

Transition Town Movement

*Local Action in the
Wake of Global Emergency and Collapse*

T. Vijayendra
Usha Rao
Shreekumar



SANGATYA

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Preface

This is a follow up of my 2019 booklet, *Kabira Khada Bazar Mein: Call for Local Action in the Wake of Global Emergency*, which was written before the Pandemic. That book has been translated into Kannada, Bengali and Marathi and is the basic text for the emerging Transition Networks in regions where these languages are spoken. The Pandemic has taught us many things. It has shown the inability of the state to help people during deep crises. Most importantly it has shown us that people and life find ways of taking care of themselves without assistance from the state. Now I no longer fear the collapse of capitalism. The sooner the better!

We are caught in a Global Emergency. This has several aspects to it - Resource Depletion, Global Warming, Ecological Degradation, Growing Inequality and Social Unrest. The primary cause of this emergency is the current crisis of capitalism which began with the 2008 financial meltdown. The response of capitalism to this Global Emergency is the project of 'global capital', the so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution which is doomed to fail. A totally different non capitalistic response is Transition Town Movement. It is an initiative or model that refers

to grassroots community projects. The aim is to create the means for sustainable self-sufficiency at the local level to reduce the potential effects of peak oil, climate destruction, and economic instability. This is done through re-localization strategies, especially around food production and energy usage, taking us from the present capitalist/industrial stage of society to an alternative stage.

The first long article, ‘Transition Town Movement’ is divided in three parts. They deal with: Part I: Global Emergency and End of Modern Technology and Alternatives, Part II: Meaning and History of Transition and Part III: Transition in India.

After that there are four articles, which deal with concrete issues of transition in India. The first three pieces are written by Usha Rao based on her experience in rural areas of Madhya Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka. They are i. We are Part of the Problem, ii. School Education during Transition Times, and iii. Some Thoughts on what Transition would involve in Rural Areas. The last article is written by Shreekumar based on his study of J. C. Kumarappa and his own experience: Transition from the Present to an Economy of Permanence.

The final section is called Resources. It covers books, links to web sites and links to videos. The context of the book and the ideas therein, is India.

Hyderabad
July 31, 2023

Vijayendra

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Transition Town Movement

T. Vijayendra

Part I

Global Emergency and End of Modern Technology and Alternatives

The Global Emergency we are witnessing has several aspects - Resource Depletion, Global Warming, Ecological Degradation, Growing Inequality and Social Unrest. I will discuss each of them below, along with their relation to each other.

Resource Depletion

Human society uses natural resources for its survival and reproduction. Other living beings depend directly or indirectly on plant resources which are renewable. In addition to these, human beings also use non-renewable resources including minerals such as coal and petroleum and metals such as gold, silver, copper and iron, coal. They are considered non-renewable because their quantity is fixed and the more we use them the less is left of them, to use. For industrial societies, petroleum and coal are the

basic sources of energy and their depletion can spell the end.

Now, there is a law of extraction of these non-renewable resources. It was first discovered in the case of oil by M. King Hubbert and is called, 'Peak Oil'. It says that when half the resources are extracted (taken out), then the production will start falling. That is, the peak of production occurs when half the oil is taken out. It applies to a particular well, to a region, to a country, and to the whole world. Today, we know that it applies not just to oil but to all mineral resources. Scientists have calculated the peak year for almost all the important minerals. And, hold your breath; the overwhelming majority of them will peak before 2030, starting with oil! The data is almost accurate and might differ only by a few percentage points, but the fact remains that the years of industrial society as it exists are numbered and the end will come in a decade or so. The collapse of industrial society will be a 'never before' event because that will be the end of the historical process of ever-increasing wealth that human society has seen in the last few thousand years.

The champions of the Fourth Industrial Revolution such as the World Economic Forum say that the sun is a never exhausting resource and that solar energy and wind can easily replace fossil fuels. The record so far is dismal because the dependence on fossil fuels has not decreased. This year USA, UK, and Germany are bringing back coal plants due to a sharp reduction in energy supplies, particularly natural gas, following the Ukraine war. Both solar and hydro power need a lot of metals as well. Solar needs copper and some rare earths all of which are in short supply and will be increasingly so.

In addition, solar power requires vast amount of vacant land surface to capture sunlight. Already humans are using more than 90% of earth's resources, stealing them from other species. This will further erode the share of other species. Similarly, wind energy

takes up a lot of air space, endangering birds. And this is leaving aside the massive waste disposal problem posed by renewable energy, which has already begun to show.

There is a theoretical argument also. It essentially says that these alternative energy sources – solar, wind, nuclear, Hydrogen etc. all are meant to produce electricity. But the infrastructure needed to produce them and use them (transmission and distribution) are all based on fossil fuel and other metals that are peaking. In other words, while the alternative energy sources are ‘feasible’ they are not viable!

In the short term, even renewable resources cannot help us because human society has used them at a rate higher than the rate of their natural reproduction. That is, we have cut more trees than the number of new ones that are growing; we have used more water than is being replenished naturally, and so on. Water tables all over the world are falling. It will take decades to get back the status of ‘renewable’ for these resources. In fact, we have been mining them in the same way that we have mined the non-renewable resources.

While there is a window of a few years before resource depletion triggers a collapse, global warming, as we will see below, does not give us any window!

Global Warming

This has received maximum attention in the media due to the recent IPCC report which has drawn everyone’s attention to the gravity of the situation. “If we are to stay below 1.5 °C global warming, emissions have to peak no later than 2020. Emissions must also be cut by half by 2030, and to net zero by 2040. We need an immediate emergency response by policymakers, businesses, and civil society, aimed at an unprecedented transformation of all sectors of society. *It’s time to act!*” Well, we

have passed that deadline of 2020.

The levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere are the main drivers of climate change. They are measured in ‘parts per million (ppm)’ and the safe levels are considered to be a maximum of 350, ideally less. They have hit a new record high, the UN said, warning “*The window of opportunity for action is almost closed.*” Today (May 2023) it is 424 ppm! It is probably more correct to say that the window of opportunity for action is closed. No government is actually prepared to reduce emissions. In fact, this year they have been busy with wars which only increase emissions. A group of scientists have claimed that we are moving towards a temperature increase of 3.2 degrees centigrade and have asked the scientific community to launch global civil disobedience!

Ecological Degradation

The year 2022, saw some of the worst effects of ecological degradation due to climate change. Europe has seen the worst drought in 500 years. Both the USA and China too are facing drought in large areas. Now these are huge areas and include most of the ‘developed countries’ as well as comprising some of the ‘food baskets’ of the world. Pakistan has faced huge floods involving 30 million people. In India too, large parts of the country have faced floods.

Growing Inequality and Social Unrest

The Annual Oxfam report points at growing inequality in the world. These inequalities continue to raise protest movements all over the world.

These movements are against the livelihoods crisis and the steep rise in the price of essentials brought on initially by the Covid-19 pandemic and the crippling lockdowns that followed, and exacerbated by the war in Ukraine. Global warming, coupled with

resource depletion, ecological disaster, growing people's movement, and wars among capitalist nations can together trigger a collapse of the entire global system.

Already Sri Lanka and 27 other small countries are going through a process of collapse. In 2023, we are witnessing huge strikes in U. K. France and Netherlands against inflation and for higher wages.

In coming years many other small and medium sized countries will follow suit, and then the bigger countries too may fall down like Humpty Dumpty. The recent collapse of Silicon Valley Bank shows that the collapse has begun. It is logical to conclude that capitalism can neither solve these problems nor can it outlive them. We need to work towards alternatives without delay.

Part II

Meaning and History of Transition

Transition is a state that denotes the movement from one situation to another. Here we use it to the movement from the present capitalist/industrial stage of society to an alternative stage. We do not yet know what the alternative would be. It will be determined by the history and other conditions of specific regions. It can be any of the alternatives that have been attempted earlier or their modified forms. For example it can be socialism, eco socialism, anarchism, and a variation of a parliamentary democracy. Transition Town Movement is one proposed alternative. It belongs to the TRADITION of ANARCHISM in general and to PERMACULTURE in particular. Let us talk briefly about anarchism and permaculture before we proceed to discuss Transition Town.

Briefly: 1. Anarchists are opposed to all authority 2. Anarchists believe in self-management within a local community based on 'a

free association of free people’ and 3. The Anarchist community will federate with other communities also based on ‘a free association of free people’. There are a lot of misconceptions about Anarchists. Since they are anti-authoritarian, the stereotypical image is that of a young man with long hair, unkempt dirty clothes, who doesn’t listen to any one and does as he pleases. It is true that many anarchists in the past and even today have long hair. What this image does not include is the element of self management within a local community. The reality is that most anarchists are gentle, low profile people, often good gardeners and in possession of one or the other artistic manual skill. Many poets, authors, artists, theatre persons, philosophers, educationists, musicians and other creative people have been anarchists. The reason is obvious. Creativity needs freedom and hence anti authoritarian philosophy attracts such people.

Permaculture is an alternative way of life, based on a cooperative and non-exploitative relationship with the bio-sphere. The term was coined by Dr. Bill Mollison of Tasmania, Australia in the early 1970s to mean Permanent Agriculture or Permanent Culture. David Holmgren was a collaborator in this venture.

It was initially conceived as a framework for a more permanent basis for agriculture rather than mere annual cropping. The idea was to have a mutually beneficial assembly of multi-crop elements of perennial trees, shrubs, annuals (food crops), herbs, vegetables, useful weeds, fungi, and tuber crops with integration of animals, aimed towards household and community self-reliance for food sufficiency. Over time, Permaculture has come to mean much more than food sufficiency at the household level. It has become clear that self-sufficiency in food becomes meaningless unless people have access to land, information and financial resources. Permaculture today signifies a whole life system encompassing various strategies for people to acquire all those resources,

including access to land. This is essential to enable self-financing and self-managed systems that can provide for material and non-material needs of any community, without depleting, polluting and destroying the natural resources of the biosphere.

The terms **Transition Town**, **Transition Initiative** and **Transition Model** form elements of an initiative or model that have evolved as grassroots community projects. Their aim is to bolster self-sufficiency and reduce the impact of peak oil, climate destruction, and economic instability. This is done through re-localization strategies, especially around food production and energy usage, taking us from the present capitalist/industrial stage of society to an alternative stage.

History of Transition Town: From Kinsale to Totnes

Kinsale is a small town on the South East Coast of Ireland. In 2004, Rob Hopkins taught permaculture design at the Kinsale Further Education College. Two young women, Louise Rooney and Catherine Dunne were his students. He set them the task of applying permaculture principles to 'Peak Oil.' They produced the now famous Kinsale Energy Descent Plan. They applied the principle in the realm of energy production, health, education, economy and food production. The plan was presented to Kinsale Town council. To their surprise, the councilors decided to adopt the plan and work towards energy independence. The first transition Town was born! Hopkins moved to his home town Totnes in England where he and Naresh Giangrande developed these concepts into the Transition Model. In early 2006, Transition Town Totnes was founded and became the inspiration for founding of other Transition initiatives. By September 2013, there were 1130 initiatives registered in 43 countries.

Although there is a Transition Town Handbook and a Transition Network, the movement has no centralized structure

and each group is free to evolve its own plans of action, adhere to the core values of Transition. Other movements like Transition have emerged in different parts of the world. Prominent among these are ‘The Simpler Way’, in Australia which is the home of Permaculture, in the U. S. it is Resilience.org and CASSE – Centre for Advancement of Steady State Economy and so on. More recently, 15-minute Cities Movement is making headlines in England and Europe. It was first proposed by Carlos Moreno, a professor at Sorbonne University, in 2016. According to Moreno, the large distances of modern cities take too much of people’s time. So, it would be very useful if everyone could obtain all their needs within a 15-minute walk or bike ride.

As mentioned already, the Anarchist tradition is just one of the responses to the Crisis of Capitalism. There are other groups with different ideologies and it is probably not correct to give them any names. For example, Cuba calls itself Socialist but it is a system closer to Eco Socialism. Many Latin American countries are experimenting with various modifications to parliamentary system. In Russia some people have attempted an ‘Eco Village Movement.’

In India there are thousands of urban and rural local initiatives of self-management to address the failure of the government(s) to generate decent means of livelihood for people. In some cases the government supports such ‘self-help’ groups in order to reduce its own accountability. During the COVID lockdown these initiatives demonstrated that people can take care of themselves and their communities when the government refuses to own its responsibility. Also nature recovered at a remarkably fast rate – air pollution levels decreased, rivers cleansed themselves and dolphins were seen in Hooghly River near Kolkata!

Part III

Transition India

As of now, there are no Transition Town models in India. There are no groups or organisations which call themselves as working for Transition Town model. Yes, there are several individuals and small groups who are aware of the concept and are implementing it in their own way in the specific activities and enterprises that they are involved in. Kerala seems to have a larger number of such people. I have heard of the term ‘Transition Kerala’ and even a group called ‘Transition Studies’ in Thrissur headed by Comrade K. Sahadevan. My own booklet (Kabira...) on it is translated into Kannada, Marathi and Bengali. That is to say, that a few individuals and groups working in these states, are also working on ‘transition models.’

I personally initiated some activity in a small town in 2009. (See Appendix below, ‘My Kinwat Report’ by Vinayak, V. V.) We were successful in what we attempted but we failed to create a local leadership, although we had with us skilled working class youths. On hindsight I can say our short coming was that we had no experience, no resources in Marathi – books, websites, videos etc. We continue to have a small presence in the town. Our friend and colleague in the programme, Yogesh Kanakdande, is a local school teacher and is skilled in most of the activities we had initiated in the town.

However, in the absence of a well articulated concept, individuals, organisations and even governments are unable to seriously undertake Transition as an enterprise. A number of activities and actions at local and regional levels in India, fall under Transition and one can hope that these will get consolidated and recognised, sooner rather than later.

The main problem with some of these initiatives is that only a

few have been inspired by ideas of local self-sufficiency, descaling of energy use and simplicity. These are helmed by NGOs and individuals who carry the legacy of the independence movement – ideas of Swaraj and Gram Swaraj etc. Other activities are inspired by the modern green movements and often are in the mould of ‘green capitalism’. Only time will tell us how they will progress, change course towards Transition and succeed or fail.

I will next offer a critical survey of the current scenario in the light of Transition, both in the Rural and Urban realms. I hope this will help you, the reader to decide where and how you wish to pitch in your own efforts.

The Vision of Future

To respond meaningfully to a crisis we have to first understand the problem and then envision a solution. In this case, a post-industrial society, where problems we now encounter will no longer exist.

Let us consider the problem we currently face.

1. There is no alternative energy source that can replace the petrol and gas which run our trucks and cars. Today, transportation is so basic to global capitalism that its breakdown alone can cause the system to collapse. 2. No alternative source can generate the amount of energy we are using now. 3. The implication of the above is that ‘globalisation’ is no longer possible. 4. The present level of consumption will result in unacceptable levels of global warming and ecological degradation.

Based on the above, one can deduce that post-industrial societies will have the following main features:

1. Equality 2. A scaling down of the use of resources - particularly energy 3. Local self - sufficient economy 4. Ecological restoration of the present degraded ecology 5. A value system or ethical base which is more cooperative and less competitive than the present society.

What is Local

Local can be defined in many ways. It can be defined in terms of human scale - number of people and area that we can know, walk around or go on a bicycle. A thumb rule is the pin code. Every pin code in the country defines a local area. A Pin Code region in India has an average population of 8221 and an area of 21.22 sq. km. So a population of 10,000 and an area of 25 sq. km can be considered 'local' for India. For rural areas it can be a micro watershed or a panchayat and for the urban areas it can be a municipal ward. And the ultimate core of a locality is, of course, us as individuals or our families.

What can one individual do?

So what can one do? As a rule the key word is voluntary simplicity at a personal level. It is of course true that one person reducing her/his energy consumption/eco footprint cannot significantly change the situation. As the critics often say, 'if you don't use it someone else will use it.' But it does give one the moral energy to go ahead and involve in larger issues in larger contexts. After all, one does face the question, 'What are you doing about it?' 'What is your own footprint?' Secondly it can also be argued that simplicity or going a bit away from the consumer society gives one more time to do things. The ultimate goal at an individual level is not only to reduce one's carbon footprint, but also to earn one's livelihood exclusively from Green Jobs. We define Green Jobs as those which involve 'Restoring Ecology through Rebuilding Communities' on the basis of 'Equity and Sustainability.'

Local Response in Urban Areas: Transition Town

About 70% of emissions which cause global warming come from cities. People in rural areas follow cities as role models. So cities should take a leading role in meeting the challenges of this Global

Emergency.

The aim of a prospective Transition Town must be to prepare a plan to make the town fossil fuel free in ten years. The size of the town should be small. It would be about 10,000 people and an area of 25 square kilometres. It is somewhat similar to what is being termed a 15 - minute town.

We will look at the following aspects to be addressed in the plan: 1. Air 2. Water 3. Waste Management 4. Food Production 5. Health & Education 6. Employment Generation and Entrepreneurship.

1. Air

We cannot live without air even for 3 minutes! The biggest polluters of air in urban areas are fossil fuel driven vehicles, scooters, cars, buses and trucks. Of these cars have the highest per capita emissions. While it is not evident yet, petrol and diesel are on their way out. Electric vehicles (EVs) are showing up. Fortunately, in India it is mainly two wheeler EVs. Bicycle movement is catching on in almost all cities. Here the main issue is that the fancy cycle market is increasing at the cost of more robust roadster bicycles. Cycle rickshaws and four wheeled pushcarts have never really gone away from Indian streets. With the usage of these modes becoming more common, urban pollution will definitely decrease in the coming years.

2. Water

Next to air, water is the most important thing for living things. All human settlements are located near water bodies like lakes, rivers and wells. In fact the size of a human settlement until recently was based on the availability of water in the vicinity. Only availability of cheap energy enabled cities to pump water from distant rivers. Today in most cities every drop of water consumed

involves some coal (due to electricity in pumping) and/or petrol for tanker transport. As energy supply and size of the town reduces, local water supplies will regain relevance. Rain water harvesting is being made mandatory under building regulations. Acute water scarcity will lead to greater acceptance of these regulations. Repair and restoration of tanks and other water bodies is being urgently taken up in many towns and large movements to save the lakes have gained popularity in Bangalore and Hyderabad and several other Indian cities. Our efforts should ensure that all lakes get water that is potable, fishable, and swimmable. And finally we should plan to ensure that the water table in the area rises incrementally to reach 20 feet.

3. Waste Management

Plastic is currently the biggest source of solid waste and single use plastic has been banned in the country. The next step is segregation at source of green and red waste, recycling of non biodegradable waste and composting the biodegradable waste. Further we need to ensure zero-waste management and also ensure that industrial and sewage waste does not go to the river or water bodies. All of this has been acknowledged as essential and many cities have worked towards it. Kerala seems to be very earnest in this field. The toughest problem to crack is converting latrines to compost latrines instead of flushing the excreta to pollute lakes and rivers. In small towns Sulabh Shouchalaya has done remarkable work since 1969. The tough nut is high rise building. It is a challenge which some of us must take up.

4. Food

To reduce food miles, all food should be locally procured, except salt which may have to be imported from outside. Perishables like fruits and vegetables should be produced within the local area.

Organic home and terrace vegetable gardening is gaining popularity in many cities. Here too Kerala has achieved major success.

5. Health and Education

India has a very poor record in these fields. Urban health has deteriorated to unprecedented levels. We are breathing poison, drinking poison and eating poison. The last is mainly due to the junk food sold in packets and served in restaurants. They all are characterised by HFSS - high fat, salt and sugar. In education some states have a better record. But privatisation of education is ruining people and children. Some NGOs have done exemplary work in these areas and the Delhi government also appears to have done some very good work.

6. Employment Generation and Entrepreneurship

New green entrepreneurship and employment opportunities are coming up; such as jobs related to rain water harvesting, waste processing and composting, home gardening resources, bicycle stands and bicycle repair and maintenance shops, markets for organic and green local products, sale, maintenance and repairs of solar cookers, water heaters and solar panels, etc. The main aim is that at the end of 10 years everyone will be earning their livelihood through green jobs. Here is a challenge for almost everyone to take up. All of you can take initiative in one of these fields and change your own life and inspire others to do the same.

However, concurrently we must organise 'awareness building activities' by conducting talks, film shows, local surveys which have provocative questions that can push people to think. The aim is to identify and create a cadre of local youth leadership to lead the movement in the community.

Local Response in Rural Areas: Ecological Village

The Crisis of Rural India

This crisis can be summarised thus: Some 80% rural households, peasants and non-peasants are in debt. Their agricultural work does not pay them enough to repay their debts. Most people are indebted to 'arthias' and not to banks. Most borrowings are for urea, marriages, rituals related to deaths and births in the family. Why are framers and villagers in debt? The main reason is the introduction of the green revolution and milk schemes. There are many names to it: Commercialisation of agriculture, Development or Capitalist penetration in agriculture etc. Whatever the name, it has three well known results:

1. Increase in production and wealth, 2. Increase in disparity. The rich get much richer whereas the poor may earn more money than before, but they also fall into greater debt 3. Increase in Ecological degradation.

Since the green revolution and white (milk) revolution requires a lot of cash inputs, the producers have to sell their products. So a lot of agriculture at present comprises non food crops. Cotton, sugar cane, tobacco and jute are traditional cash crops. New cash crops have been added like soya (raw material for oil cakes for cattle, mainly exported to Iran), and maize (mainly for poultry industry), flowers (mainly for export to cities) and special grass for feeding the milch cattle for supplying milk to the chilling plants of the milk federations. Area under crops, area under irrigation and total production has increased in a big way at the cost of forests and grasslands.

All this has generated enormous wealth and money in rural areas. This has led to consumerism which has increased expenses of rural people enormously. Rural people are trying to follow the role model of urban people - English medium education, motor cycles, smart phones, non-local intoxicants. It has also created

new problems, such as health issues, both physical and mental. Green revolution poisons air, water and food. Consuming them both at the farming level (spraying of pesticides) and breathing, drinking and eating them creates health problems. Increased mechanisation of agriculture and mechanisation of transport have made people unhealthy and their medical expenses have gone up enormously. Stress due to debts leads to alcoholism, quarrels, depression and other mental health problems. Suicides are increasing due to debts and mental health issues.

Green revolution is also worsening the health of the soil and leading to general ecological degradation of the rural areas. As the area under agriculture increases, the area under forest and commons and grass land decreases. Excessive water consumption by crops has led to depletion of lakes and ground water to dangerous levels. Poor landless labourers suffer more because they depend on commons and forests partially.

Family ties are broken and individualisation has increased. Cooperation among villagers has decreased. Since the water below one's own land is considered a private property, a person digging a deeper bore well deprives neighbours their water. This in turn has led to constant tensions and quarrels, sometimes even violence.

What is Happening

These problems are well known and many people are addressing them. For example PARI (People's Archives of Rural India) is a leading media organisation documenting and reporting on these issues. Many individuals are reporting positive initiatives taken by rural people and organisations. Journals and outlets like Countercurrents (Bharat Dogra), Vikalp Sangam (Baba Mayaram) and Better India, regularly carry these articles. Those interested in getting involved with rural transition initiatives should follow these reports.

The main alternatives being pursued are organic and natural farming which includes waste management in the form of composting and water management. There are several good NGOs who have taken initiatives in health and education. Some of them work on multiple issues like 1. Education and environment, 2 health, education and organic farming, education and elimination of child labour. Some like Deccan Development Society (DDS) in Telangana have done pioneering work in food security by introducing Public Distribution System (PDS) based on local procurement. One initiative in Wardha built a school vegetable garden and produced a very good book. Many organisations are involved in awareness and leadership development programmes. In Karnataka NREGA unions have won Panchayat elections and are in a position to intervene in rural development programmes.

Often the government has helped in these activities through local administrations. More recently the government at a policy level has taken a big initiative in terms of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by 193 members of U. N. General Assembly and it came into effect on 1 January 2016. Government of India has written to the Chief Secretaries of different States. These ‘Theme Papers’ are signed by the Secretaries of various central government ministries and solicit a pious resolution to work in a coordinated fashion. The theme papers have titles like ‘Poverty Free and Enhanced Livelihood Village’, ‘Healthy Village’, ‘Child friendly Village’, ‘Water Sufficient Village’, ‘Clean and Green Village’ and so on. Like all government programme, these are ‘enabling instruments’ and their success or failure depends upon specific local administrations and people’s movements of the region.

The Role of People’s Movement and Pandemic

Recognition of the negative fallouts of the evils of “development” began in the early seventies, in the wake of revolutionary

movements that started in India in the late 60s. One of the earliest was the Silent Valley Movement in the Palakkad district of Kerala. It began in 1973 to save the Silent Valley Reserve Forest from being flooded by a hydroelectric project. Since then there have been movements in practically every state in India. For example, Koel Karo movements in Jharkhand, Narmada Bachao Andolan spread over three states, Niamgiri movement in Odisha, and Save Western Ghats which also was spread over several states, to name a few. While in most cases the movements ‘failed’ to achieve their goals, they transformed millions of people in ways that drastically altered their attitude towards ‘development’. It is this groundswell that helped NGOs, the organic farming movement and even the government to start the above mentioned activities. Another small but significant movement is the community based conservation of endangered animals. Saving Pelicans, Vultures, Storks and Cranes have seen remarkable involvement.

During the three months of the first official lockdown during the pandemic, all of us learned an important lesson. In a real crisis, when the government just gives up, it is ordinary people who join hands to take care of themselves and even strangers. While there was indeed a lot of suffering, the people from all walks of life showed tremendous resilience. And Nature recovered at a speed that surprised even the experts. So if and when capitalism collapses, and it seems that we are in the middle of it, there are actually a lot of positive things to look forward to!

Concluding Remarks

I would like to conclude with an appeal to all of you. It is an emergency and we should give it the highest priority in our personal life. I suggest that you should take up a programme of converting your own locality into a Transition Town. Ideal places to start will be the small planned urban communities like university campuses

and industrial town ships. Many universities have implemented a few such programmes – waste management (Vellore) Fossil fuel free transport (IIT Kharagpur). While you can start with a few concrete programmes, I suggest that you treat it holistically and aim at converting your campus into a Transition Town.

In rural areas the two progressive groups are the school and MNREGA unions. In the following pages there are articles about school initiatives and work in rural areas. In Karnataka some MNREGA unions have won elections. So they can control what projects MNREGA will take up and how to implement them. Many concepts of Transition Town outlined above fall within their programme.

Notes

1. *This is the complete text of the talk that was delivered under the auspices of the Vivekananda Chair, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala, on 27th May, 2023.*
2. This article is essentially an updated version of my booklet, *Kabira Khada Bazar Mein: Call for Local Action in the Wake of Global Emergency* (2019, <https://archive.org/details/kabira-khada-bazaar-mein>)
3. Part I, ‘Global Emergency and End of Modern Technology and Alternatives’, of this article is mainly taken from my article, ‘Questioning Technological Determinism – II’ 11/09/2022, <https://countercurrents.org/2022/09/questioning-technological-determinism-ii/?swcfpc=1>.
4. For defining permaculture I have used material from ‘New Agriculture: A Permaculture Point of View’ by Venkat (2012, Hyderabad, Permanent Green/ Manchi Pustakam.
5. For material on Transition Town I have mainly depended on Wikipedia.

May 2023

Appendix

My Kinwat Report

Vinayak V. V.

(After the publication of my book, 'Regaining Paradise: towards a fossil fuel free society', in 2009, I created a small group in a block level town called Kinwat, where we experimented something like 'Transition Town'. At that time we had not heard of Transition Town. This is a report from our local leader. - Vijayendra)

I came to Kinwat in August 2009. Kinwat is a Taluk town of Nanded district in the Marathwada region of Maharashtra. My parents stay in Nanded. I wanted to be away from my parents but not too far. My main aims in life at that time were:

1. To work for communal harmony.
2. To work in the area of alternative energy, and
3. To work in organic farming.

I discussed this with my friend Viju (Vijayendra) and we decided on the following plan:

1. To move to a taluk town in Nanded district.
2. To live in a Muslim locality and work with children.
3. To use solar cooker and other alternative fuel chulhas and market them.

4. To do some vegetable gardening in the courtyard of the house I live.

I must mention here that since I am an albino, I cannot work for long hours in the sun. It was one of the factors why we chose a city and not an organic farm in rural areas.

This report covers my stay at Kinwat for nearly two years. At the beginning I must say, looking back, I have got far more success in my plans than I could have visualized. Almost in every field I touched I got some success. I also went abroad to Palestine via Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and Egypt. This widened my world view, gave me enormous confidence and increased my credibility in the Muslim community.

Stay in a Muslim locality

Since My house owner and my room partner both were Muslim, I got a good access to the community. I participated in various functions. In marriages and post marriage functions eating with them (including beef) made a good bond. Various activities with children in the mohalla wiped away my misconceptions about the community. The trip to Palestine increased my prestige among my neighbours and they regarded me as a very good friend.

Alternate energy

Using solar cooker, charcoal stove for cooking and using a bicycle played an important role in making an image. They gave a good earning too. Developing a cycle mixer/grinder was an achievement. It showed that ideas are worth practicable. We got an order to supply 119 charcoal cookers. This year we are getting an order to supply 400 cookers. While we are making some profits, the more important fact is that we are creating a demand and market for eco friendly products. The products are reaching villages around Kinwat town where there is real need.

Rain water harvesting

In this field we got an enormous response. We made rainwater harvest structure in 9 houses. We developed the entire technique ourselves by reading books and the internet. This gave us a lot of confidence. Since we got a good earning, all the friends got confidence that the 'green' jobs are possible. This year we are offered a contract to build some 60 structures for the agriculture department.

Kitchen garden

The idea of kitchen garden combines availability of fresh organic vegetables, urban waste management by composting the biodegradable waste. It took very long and much efforts to get a piece of household plot which is not in use for developing urban vegetable garden. But finally I got a very good one. Neighbours are helping in cleaning and fencing and we will get good start in this monsoon. This cooperation is also helping to rebuild the community through joint efforts. Meanwhile collection and circulation of local seeds of vegetables in small packets got good response in last year.

Trip to Palestine

This trip was called Asia to Gaza and was organized by several groups from Indonesia and India. I was fortunate to be included in it. It was my first foreign trip and it made a big impression on me and I learnt a lot of things. I should write a long article about it but here I will mention only one incident. We visited Tehran University and the hosts explained our mission to the students. Later in an informal chat with one student I asked him who his role model was. He promptly replied, 'You!' I was absolutely bowled over.

It also exposed me to world politics, taught me about

Islamophobia and it helped me to understand the stand point of strengthening the marginalized people socially and economically. If somebody had told me two years ago that I have a Hindu upper caste mentality I would not have understood. Today I know what it means. The trip also gave me a wide acceptance in the Muslim community in the town.

Interaction with a wide variety of communities and classes in the town

Due to my various activities and the trip to Gaza I earned the affection from a good number of people in almost every community of the town. I think this was the biggest achievement in the last two years.

My personal growth

Today all my caste/religious baggage is off. I can interact with members of any community on an equal basis. I am much more confident in everything I do it now.

P. S.

Recently a kitten has adopted me and is teaching me how to rebuild communities by visiting the neighbours unannounced.

We Are Part of the Problem

Ecological Degradation and Us

Usha Rao

(This article explains why it is so difficult for us, particularly urban people to follow the green path in our lives. There is a need to recognise this and move away from our present life, step by step to a greener alternative.)

The way we are organised today – economically, socially, politically and culturally, is designed to cause greater ecological destruction. There is no way that we can continue like this and still expect to leave the earth as a habitable place for the coming generations.

Economically and socially, we are constructed as individuals and familial economic units. These economic identities at the individual and family level are very debilitating for an ecologically sustainable existence. Economics dictates that we maximise our economic returns and practically every decision we make seems to be overwhelmingly governed by economic considerations only.

Socially we live in nuclear households and much of our life is determined and governed by it. This has drastically impoverished the quality of living. If there are many people of different age groups, different capacities, different interests, in one unit then life is richer and the individual load for sustaining the unit is also

less. Right now each person is struggling and keeping super busy all the time to maintain the family status quo. Our capacity to reach more people with what we can give and share is also reduced. Our access to good things that get generated by 'others' energies is cut off. This would not be the case and there would be sufficient time and energy and leisure if say the number of households and establishments went down to twenty percent of what they are now. It is absurd that each nuclear household also keeps itself provided to host five or ten other people (nearly double its requirements). So much of over-providing! And all of it is at critical ecological and social costs and at the cost of a richer quality of life.

This pattern of life rules out the wholesomeness that can be achieved by taking all aspects into consideration and with appropriate weightage. All our decisions are at the cost of well-being of larger society and like in a vicious circle, our own well-being also gets jeopardised.

The money we earn and the manner in which we get it is part of a system. In a society where inequity is increasing in huge proportions, obviously what we are getting is also what someone else is not getting. When having too much coexists with too much wanting, there is social pollution which poisons the existence of the haves and the have-nots alike. This poison cuts the possibility of any meaningful action. In a sense, whatever we have which is more than an equitable share of the world's wealth and goodies is poison contaminating a humane existence.

As civilisation has progressed, we have acquired a very negative attitude towards manual work. This is precisely what would have kept us healthy. So our own snooty choice of non-manual work leaves us with no scope for a healthy existence at the personal and physical level. Socially, it has corrupted the work culture.

Actually in a healthy society physical work will be seen as

collectively meaningful and gratifying and it will generate well-being for all. It will include the joy of making something good along with many others. There is no pressure on the individual and our needs are met by joyous collective action. Much unlike our current jobs where everyone is isolated, this collective work also has a natural corollary in collective leisure. The kind of storytelling one has seen historically in folklore, folk dances and music, either do not happen in our current situation or happens in a very contrived fashion and does not flow naturally.

If what we are doing is not part of an ecology conserving culture, then every act of ours is ecologically destructive. In that sense, all the jobs we are doing, which are so important for us, with which we identify ourselves, put our whole lives into and make a lot of money out of; seen from an ecological perspective, are serious mistakes and some, perhaps, are even criminal. Every bit that we are doing is adding so much to the already precarious situation that we are now facing.

There is something totally false about economics, in the sense that the way things are monetised and valued are not in direct proportion to our well-being. Clean air and pure water are all critical for our well-being but individually or collectively, as a society, we do not invest any of our resources for this.

For example, our schools do not make us aware of water bodies around us, do not equip us to maintain our water table, do not train us to refrain from doing anything that will degrade, destroy or pollute. They do not train us to monitor the pollution levels of our soil, our water, our air which should be imperative if we are to keep healthy.

If we mean to live as ecological citizens of the ecological web, then these are perhaps the first things that we need to learn. A deep understanding of our ecology should inform every act of ours.

Over the years, land has become a commodity, which ends in

the hands of the one who has more money. Since all of economics is skewed with irrationally high wages for some work and irrationally low wages for some other work; those who are buying land do not have the physical capacity or know-how to tend the land and those who have the physical capacity and know-how to tend the land are caught in the social pollution of aping consumerist lifestyle and take to mining the soil and polluting it with chemicals and pesticides in order to make big money to be able to consume like the urban rich. In essence, we are organised in such a way that the land cannot be nourished and tended as it should be.

While land is being held with individuals and families and whatever tending happens within that paradigm, doesn't make room for the truth that land, soil, water, biodiversity are commons and can be tended best only as such, that is, only as commons. Only when we tend these as commons, is when we look at each other as valuable human resource, essential to our collective well-being. As of now, we are divided very deeply along lines of caste, class, gender, community, religion etc. All this doesn't allow us to function with a sense of common (resources). It is indisputable that we can live ecologically only if we revel in being part of the collective web and feel the aptness of doing only that which will be good for everyone and also feel just as good about not doing anything which will detract from the collective well-being. There is a need to look at freedom in the sense of being free to be able to follow this fundamental principle.

School Education during Transition Times

Usha Rao

Where are we today?

We have all grown up in times when there appeared to be a great abundance of resources. We have grown up with the feeling that there is plenty more where it came from — be it water, be it gas for fuel, be it petrol for transport, and so on. And we are constantly in the mode of continuing to expand our needs without any felt need to reflect on ‘how appropriate it is’ or even to think whether there is more to all this. Even the most poor and frugal — just to be able to survive in the current culture — consume a lot more than our forefathers did. We must bear in mind that our very thoughts and worldview, which will be the basis from which our action springs, is rooted in this roller-coaster destructive culture.

We have become used to getting many things at the flick of a switch, at the turn of a key, or at the click of a button. Our needs — physical, emotional and social — are extremely scattered. We are rarely relating to what is immediately around us. We do most of our relating with people who are located far away. We need things to be transported from far off to meet our daily needs. We do not even consider if we really need these things and whether

they are good for us or the people who are producing them and marketing them to us. We have no awareness of how those things reach us. We remain unaware that electricity — something we cannot imagine living without — may be coming to us at the cost of the great tragedy of the displacement of millions of people. We do not think of what is happening to the entire farming community that provides us our daily food. As to the people with whom we share this earth and by whose efforts we are sustained, we do not connect with them at all.

We have been schooled to alienate ourselves from our families, our communities and our land. To what end? Only to be caught in a narrow economic trap in which we all slave for a section of society that charts out this path of destruction. We have foregone our space for functioning responsibly in lieu of the salaried jobs that consume our lives, our space to live and our ability to function as part of a caring and sharing community. In effect, our vision has been reduced to a picture of ourselves — a selfie — filling up our minds, with only ‘Me’ existing, to the exclusion of all else!

What should we do about it?

There is much that we can learn from the Warli community, one of the many tribal communities in India which live ecologically sustainable lives. The celebrated Warli paintings give us a glimpse of their worldview, in which each person lives in harmony with all other human beings, as well as with all plants and animals.

Dr. Venkat (1923-2011) was a guru and mentor to many who took up agriculture on ecological principles. If one had a problem in farming or a query on, he had a fairly good answer to it. Never assertive, he like a good scientist, would only state what was probably correct. To the very end he practiced permaculture in his little home garden.

I would like to share some ideas of Dr. Venkat that are important

to this discussion and mark an important starting point in our quest for sustainability. To quote, “If humans do have a destiny, a natural destiny, it is to sustain life on this planet. If this be so, then our need is a renaissance in agriculture, through nursing a robust peasantry which will restore the losses of quality and health of our soils, the health of our plants and animals, and the health of humans and all other non-human forms of life. The health of all these is a single connected chain. Loss of a single link will result in the loss of the chain itself.” (‘On A Perspective for Renaissance of Agriculture’ by Venkat, A presentation made on 14-02-2003 – Hyderabad, India.)

The health of soils is the foundation for the health of all forms of life. If this is central to our planning for livelihoods and human resources, then what are the implications? Doing this would require that most people live a community - based grounded existence. This means that we must reject jobs provided by someone far away and refuse to be drawn into an alienated existence. It would require that wherever we live, we do so deeply connected to the people around us and to the natural resources of air, water, soil fertility, biodiversity of flora and fauna, and a community of people rich in skills and capacities of nurturing, building, using and living by their available set of natural resources.

Our first task then is to collectively tend and nurture our people and our natural resources.

Local Action

We would need to work out what our ideal unit of action would be. In rural areas, a watershed makes a good connected unit. In a city we would have to work it out. A municipal ward can, perhaps work as a primary functional unit.

Each and every person who is the least bit serious about this has to ground herself, root herself in a community. This is needed

to gather knowledge, understanding, capacity, strength and motivation, and for positioning oneself to address the converging crises of failing politics, depletion of mineral resources and the alarming state of our natural resources. Depleted and poisoned soils would need to be nursed back; dangerously receding water tables would have to be rejuvenated. It is possible to address these issues and bring back a state of abundance if we organise ourselves to do so.

Human Resources

The other area we need to work on is to train and nurture the right kind of human resources. We need to be people who belong to the place, take care of it, and live with it, as part of it, while also nurturing others to play the same role. By place I mean a physical space, the people it contains and all that is happening there. We would need to start a process of community self-education, beginning with ourselves.

School as a Hub for Transition

Schools should become the hub for Transition. The first Transition Town originated when a school permaculture teacher set a project for students to plan for a fossil fuel-free life in their town and how to move step by step, year by year, from the current heavy dependence on fossil fuels.

This would mean a sea change in the way schools function. Most of the school's activities should be devoted to transition. Schools would need to be neighbourhood schools with a great degree of integration between the school and the community.

In the initial phase, the school must conduct a series of local surveys about the status of resources, their use and abuse and their sustainability, and what we as a community are doing with our natural resources. This information should be presented to

the local community on a regular basis and should also be brought out as a regular newsletter. This would help us to be informed and to build the capacity to address the problems that confront us. This would make for the initial phase of Transition work. Done well, it should lead to a series of activities and the formation of many groups working on different aspects of Transition.

This would be unlike existing curricula where knowledge generated somewhere far away is studied for academic requirements and interest and does not entail any action. When school is a Transition Hub, knowledge — about our community and its resources, situations, problems and strengths, becomes important and will organically flow into action. Instead of knowledge for individual achievement, it would be for exercising our capacities and building them for collective well - being. Teachers and children would actually be learning together and learning things which are significant for their lives. School and community would be deeply connected. School as a Hub for Transition would have to cover the entire neighbourhood population without bias.

What will we find?

We will find that our space for acting responsibly has been undercut by centralised structures. We will first need to create the ground to have space for functioning in a responsible manner. We will find that our problems are collective and can only be solved collectively. We will find that individually cornering resources is destructive and a pointless waste of energy. We will find that we need to move towards local production and local consumption. We will find that we need all our labour to take care of our collective resources and for taking care of our people. In this process, we cannot have the time or mind for doing alienated jobs.

We will find that life can and will feel good, very secure, very light, very enjoyable, very meaningful, when we function as part of a ‘Commons’ directed towards cherishing and nurturing our Commons. In taking care of everything and everybody, we would also be taken care of at the individual level.

A wholly new way of living will emerge, - of genuinely living - where our lives are not consumed by paid jobs and alienated labour.

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Some Thoughts on what Transition would Involve in Rural Areas

Usha Rao

Sometime in 2003 Dr. Venkat presented in a permaculture workshop his piece titled 'On a perspective for Renaissance in Agriculture'. The following paragraph is drawn from that.

'If humans do have a destiny, a natural destiny - it is to sustain life on this planet. If this be so, then our need is a renaissance in agriculture through nursing a robust peasantry which will restore the losses of quality and health of our soils, the health of our plants and animals and the health of humans and all other non-human life forms. The health of all these is a single connected chain. Loss of a single link will result in the loss of the chain itself.'

If this be central to our planning for livelihoods and human resources, then, It is necessary that most people live a community based grounded existence. This means we reject the jobs provided by someone far off and refuse to be drawn to an alienated existence. Wherever we exist, we do so deeply connected to the people around and to the natural resources, of air, water, soil fertility, biodiversity of flora fauna, and community of people connected by and with all of these.

Our first job is to collectively tend and nurture our people and our natural resources. In practical terms a watershed or a ward may work out as a primary functional unit.

Each and every person who is the least bit serious about this has to ground oneself, root oneself in a community. This is needed to gather strength, capacity, understanding and to position ourselves to address the converging crises of failing politics, depletion of mineral resources, alarming state of our natural resources - depleted and poisoned soil that would need to be nursed back, dangerously receding water tables. It is silly that it is very easily possible to address these and bring back a state of abundance if we organise ourselves to do so. The other area we need to work on is to train and nurture the right kind of human resources. Our schools and colleges are messing about with no clue to what we are up against and what capacities are needed to tackle these crises. For all this to happen, we will have to start with owning a place – i.e. to say decide to belong to a place, to take care of it, to live by it, with it, as part of it. And by place I mean physical place and people and all that is happening there.

We will need to start a process of community self-education (including ourselves) - taking stock of what we have, what we have lost, what we are losing, what we need to build... of the resources that belong to us and how best we can set about repairing, restoring, enriching them. This should lead to one or more active groups working on different issues.

It would be good if a group of youth is trained in

- community work
- participatory research and analysis
- watershed management
- making permaculture plans for individual farms and for the whole village or watershed

Moving towards a sustainable future will involve addressing

equity and current level of productive resources and carrying capacity. As the quality and quantity of collective natural resources goes up, carrying capacity and production will also go up and so we can move to a situation of diverse livelihoods and greater incomes.

Each person in the village /panchayat/watershed will do their best only when there is fair distribution of the fruits of their labour. We will need to aim at generating the spirit of – ‘we will all work together and enrich our area and equally share what comes of it’. Unless we work towards such a system we will continue to face greater and debilitating challenges. For example, in dry land and low rainfall areas, to get the water table up would be one of the foremost priorities. To start with, those who are making more money by exploiting ground water will have to realise that they are drawing from the commons rather destructively and will have to refrain (restrained perhaps) from doing that. Apart from water harvesting structures like contour trenches and bunds, check dams etc., it will be required that we plant trees and get them to survive by watering them through the summers of the first 3-4 years. This will become impossible if we leave it for too late. Depletion of ground water is far too serious a situation and we need to act fast. Unless the landless and poor see those in possession of greater resources forgo some of their unethical appropriation of commons and feel confident that thereon they will get a reasonable share of resources and produce, we cannot hope for collective participation which is critical to salvage a livable future for all and to avert extreme situations.

Towards this goal, the present skewed distribution of productive assets and the system that upholds needs to be scrapped and a new system put in place. More land should be reverted from industry to greening. All farmlands should necessarily have tree belts. Land that topographically is suited for water bodies, forests,

grazing lands should be earmarked for them. And we must all accept an income which our current level of productivity of our assets permits.

It is imperative that everyone recognizes that salvaging and tending to commons collectively is our only hope.

We need to move towards local production and consumption. This in some ways would be a good guide for identifying livelihoods and capacity building.

We need a watershed local newspaper that records, informs and binds the citizens of the area together as we move with these tasks, activities and processes. These days whatsapp seems to be what people use most.

The local schools and colleges should be major actors in transition activities and transition activities can themselves constitute most of the education.

Every school should be based on a farm. School farm should have all the major fruit trees growing on them, enough of them for the children to get enough fruits to eat. Children should grow all the vegetables required for their mid-day meal. This is also to learn about growing fertile soil and essential biodiversity. The school farm should also have a minimum set of medicinal plants and children should know of their use.

We need to sequester all our energies for transition and need to keep shedding activities which draw away energies and resources. Much of what we are now doing may need to be trashed.

Most village societies are divided and the divisions have been crystallised. We need some practical sociology projects to happen where these need to be held up and seen for what they are doing to our society. Some of the ecological challenges we face may ease this because we need each other to do our salvaging otherwise we are lost. Our problems are collective ones and these can be solved only collectively.

Many aspects need close scrutiny and consideration -

Caste

Village level activities

Work culture over the decades

Gendered existence

Suicides in the village

Push factors for youth wanting to go out

Aged people in the village

People with handicaps

Leisure activities in the village

Folk songs, stories, drama, dance...

Exchanges need to shift from being money based to barter and sharing.

We need to keep track of every person in the village and ensure their well - being.

Humans tend to think of things as static and unchanging and live in response to that. Fact is that our actions contribute to keeping things unchanging. Everything is changeable including us.

If I see myself as part of a collective then I can also see comprehensively in the sense that I may not be able to do something about an issue but someone in the collective surely can.

There are some things that have to be held in mind till the occasion arises and then one or somebody in the collective can do something about it. On the other hand, some aspects may work out over the next few generations. We could begin working on it now with great urgency because this is what we should have done generations ago.

Transition from the Present to an Economy of Permanence

Shreekumar

We see all around us signs of converging crises. There is unacceptable and unprecedented economic inequality. Discrimination in various forms and sectarian violence not only persist, but are in fact on the rise in many parts of the world. The economy is on the verge of collapse as a result of relentless exploitation of natural resources. Pollution of air, water and soil, erosion of soil and loss of soil fertility, receding water tables, loss of biodiversity and our continued dependence on fast-depleting reserves of non-renewable resources are warnings of an imminent collapse. Climate change has reached a point of an emergency. At the individual level, a very large number of people experience poverty, hunger, malnutrition, insecurity of employment and alienated nature of work. The distress we experience collectively and majority of us, individually, are not unconnected. They have their roots in the kind of society we have built. Though we are heading for collapse of a global civilisation, an event unprecedented in history, the conflicting interests we have developed prevent us from uniting in a collective effort to solve the problem. Humanity is steeped in conflict and is also in conflict

with the rest of Nature.

The damage we have caused to our environment and the depletion of the resources of the planet are consequences of the fact that humanity has conducted its affairs in an exploitative manner. We can't solve the problem by persisting with the attitude that caused it. We need to look beyond technological fixes. A fundamental change in our ethic and our relationship with Nature is needed.

How have we arrived at this situation? We are all participating in an economy that has as its driving force, profit. Since exploitation is more profitable than doing business in a sustainable manner, exploitation is inevitable in the absence of a deterrent. The deterrent can be in the form of ethics, laws or societal pressure. No such deterrent exists as of now. Technology has given us enormous power to exploit. Our ability to exploit increased enormously after the Industrial Revolution. With so much power, not tempered by responsibility and empathy, exploitation within human society and exploitation of the rest of Nature continues unabated. By and large, we try to maximise profit at the individual level and increase Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at the systemic level. We have built an economy that demands perpetual growth with little regard to the fact that the planet has a finite capacity for regeneration.

The access to large reserves of non-renewable resources including concentrated sources of energy and the technology to harness them gave us an opportunity to increase production and consumption far in excess of sustainable limits for a period very short in the history of even our own species. As trade became globalised, the purpose of trade relentlessly shifted from meeting our basic needs to increasing consumption. Though our economy outgrew, or overshot, the sustainable limit decades ago, we continued to achieve growth using non-renewable resources. We

became addicted to the comforts and convenience obtained through profligate use of resources. No other species increases its individual resource use with every passing generation.

That we have succeeded in achieving growth in the economy even after overshooting the sustainable limit does not imply that our problem lies in the future when non - renewable resources will have been exhausted. A lot of ecosystem services which ought to be available for free have now to be produced artificially and hence are available only to those who can pay for them. A simple example is water which is a basic need of all living beings. If clean water is available as an ecosystem service, we do not need to purify it artificially. Comfortable living conditions are another example. For the poor people who cannot pay for artificially produced services replacing ecosystem services, the problem is in the present. There are other reasons to establish that sustainability and equity are not separate issues. Products produced by eco-friendly processes are more expensive than those produced without any regard to resource use and impact on the environment. Thus, eco-friendly products are beyond the reach of the poor who are the majority. The rich who can afford eco-friendly products are actually the beneficiaries of the inequality arising from the process of concentration of wealth in an economy powered by fossil fuels. Exploitation within human society and exploitation of Nature go hand - in - hand.

Can we make a transition to an economy of permanence? What do we mean by permanence? The natural changes in the environment and the web of life take place slowly on evolutionary timescales. Human beings, having gained access to concentrated sources of energy, have accelerated the change and caused mass extinction of other species and endangered their own survival. We use the word permanent in the sense of not causing changes in the environment too fast, for our own good. We can solve the

problem only if we address the root cause instead of managing the symptoms.

Scientists have identified nine parameters called planetary boundaries which must be kept within safe limits. We have already passed safe limits with respect to three of them, namely biosphere integrity (biodiversity), biogeochemical flows (of nitrogen and phosphorous used in artificial fertilisers) and novel chemical entities (chemical entities not produced by natural processes). We are alarmingly close to passing safe limits with respect to climate change and land-use change. The danger from atmospheric aerosol loading is not yet quantified. Climate change has received a lot of attention though it is one of the several symptoms of unsustainability because it lends itself to mathematical modelling and scientists have said unequivocally that we are in an emergency.

J. C. Kumarappa, an economist who worked with Gandhi, in his book, “Economy of Permanence”, broadly classifies our economic activities into five categories. They are, in decreasing order of violence and increasing order of benevolence, Parasitic Economy, Predatory Economy, Economy of Enterprise, Economy of Gregation and Economy of Service. In the Parasitic Economy, one destroys the source from which one draws one’s sustenance. In the Predatory Economy, one draws one’s needs from a source without contributing to it. In the Economy of Enterprise, one does productive work and enjoys the fruits of one’s labour. In the Economy of Gregation, one works not just for one’s own sake but in cooperation with others for the benefit of all. In the Economy of Service, one does good without any expectation of personal gain. In our society, most of us do some work in order to earn the money with which we buy goods and services to fulfil our needs. At first sight, it appears that we are participating in an economy of enterprise. However, our economy on the whole is exploiting the planet and destroying its ability to

sustain life. We are thus participating in a parasitic economy. We have no other way to survive than to collectively build an economy that is not parasitic. Unless we consciously become part of an economy of gregation, we will continue to contribute to the problem. In order to contribute to the solution, we must find ways to cooperate in building a non-exploitative economy.

A transition to a sustainable economy has the following characteristics:

1. Decentralisation of production
2. Localisation of the economy
3. Transition to the use of renewable materials and energy
4. Decentralisation and democratisation of decision-making
5. Move from urban areas to rural areas
6. Move to agriculture from other sectors of the economy
7. Transition to ecological agriculture
8. Obtain from plant sources products to replace those currently produced from petrochemicals
9. Allow degraded forests to regenerate

Government policies must be designed to deter exploitation rather than to facilitate it in pursuit of growth in the GDP. The deterrent can be in the form of prohibition or penal taxes that can offer a level playing field to those who employ eco-friendly methods of production using fewer resources and employing more people. We need a period of *degrowth* during which the economy must shrink without loss of livelihoods. During this phase we must repair, to the extent possible the damage we have already done to the environment. This requires a shift of working population to agriculture and a transformation of agriculture. It must be recognised that during the period of rapid growth in the economy, the working population shifted to sectors of the economy which gained more from extraction even as agriculture also became extractive. The present social organisation as well as

distribution of population, both geographically and across professions evolved according to the demands of an extractive economy. It needs to be redistributed according to the logic of sustainability.

Agriculture must be practised not just for producing food, but also for arresting the damage already done and repair the ecosystem. It must rebuild soil fertility, stop further erosion of soil, restore water security and prevent further loss of biodiversity. People must be trained in ecological agriculture. In fact we need armies of trainers. Farming must produce food, fodder, fuel, timber and a host of other materials for which we have become dependent on petroleum-based industrial products. We need land reforms that will facilitate pooling of land and land-use planning considering micro-watersheds as units.

Decentralisation of production involves production using local resources mainly for local consumption. It involves gradually reducing our dependence on non-renewable resources. It also means a smaller scale of production, involving smaller capital and employing more people. This process naturally leads to a redistribution of wealth. Mining of natural resources must not be in the private sector. Non-renewable resources must not be used for mindless consumption, but must be employed in building the infrastructure for a sustainable economy. Anything that is consumed in large quantities must not travel long distances. Trade must be aimed at meeting the needs of all and not on increasing consumption.

While a gradual transition to a non-exploitative economy is theoretically possible, a gradual redistribution of wealth is not possible given the present level of concentration of wealth. Hence all wealth above a certain limit must be nationalised and used for public purposes. There must be an upper limit on individual incomes so that no one can have a lifestyle that is unsustainable

and be a bad aspirational model for others. Governments must frame policies that encourage formation of cooperatives.

A strong political will is needed to decentralise administration and the economy. While a strong demand for decentralisation is needed, activists must strive to create the conditions for such a transition by building a culture of local cooperation. In this context, we can give a new meaning to Ambedkar's call, "Educate, agitate and organise". We need to educate the people about the situation we are in and agitate them enough to motivate them to organise themselves for constructive work. Thus far, all victories for liberal values were earned during a regime of growth. It will be a challenge to preserve these hard-earned victories in a regime of degrowth.

Resources

Books

1. **Regaining Paradise: Towards a Fossil Fuel Free Society** by **T. Vijayendra, 2009, Publication Collective, Rs. 120/-**
<https://ecologise.in/downloads/>
<https://www.scribd.com/document/359579529/Regaining-Paradise-towards-a-fossil-fuel-free-society-by-T-Vijayendra-2009>

Global warming and peak oil have posed the imminent crisis in capitalism globally. However, most political activists appear to be unaware of the extent, the inter connectedness and the immediacy of the crisis. There seems to be a vague but definite collective subconscious that all is not well, and that, the system is breaking down. Every crisis of capitalism opens the possibility of far reaching changes. The transition though which it would happen, could be ordered or chaotic. Those societies that are prepared with an alternative have better chances of an ordered transition. Today, Cuba is best prepared for such a transition.

2. **Cuba: Road to a fossil fuel free society by T. Vijayendra, 2012 and 2016, Ecologise Hyderabad, Rs. 10/-**
<https://www.scribd.com/document/390240986/Cuba-Without-Isms#>
 This little booklet tells the story of Cuba in its ‘Special period’ (1989-1995) when Cuba faced the end of Soviet support and had a crisis similar to today’s world crisis. How Cuba met this crisis successfully is an inspiration all.

3. **Kabira Khada Bazar Mein: Call for Local Action in the Wake of Global Emergency by T. Vijayendra, 2019**
<https://archive.org/details/kabira-khada-bazaar-mein>
 This is a booklet for call for action to youths to get involved in transition efforts on an emergency basis.

4. **Vijutopias: Dreams of Local Future by T.Vijayendra, 2020, Sangatya, Rs. 100/-**
<https://www.scribd.com/document/641920720/VIJUTOPIAS-by-T-Vijayendra#>
 These are twelve short stories about Transition in India.

5. **Credible Fantasies by T. Vijayendra, 2023, Ecologise Hyderabad, Rs. 50/-**
<https://www.scribd.com/document/657887815/Credible-Fantasies-by-T-Vijayendra>
 These are eight short stories about Green Jobs in India.

6. **Patrick Geddes in India, 1947, London and Bradford, Perry Lund Humphries, Reprinted 2007, Select Books, Bangalore.**
<https://www.indianculture.gov.in/flipbook/68572>
 Patrick Geddes was a pioneer in people centric urban planning

and regional planning. ‘Town planning is not mere place-planning, nor even work-planning. If it is to be successful it must be folk-planning.’ Patrick Geddes was in India during 1915-1919 and he carried out some 60 town planning exercises. Many of our ideas in TT movement can be found in his writings and works.

7. **The *Third Curve: The End of Growth* as we know it by Mansoor Khan, 2012**

<https://ecologise.in/downloads/>

The *Third Curve* by Mansoor Khan is a book, which gives a deep insight into the financial markets and the economic status of the world. It will help the readers realize and identify the concept of sustainable energy and its importance in transforming the state of world economy.

8. **Eco-Socialism or Eco-Capitalism? A Critical Analysis of Humanity’s Fundamental Choices by Saral Sarkar, Orient Blackswan, 2000, 296 pages.**

<https://www.google.co.in/search?tbo=p&tbm=bks&q=inauthor:%22Sarkar%22>

This major work explores some of the most important questions facing humanity. The author looks to a fundamentally different future; one in which the very notion of progress is differently conceived. This urgently needed vision of a sustainable good society must have some historical continuity with the great socialist traditions of justice and popular participation.

9. **Radical Ecological Democracy: A Path Forward for India and Beyond by Ashish Kothari, July 2014, Kalpavriksh.**

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264235413_Radical_Ecological_Democracy_A_Path_Forward_for_India_and_Beyond

Grassroots and conceptual movements in India and many other countries are showing the path to a different future, a Radical Ecological Democracy in which sustainability, equity, justice are ensured through direct democracy.

10. The Simpler Way by Ted Trainer, Simplicity Institute, PDF

<http://simplicityinstitute.org>

<http://www.simplicityinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/LimitsOfTechnologyTrainer.pdf>

Ted Trainer is an Australian scholar-activist who for decades has been defending and practising an ‘eco-anarchist’ perspective he describes as the Simpler Way. His vision is of a world where self-governing communities live materially simple but sufficient lives, in harmony with ecological limits. This anthology contains some of Trainer’s most insightful and provocative essays, covering all aspects of his challenging but inspiring vision of a just and sustainable society. Topics include a radical critique of consumer-capitalism, the need for fundamental system change, and a transition theory based on building a new society within the shell of the old.

11. Death for Gaia: Ecocide and the Righteous Assassins by Samuel Alexander and Peter Burdon

<http://simplicitycollective.com/death-for-gaia-ecocide-and-the-righteous-assassins>

(I can provide a pdf copy of the book.)

Death for Gaia is a philosophical story about a group of scientists who create and release a biological weapon they

call 'Hemlock 42'. This virus is designed with a single goal in mind to eradicate most of humanity as a means to save of what remains of planetary ecosystems and the declining diversity of species. Less than ten percent of humanity survives the pandemic.

Forty-six years after this momentous disruption, various tribes of the After World have gathered, in this period of fragile but renewed stability to discuss the justifiability of the acts that led to the Great Die-Off. Professor Duruk Senjen, the sole surviving activist who released Hemlock-42, has been called to defend his acts and face judgement.

Various accusers represent all the political hues of the present society who are facing this ecological crisis. They include capitalist, Marxist, eco socialists and anarchists. It is a very good reader about the present political scenario.

Websites

1. Frontier Weekly Magazine on social political issues

<https://www.frontierweekly.com>

It is a 56-year-old weekly journal both in Print media and online. It is run very frugally. It has articles, news, links relating to the world, India & West Bengal. It is probably the most important left wing weekly printed journal left in the World.

2. Ecologise – The 21st Century's Converging Crises and Alternative Pathways

<https://ecologise.in>

It is not very active, but it is the best storehouse of our concerns. It has got a good search engines also. It has an excellent collection of free download pdf copies of some

of the most important books. Similarly its videos collection is also fairly good.

3. Countercurrents: Online Daily Journal

<https://countercurrents.org/>

It publishes reports, analyses, experiences, academic debates and campaigns which take a side – the Side of the People!

It was founded by journalist Binu Mathew, and published its first article on 27 March 2002. During the first 16 years of its existence, Countercurrents.org published over 50,000 articles, fact-finding reports, research papers and news items on major social issues around the world. Countercurrents.org was awarded the 2018 Solidarity Media award by Solidarity Youth Movement in Kerala. It has an international audience of hundreds of thousands.

4. Vikalp Sangam

<https://vikalpsangam.org>

It is a very good and large website and has podcasts and videos also. It is also on Face book and Twitter. There is also a Hindi version. It is run by an organisation called Kalpvriksha. It covers local movements very well.

5. Down to Earth

<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/>

Down to Earth is a fortnightly magazine focused on politics of environment and development, published in New Delhi, India. The Centre for Science and Environment assists in the production of the magazine. It has a circulation of 70,000 and it is India's most popular environmental magazine. CSE also publishes books; hand books and conducts training programmes.

6. The Better India

<https://www.thebetterindia.com>

It is supposed to be ‘World’s largest positive and solutions-based content driven impact platform for stories of change, inspiration, hope, resilience & *more.*’ My impression is that the stories are mainly about ‘green capitalism’ and the site appears to be inspired by the World Economic Forum.

Videos

We have divided this section according to topics in the Transition movement. These groups are: 1. Transition 2. Air 3. Water 4. Waste Management 5. Food and Agriculture 6. Education 7. Health 8. Energy and 9. Community Based Wildlife Conservation.

I have given links to all the videos. But it is not necessary. In You Tube Search, in most cases just writing the name of the film will give access to the film.

I. TRANSITION

These films take a holistic view and involve a country (Cuba) and villages in India – both mainstream villages and a tribal village. Finally there is a utopian film by Kurosawa: Village of watermills.

1. **The Power of Community: How Cuba Survived Peak Oil** (2006)

(USA/2006/53 minutes/ Auto-generated English subtitles)

Director: Faith Morgan

The Power Of Community: How Cuba Survived Peak Oil (2006) | Official Full Documentary - YouTube

When Cuba lost access to Soviet oil in the early 1990s, the country faced an immediate crisis – feeding the population – and an ongoing challenge: how to create a new low-energy

society. This film tells the story of the Cuban people's hardship, ingenuity, and triumph over sudden adversity – through cooperation, conservation, and community.

2. **Swaraj in Hiware Bazar**

(India/2011/23 minutes/Official English subtitles)

Director: Manish Sisodia.

Swaraj in Hiware Bazar - YouTube

In 1989, the drought-prone village of Hiware Bazar in Ahmednagar District of Maharashtra took a decision that would change their village forever – they would decide their own fate. Through mutual cooperation and self-governance, the people of Hiware Bazar transformed their village – ecologically, socially, economically and politically – into what could be considered a model transition village today.

3. **Village of the Watermills**

(Japan/13:35 minutes/Official English subtitles)

Director: Akira Kurosawa

Akira Kurosawa | Dreams Film | The village of the Watermills - YouTube

A young man finds himself entering a peaceful, stream-laden village. The traveller meets an old, wise man (he tells the young man that he is 103 years old) who is fixing a broken watermill wheel. The elder explains that the people of his village decided long ago to forsake the polluting influence of modern technology and return to a happier, cleaner era of society. They have chosen spiritual health over convenience, and the traveller is surprised but intrigued by this notion.

II. AIR

Air is of course essential to life. We can't even live for 3 minutes without breathing clean air. The biggest problem of air is air pollution caused by fossil fuel vehicles in big cities.

1. **35 Indian Cities in Top 50 of the World's Most Polluted Cities**

(India/2022/2:45 minutes) <https://www.youtube.com> › *watch*

For the fourth consecutive year, Delhi has been named the most polluted capital in the world. According to the World Air Quality Report 2021 - India Times - 24-Mar-2022.

And the only answer is to reduce them. And a simple and revolutionary answer is to reduce the size of the city so that we don't need them! This is the idea behind a 15 minute town which is explained in a few minutes in this small video.

2. **What is a '15-minute city'?**

(YouTube / C40 Cities/ 15-Jul-2020/ 1:52 minutes) <https://youtu.be/McGyONofhi4>

We can make city life more accessible, sustainable & enjoyable by creating "15-minute cities".

Bicycle represents the complimentary answer to the 15-minute town. It not only is not polluting, it also is very healthy for humans to ride a bicycle. It also historically helped women's liberation!

3. **Chakori (Bicycle) – Short Film (1992)**

(India/ 1992/30.04 Minutes)

Director: Sumitra Bhavé and Sunil Sukhthankar

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CV9oT8kkzxE&t=839s>

This is a classic short film made by the veteran film makers about an Indian village girl, Seeta, trying to ride a bicycle. The film is a classic interpretation of the obstacles women have to face in India. Though classic, this film with its symbolic yet realistic language and presentation is a treat for all film makers and is still relevant today.

III. WATER

1. Explained: India's Water Crisis

(DataBaaz / YouTube/ India/ 2021/3:18 Minute)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zEen97ZuPfg>

India's Water Crisis: Every year 0.2 million people in India die due to unsafe water while 600 million Indians face acute water shortage in their daily lives. Niti Ayog projected that demand will double by 2028. Meanwhile, the amount of water available per person for daily needs is shrinking. Therefore, the United Nations classified India as water-stressed.

2. How You Can Save Rainwater with This Method | Anuj Ramatri - An EcoFreak

(India, 2020, 5.31 Minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0R1vR-MOixY>

The rainwater harvesting system needs to be designed in a way that it does not occupy large space for collection and recharge system. A few techniques of rooftop rainwater harvesting in urban and rural areas are elaborated in this film.

3. India's Water Revolution #2: The Biggest Permaculture Project with the Paani Foundation

(Andrew Millison/ 2020/11:25 Minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jDMnbeW3F8A>

Permaculture instructor Andrew Millison journeys to India

to film the epic work of the Paani Foundation's Water Cup Competition. We tour the village of Velu, in Maharashtra, who won the 2016 competition to install the most amount of water harvesting structures in a 45 day period. Guided by Paani Foundation's chief advisor, Dr. Avinash Pol, we take a ride through the village watershed and see a massive water diversion and groundwater recharge project that has dramatically improved the lives, economy, ecology and stability of this village. Although the Paani Foundation doesn't use the word Permaculture to describe what they do, we examine why their work has turned into the biggest Permaculture project on Earth! Subscribe to this channel to watch the whole "India's Water Revolution" series as it comes out: <https://www.youtube.com/user/amilliso...>

4. India's Water Revolution #3: From Poverty to Permaculture with DRCSC

(Andrew Millison/18 Jun 2020/ 13.15 Minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtHullfyJao>

Permaculture instructor Andrew Millison journeys to India to film the epic work of the Development Research Communication and Services Centre (DRCSC) in the state of West Bengal. We tour multiple villages in the tribal district of Purulia, and see the life changing work that DRCSC is doing on water security, food security, poverty alleviation and ecosystem restoration. Guided by DRCSC founder Ardhendu Chatterjee, we visit the work and see the effects of water storage and groundwater restoration projects that are enabling the poorest of the poor to stay on their lands and thrive instead of migrating far away for low wage work. Subscribe to this channel to watch the whole "India's Water Revolution" series as it comes out: <https://www.youtube.com/user/>

amilliso... Show links: DRCS: <http://drcsc.org/>

IV. WASTE MANAGEMENT

1. Garbage to Gold

(UNICEF, India/18.02 minutes/English audio without subtitles)

https://youtu.be/yFBw_qxbOLO

Vellore's Christian Medical College sparked a change in the city of Vellore that would develop into a stellar model for sustainable waste management. The college began an initiative on a small scale to manage waste by segregating and making use of every last "waste" product: a "zero waste movement". Due to the success of this initiative, several other municipalities in Vellore joined in. This film takes us through Vellore's entire waste management process, whose success was ensured by the support and participation of all the people of Vellore and their remarkable workforce.

2. Eco India: A community in Gurgaon

(Eco India/ 2020/ 9:53 Minutes)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yFBw_qxbOLO&t=204s

Every week, Eco India brings you stories that inspire. This film shows how to collect and compost their organic waste together as a community.

3. How to make GOLD at home?

(Vani Murthy/ 2022/ 11:32 Minutes)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yFBw_qxbOLO&t=204s

In this video, we talk to Vani Murthy to understand why composting.

4. Twin Pit Toilet

(India, 2017, 3.06 Minutes)

Director: Amit Kumar

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I7kIzNXD5Kc>

District Administration, Burhanpur Madhya Pradesh.

It is a short animation film which explains the two pit toilet system.

5. Twin Pit Technology Campaign

(India, PIB, 2018, 1.06 Minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dFpF2RK-gO4>

Eminent actor, Shri Akshay Kumar, launched an advertisement campaign for the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) in the capital. The campaign was launched at a Collectors Convention for Toilet Technology organized in the capital. The campaign focuses on promoting the twin pit toilet technology in rural India, and also features actor, Ms Bhumi Pednekar along with Shri Kumar. Courtesy: Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin.

V. FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

1. Onwards to Food Sovereignty - The alternative Public Distribution System of the DDS

(Deccan Development Society/ 2013/ 34: 27 Minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z7HHhZwX9pg>

The video first briefly describes the social and ecological impacts of the Green Revolution in India. Green Revolution agriculture has largely bypassed the needs of rural people and their complex, risk-prone and diverse environments in the dry lands of India, which represents 65% of the country's arable land and where the majority of the poor and excluded live. India's Public Distribution System (PDS) has made it

possible to re-distribute Green Revolution rice and wheat from well-endowed areas to food deficit regions. However, the video shows how PDS cereals like rice and wheat have displaced dry land farmers from their agriculture, undermined the nutrition and food security of poorer communities, marginalised women farmers, robbed farmers of markets for their cereals (sorghum and millets), and eroded biodiversity important for food, farming and ecosystem resilience.

The video highlights the outcomes of action research designed to rebuild village livelihood assets and local food sovereignty by setting up a decentralised, locally controlled and managed Public Distribution System (PDS) in a network of 77 villages in the dry lands of Andhra Pradesh. This alternative PDS is known as the Community Grain Fund by villagers. It is a remarkable innovation by voluntary associations of women farmers (*sanghams*) in Medak District. The Community Grain Fund is based on:

- Locally-grown dry land cereals (millets and sorghum) and the biodiversity rich farming systems of which they are a part
- Local storage using indigenous knowledge and technologies, with women and village level organisations co-ordinating activities
- Local distribution by women's *sanghams*, who allocate food grains according to their own criteria of poverty and well-being, taking affirmative action to support the most vulnerable and hungry in their communities
- Local adaptive management and decentralised governance that is better suited to sustaining the dynamic and complex ecology of dry land environments. The impacts of the alternative PDS on state government thinking and policy are presented at the end of this video film.

2. **Kalasi Kattuga - Working Together.mp4**

(M. V. Foundation NGO/2012/ 9: 12 Minutes)

Director: Pankaj Gupta, Executive Producer: T. Vijayendra
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1zb_S77R4A

M. V. Foundation has worked in Ranaga Reddy District near Hyderabad, Telangana with marginal farmers. It is a rururban region and the men folks are migrating to Hyderabad and women work as labourers since without inputs land does not produce enough. Esther Subhashini of M. V. Foundation organised women into Sanghas and introduce organic farming on a collective basis. Within a few years, they stopped working as labourers on others farms, men folk returned and children began to go to school.

3. **Dr Venkat: From soil rises life**

India, Aranya Permaculture Resources, 2014, 27.07 Minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWbK1tZ8Ibk&t=11s>

Dr Venkat (1923-2011) India's Permaculture pioneer. He utilized the Permaculture teachings of Bill Mollison and traditional Indian practices to create Permaculture concepts tailored to the Indian subcontinent. "If life depends upon soil, unless you see soil as a living thing you cannot get life out of it. You can't get life out of a non-living thing."

4. **Me the Change: Meet Deepika Kundaji, a Woman Who Birthed a Forest**

(The Quint/2022/ 10: 20 Minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iOHTUnpv2lQ>

On International Women's Day, we celebrate Deepika Kundaji, a woman who created an 8 acre forest out of a dry arid pebbled land in Tamil Nadu's Auroville. With no external help or labour, she and her husband created a forest in the

‘Pebble Garden.’ They have travelled across the country educating farmers on how traditional farming methods can help boost production of crops that tackle climate change.

5. From Poverty to Permaculture with DRCSC

(Andrew Millison/ 2020/ 13:16 Minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtHullfyJao>

Permaculture instructor Andrew Millison journeys to India to film the epic work of the Development Research Communication and Services.

6. Permaculture for Wastelands at Aranya Farm - YouTube

(Andrew Millison/ 2020/14:03 Minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KhoV-vBAyFI>

Permaculture instructor Andrew Millison journeys to India to film the epic work at Aranya Farm in the state of Telangana. We tour the twenty-year-old farm that was established on bare bedrock, and now boasts 11.5 acres of permaculture food forests, which has restored the groundwater table to plentiful abundance. Guided by Aranya’s directors Narsanna and Padma Koppula, we visit the surrounding area where the landless poor are now farming their own lands and turning bedrock into bounty using permaculture principles. This video clearly proves that wastelands can be transformed into verdant and productive agricultural systems, improving the lives of many.

VI. EDUCATION

1. Puvvidham- A School outside the Classroom

(Puvvidham/ Tamil with Eng Subtitles/2018/57min/Colour)

Production, Direction and Editing: Balamurali Krishnan

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZKEGUVR3mA>

Synopsis: Puvudham translates from Tamil to love for the earth. Puvudham, a rural primary school has been providing education to the children of Farmers, Migrating Labourers and the under - privileged for the last 18 years in the Nagarkoodal area of Dharmapuri district, Tamil Nadu, India. Puvudham's education is based on Mahatma Gandhiji's Nai Talim Curriculum with the spiritual principle which states that "knowledge and work are not separate". The documentary showcases Puvudham where Children do organic farming as an everyday school activity, manages school on their own without much help from the adults. The film captures the essence of how learning happens outside the classroom at Puvudham and the spontaneous expressions of children towards exams and gender roles.

2. **Marudam Farm School**

(Srishti Films/Vikalp Sangam Series/4 Jan 2018/6: 43 Minutes)

<https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-q=Marudam+Farm+School%2C+Thiruvannamalai%3A+Organic+farming+at+an+alternative+school.%2Bvideo#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:d599599a,vid:hi0iEM1yw5s>

We are a small, Alternative, holistic, environmental, multi-cultural, equality-minded, community based, Farm School. As of 2020, Marudam is a host to some 130 children between the ages of 4 and 16 years; about 30 teachers and staff in different capacity; roughly 20 residents; numerous dogs, cats, cows, chickens; and a rich, diverse and ever growing wild - life population of all kind. Located on an organic farm and spread over 12 acres, **land** is something we take rather seriously, care for, and constantly engage with as a rich, real-life, educational resource, integral to the learning process.

The same considerations inform the way we build: as simple, environmentally conscious and cost-effective as we manage under the government regulations, with artistic expression and a rustic, close to earth aesthetic.

3. Kanavu - The Dream

(Yucel Films/ Villains of Winter/ MookNayak Pictures/16 Sept 2021/ 7: 03 Minutes))

Director: Nebish Benson

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WPAYI1WD4Dw>

Presenting Kanavu - The Dream Award Winning Short Film Directed by Nebish Benson. What started as a journey with friends to explore the beautiful grounds and stories of Kanavu, transcended into a beautiful dream of ours. And now, we're exhilarated to share this dream with you.

VII. HEALTH

1. CRHP Jamkhed

(India/2010/13.15 minutes)

Director: Amanda De Luis and Edwin Toone.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k3cXVNCg04s>

The Comprehensive Rural Health Project Jamkhed has been working among India's rural poor and marginalized since 1970. Working directly at grass root levels through mobilization of community groups, CRHP has demonstrated that long lasting positive transformation is achievable through relatively simple yet far reaching interventions. This film was written, directed, and produced by Amanda De Luis and Edwin Toone with help from all the staff of CRHP.

2. Child In Need Institute - CINI An introduction by Sir Mark Tully

(India/3:24 Minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H1rYle0Stvg>

CINI is a leading Non-Government Organization of India founded in Kolkata in 1974. CINI has been working to achieve sustainable development among poor communities living in the city of Kolkata, South 24 Parganas and surrounding area. For more information on Child In Need Institute - CINI, please see <http://www.cini-india.org>

3. **Jaipur Foot + Doctor PK Sethi + Artificial Leg**

(The Lallantop/India/6:27 minutes.)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IrJirwIzK_0&t=208s

Dr. P. K. Sethi invented the world famous Jaipur leg that lightens life of millions of handicapped people around the world. He invented world's cheapest artificial leg.

4. **Shaheed Hospital: The Story of a Revolution**

(VideoVolunteers/India/2017/10:16 minutes.)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2caOJz_IVeU

Born of a workers' struggle, Shaheed Hospital has been providing affordable and respectful care to Chhattisgarh's rural population for 34 years now. The hospital was inaugurated in 1983 by Lahar Singh and Halal Khor, a labourer and a farmer, symbolizing worker - peasant unity in the struggle for rights. It opened with 16 beds and an outdoor dispensary. Since then, many things have changed and many remain the same. Niyogi was assassinated by a group of industrialists in 1991; both Dr. Sen and Dr. Jana have been arrested and subsequently released on charges of sedition and in a case related to police firing, respectively. In the meantime, the hospital has grown to have three storeys and is offering different kinds of specialised care, and even today,

working on the principle of providing affordable and respectful care.

5. Tribal Health Initiative – Sittilingi

(Kalpavriksh and Srishti Films/India/2019/4:42 minutes.)

Vikalp Sangam: <http://vikalpsangam.org/Kalpavriksh>:
<https://kalpavriksh.org/> Srishti School of Design: <http://srishti.ac.in/>

Executive Producers: Geetha Narayanan, Ashish Kothari & Sanjay Barnela

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-JDpodN7SQ>

Tribal Health Initiative was started in 1992 by Dr. Regi George and Dr. Lalitha Regi. Today we have expanded into a team of over 70 highly trained people, working to improve the lives of the tribal communities living in the Sittilingi valley and surrounding hills through a variety of programs in health care, community health, farming, and craftwork. <https://www.tribalhealth.org/>

6. Guna Mukhi: Journey towards Health Rights

(Jagruti /India/ 2013/9: 52 minutes)

Director: Vijaya Kumar

Produced by: Jagruti (<http://www.jagruti.org>)

Language: Kannada with English subtitles.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luYbXH0AdXo>

GUNA MUKHI, reconstructs the narrative of how a poor dalit women's collective in a small village in Belgaum district, Karnataka, India defied class, caste and gender barriers and rose up against the failing public health system. The film draws from the rich and first hand experiences of the village women who, with the support of various village level peoples' organizations and activists, stake claim to their health

entitlements. The film concludes by asserting the importance of people's struggles in creating a functional, responsive, people-centric health care system and in the larger context ensuring that the State does not abdicate its duties and responsibilities towards its citizens.

7. **Palliative Care, Kerala**

(India/2016/12:23 mins)

Language: Malayalam with English sub titles

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JBYS3h2EEg8>

This is a documentary on the Pain and Palliative care unit of Medical College, Kozhikode.

VIII. ENERGY

1. **Understanding Peak Oil**

(Scott McLean/2018/3.05 Minutes)

Director: Scott McLean

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHKp5vF_VoE

Quick 3-minute video visually explaining Peak Oil, what oil is used for, and what the future may hold with regards to Peak Oil. This is the culmination of my year-long thesis project looking at how Graphic Design can help communicate a complex topic such as Peak Oil.

2. **Micro-hydro Electric Fish Ladder in Hampi, India**

(Oregon State University Ecampus/Permaculture Principles/
11 Jan 2019/ 2: 15 Minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXbIAKwpS0k>

Andrew Millison tours us on the integration of small scale electricity generation with habitat enhancement in this artful micro-hydro system at an eco-resort near Hampi, in South India. <http://www.hampisboulders.com/>. This video is part

of Oregon State University's Online Permaculture Design Course.

3. Brahma Kumaris - India One Solar Thermal Power Project

(Animation Dept. HQ Brahma Kumaris/6 May 2015/5 Minutes.)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sizTt_7PEJs

It is a one mega watt solar thermal power station constructed on 35 acres of land near Umrani village, Abu road, Rajasthan. The project was jointly executed by Brhama Kumaris and India Care, Berlin, Germany. It was fabricated near the village in a workshop employing 200 persons.

IX. COMMUNITY-BASED WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

1. Hargila

(Cornell Lab of Ornithology Conservation Media Program/2021/ 28.07 Minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yeYV4UjsdxM>

Wildlife biologist Purnima Devi Barman now globally known as the STORK SISTER, has led one of the most unique conservation success stories in the world, with the reversal of a species' from persecution and the brink of extinction, to being revered as a national identity. This is because of the thoughtful, empathetic and creative inclusion of people as the stewards of the Greater Adjutant. A mother of two, Purnima Devi Barman has worked ceaselessly since 2008 to protect the breeding colony of the Greater Adjutant *Leptoptilos dubius*. Over fifteen years Purnima's work has led to an eight-fold increase in the local Adjutant population. In collaboration with Dr. Barman and the NGO Aaranyak, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology collected the first

comprehensive natural history video coverage of the Greater Adjutant in 2016 and 2019 to inspire local and international support for Greater Adjutant conservation and the communities involved. The film “Hargila” is a result of that work.

2. **India: Elephants in My Backyard | Witness**

(Al Jazeera English/9 Aug 2020/ 25.07 Minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TKAU8bmu9eI&list=PLft2K8sE6pgiR OBpCBin7sQcMgfKU9EFd&index=9>
Elephant habitats across India are shrinking at an alarming rate, leading to conflict with local residents. In the southern region of Hassan, the conflict has been particularly intense. But accountant-turned-conservationist Vinod Krishnan is part of a team, led by Dr Anand Kumar that is pioneering a radically new approach to deal with the conflict based on strategies of co-existence. If successful, they could help revolutionise the way India deals with one of its most urgent and complex conservation challenges.

3. **The Sacred Grove**

Inside a forest protected for generations: Sacred groves and cave paintings near New Delhi

(Mongabay India/2021/9.02 Minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L3Pke26moss&t=88s>
Fighting for the last remaining green lungs of the Delhi - NCR comes at a price, and local conservationist Sunil Harsana knows that. It takes deep love and passion for the wild. Mangar Bani is a 250 - hectare forest on the Delhi - Haryana border untouched by time. Sunil and his team of young conservationists and birders are the guardians of Mangar Bani.

In 2021, the archaeology department of Haryana identified that the cave paintings in the forests could have possibly originated from the Palaeolithic period. Conservationists hope the new archaeological findings will help the community get more secure legal protection for their sacred grove.

4. **The Story of Budheswar**

(India/ Documentary/Bodo/ 2022/ 16.01 Minutes)

Director: Bishal Swargiary

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6WVVaBNWq5M>

It's a documentary film in the 'Bodo' language which shows the story of Budheswar Boro. Budheswar Boro went from being an illegal hunter who lost an arm while hunting to being a protector. This little documentary attempts to demonstrate how humans have the power to alter nature fundamentally.

5. **Bishnoi: Guardians of the Chinkara**

(India/RoundGlass Sustain/ 2020/ 4.35 Minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=niHvT0DT6d4&t=120s>

Meet the shy, graceful chinkara or the Indian gazelle that springs across the Thar. Also, meet its guardian angels — the Bishnoi community of Rajasthan, a special breed of people who watch over and protect everything that thrives in the hot and challenging desert.

6. **Kokkarebellur**

(WWF-India/2017/ 5.22 Minutes)

Music: Ocean Mandolin _ Al Lethbridge (PRS)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qm41gyKM—0>

More about Kokkarebellur - the ecosystem model managed

and owned by the community! Besides living alongside birds for several centuries, the people of this village have also come together to rejuvenate many smaller wetlands in and around the village - resulting in more winged visitors like the painted stork and the spot-billed pelican.

7. The Cranes of Khichan Rajasthan India — from “Deserts: Living in Extremes”

(2020, 5.03 Minutes)

Director: Gilda Tabarez

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4lzJQYOjP9Q&t=193s>

This is a beautiful story about conservation. The Jains of India pay particular respect to all forms of life and are devoted to good works. In the 1970s, one Jain family in the village of Khichan, Rajasthan, began to feed wild birds in their own backyard. Among these birds were beautiful Demoiselle cranes flying south from China and Mongolia in winter. Many of the Jains moved to the city to work but sent back money to be sure the cranes were fed. This act of kindness produced a world class natural history phenomenon.

About The Authors

T. Vijayendra (1943 -) was born in Mysore, grew up in Indore and went to IIT Kharagpur to get a B. Tech. in Electronics (1966). After a year's stint at the Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics, Kolkata, he got drawn into the whirlwind politics of the late 60s.

Since then, he has led his life as a political-social activist. His brief for himself is the education of Left-wing cadres and so he almost exclusively publishes in the Left wing journal *Frontier*, published from Kolkata. In the last few years, he has also been publishing regularly in the online journal *Countercurrents.org*. For the last ten years, he has been active in the field of 'Peak Oil' and is a founder member of Peak Oil India and Ecologise. Since 2015 he has been involved in Ecologise! Camps and in 2016 he initiated Ecologise Hyderabad. In 2017 he spent a year celebrating the Bicentenary of the Bicycle. Vijayendra has been a 'dedicated' cyclist all his life, meaning, he neither took a driving license nor did he ever drive a fossil fuel-based vehicle.

He divides his time between organic farms at several places in India, watching birds and writing fiction and Hyderabad. He has published a book dealing with resource depletion, three books of

essays, two collections of short stories, a novella, an autobiography, a children's science fiction about the history of the bicycle and several booklets. His booklet, *Kabira Khada Bazar Mein: Call for Local Action in the Wake of Global Emergency* has been translated into Kannada, Bengali and Marathi and is the basic text for the emerging Transition Networks in these language regions. His book *Vijutopias: Dreams of Local Future* is a set of twelve stories about possible transition scenarios in India. It is an entertaining book full of hope and energy in these dismal times. A recent book, *Credible Fantasies* is a book of fun short stories about possible green Jobs in India.

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Usha Rao (1961-) was born in Khadki, a cantonment town near Pune. She did her schooling in Kendriya Vidyalaya; studied Mathematics Hons. at Calcutta, and has a post graduate diploma in rural management from Institute of Rural management, Anand, Gujrat. For the last 18 years she has been working on land, initially in Telangana and now since the last 6 years in Chikkaballapur, Karnataka.

She delights in playing tag with nature at making soil come alive and to get soil onto a growing fertility cycle. She is seriously worried that we are not making a society that can keep that cycle going.

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Shreekumar (1959 -) grew up in Udupi and studied chemical engineering in Karnataka Regional Engineering College, presently known as the National Institute of Technology Karnataka. He worked for about six years for an oil company before deciding to move to academia. He joined the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore to study for a master's degree and went on to do PhD. Towards the end of his studies at IISc he got involved in communal harmony activities and later became part of a students' group that was interested in questions of development.

The group had some interaction with the Narmada Bachao Andolan and he spent a few months in the Narmada Valley. Thereafter he taught for four years at KREC. He quit his job in 2000 and went to Sampoorna Kranti Vidyalaya (SKV), Vedchhi, Gujarat. Since then he hasn't taken a full time job. He worked for a year (2001-2002) in the Centre for the Application of Science and Technology to Rural Areas (ASTRA) at IISc. Since 2000 he has considered himself a part of the SKV community, where he stayed for more than three years. He returned to Udupi in August 2004 in order to be close to his aging parents but he has been spending about three months every year in Vedchhi. His primary concern is to find a lifestyle close to his ideal - non-exploitative of nature and the rest of society - without isolating himself from society and contributing at least something to both nature and society.

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Transition Town Movement

Local Action in the Wake of Global Emergency and Collapse

Transition town is an initiative or model that refers to grassroots community projects. The aim is to increase self-sufficiency to reduce the potential effects of peak oil, climate destruction, and economic instability. This is done through re-localization strategies, especially around food production and energy consumption.

This book describes the nature of the global emergency and the origin of the Transition Town movement. It then focuses on the possibilities of Transition India and the issues involved. Finally there is a section on resources – books, websites and videos that readers may find useful.

It is a call and a guide for youth to become active in meeting this emergency that they are facing! The time to act is now!

SANGATYA