

ABMKSS Call on World Environment Day - Agenda 2030 with a twist

Even as technology makes the world come closer together, environmental issues threaten to split it apart. The Corona pandemic while global in nature has forced people into segregation as never before in recent years. The once pristine rural surroundings, havens for health recuperation and peaceful living have become infected by the virus after opening up the lockdown to free movement of the workforce from rural to urban areas and vice versa, unrestricted thronging of market places, religious gatherings, festivals and political rallies and a mutating virus that was able to bypass the vaccine barrier all served to bring on a second wave bigger than the first. As if this is not enough, reports of third wave have already begun.

That nature responds to the ignominy inflicted on it is well known. In *Dialectics of Nature*, Engels writes: *Let us not, however, flatter ourselves overmuch on account of our human victories over nature. For each such victory nature takes its revenge on us. Each victory, it is true, in the first place brings about the results we expected, but in the second and third places it has quite different, unforeseen effects which only too often cancel out the first. The people who, in Mesopotamia, Greece, Asia Minor, and elsewhere, destroyed the forests to obtain cultivable land, never dreamed that by removing along with the forests the collecting centres and reservoirs of moisture they were laying the basis for the present forlorn state of those countries. When the Italians of the Alps used up the pine forests on the southern slopes, so carefully cherished on the northern slopes, they had no inkling that by doing so they were cutting at the roots of the dairy industry in their region; they had still less inkling that they were thereby depriving their mountain springs of water for the greater part of the year, and making it possible for them to pour still more furious torrents on the plains during the rainy seasons..... What cared the Spanish planters in Cuba, who burned down forests on the slopes of the mountains and obtained from the ashes sufficient fertilizer for one generation of very highly profitable coffee trees--what cared they that the heavy tropical rainfall afterwards washed away the unprotected upper stratum of the soil, leaving behind only bare rock! Thus at every step we are reminded that we by no means rule over nature like a conqueror over a foreign people, like someone standing outside nature—but that we, with flesh, blood and brain, belong to nature, and exist in its midst, and that all our mastery of it consists in the fact that we have the advantage over all other creatures of being able to learn its laws and apply them correctly.*

Stalin on seeing the destruction that the great dust bowl caused to the Prairies of America did not allow the Steppes to be cultivated, rather focused on planting trees hundreds of kilometers wide and thousands of Kilometers long to prevent the cold winds of the North reaching the South, Mao ensured that the development of irrigation and canals was accompanied by avenue plantations along the canal. Some of these achievements were later undone in a bid for production at any cost. The impact of this form of development is there to see in both the erstwhile USSR and China.

World over the impact of ignoring the environment was building up. In India, M N Buch highlighted the implication of the destruction of the forests in the seventies, as a result a

call to conserve the Forests led the Forest Conservation Act 1980, and prior to that the Wildlife Act 1972 was passed. The anti people nature of the these Act led to country wide movements resulting in the passing of the Biodiversity Act 2002 and the Forest Rights Act 2006

Internationally in 1987, the Brundtland Commission report *Our Common Future* created waves, the ripples of which were felt across the world. Yet despite that the destruction of the environment continues unabated. A world powered by fossil fuels did not want to give up its privileges. Increasing cost of production in agriculture and other natural products have however brought home the costs of going against nature even more sharply than ever before. The farmer's agitation in India over the Minimum support price for agriculture is one such. Simultaneous to this, the developments in renewable energy make the concept of decentralised sustainable governance possible provided the control of energy production and its use is in the hands of local communities.

In discussions held at Bhekadiya in March 2020, an outline for a rural perspective to the Sustainable Development Goals and agenda 2030 was developed. <http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Rural-perspective-on-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Case-study-of-Chhota-Udepur.pdf>. In essence it points out that the \$53 trillion demanded at the Paris Climate Change Convention in 2016 was not required, just three percent of this figure would do if the power of nature to fix nitrogen in the soil was factored in. Obviously this is a resounding to corporate money making schemes to fix the world, rather going for community based solutions instead.

This call is reflected in the call of ICAN call for a discussion on the relevance of the Commons for sustainable development and the presentation made on behalf of Institute for Ecology and Livelihood Action (IELA) one of the co-organizers of the meeting IELA has taken forward the recommendations of the study in various fields. In the forestry sector the five policy briefs prepared by AIFFRS and the note submitted to the Tribal Minister summarizing the points that have been highlighted in the briefs All of which can be viewed at <http://ielaind.org/reports/>.

ABMKSS will be tracking relevant developments to give shape to the agenda think globally act locally. One such has been spelt out in the theory of change worked out jointly by IELA and Gayatri Seva Sansthan (GSS) <http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Theory-of-Change.pdf> We look forward to your contribution and participation in such initiatives. In the words of Mao *let a hundred flowers bloom*.

Viren Lobo

For and on behalf of ABMKSS

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