at Lonavala



Viren at the old Spaghetti factory in Sacramento



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