

Self-Employment towards Social, Economic and Ecological Harmony.

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The world is passing through an unprecedented environmental problem coupled with the problem of inequality. 80% of the world's wealth has been accumulated in the hands of a few individuals. Severe inequality has posed a major threat to the civilization not because the force behind it is brutal in its method of functioning, but because of the aggressive spirit of the business ethics. One has to look forward to explore the possibility of the ethics and adventures of the other society, which is, according to Rabindranath Tagore, the *atmiya samaj* or the fraternal society. It is true, we shall never get back to the society of the bygone days. But we can make use of some of its potentials. The bane which we are confronted with is an outcome of the power and spirit of the business society. To make use of the relevant and selective power and spirit of the other society is indispensable.

Within the next few couple of decades, according to the scientists, nearly forty percent of the world's agricultural land shall go off beyond the ambit of agriculture. It is mostly because of environmental degradations, industrialization and ever-expansive housing projects. While conventional – i.e., the chemical agriculture – would lead to about 50% to 100% decrease in the rate of agricultural production, the world population during this very time would see an increase of about two hundred crores, at least. As a result, the world would be confronted with a terrible, and an unthought-of-before, food crisis. Gene-technology and the corporate group behind it would be cent-percent successful in resolving this crisis – that is not certainly the absolute and only acceptable opinion. For this reason both Central and State Governments are ready to keep space for the natural-technology of agriculture. In their view, natural agriculture too has a positive role to play in solution of the food crisis, in removal of poverty and in liberation from exploitation. Just providing wholesome food is not its sole utility.

However, going towards natural farming is not so easy a matter. The social environment, conducive to such farming has withered away. The whole society has become so disarrayed that it can hardly make a success story with natural farming. Expulsion of man from his natural and cultural context has meant deprivation from his sources of spiritual sustenance which cannot be compensated by material possessions. Human relations have come to be polluted by the compulsion to judge everything against an impersonal, utilitarian standard. When the scale of this disarray is considered together with the disarray in the natural world, it becomes amply clear that the path currently traversed by mankind is not sustainable. One has to look for a better way of life.

It is well known that natural agriculture can be profitable on the whole only through multi-lateral agriculture, through diversification of production. Agriculture in India is carried on primarily through family management. This form of management may be more or less efficient for a singular variety of agriculture production. Multi-lateral or diversified productivity in agriculture calls for an expected level of intensive co-operation amongst the agricultural community – at least in one part, a passable social system for all to think together and for all to work together.

Return to natural ways of agriculture appears to be inevitable. However, the transformations of the last few decades have meant that such a switch would result in a swift decline in productivity and income in the short term. Even though the long-term outlook is better, the prospect of short-term loss prevents people from taking to natural farming. The transition can be made possible by diverse farming. By resorting to various supplementary plants and crops, fishery and animal husbandry, it is possible to augment the income reasonably. However, the issue of security and the question of establishing a symbiotic relation can be overwhelming in the short term. Any departure from conventional wisdom would attract suspicious attention. Any possibility of success of an experimental path would generate neighbours' envy. Many experiments have to be abandoned because of sabotage.

These hurdles are natural consequences of a piecemeal approach which has been our bane. We would not have been in the present mess if we had realized how interconnected human life is with the lives of other humans and the natural world. Every effort to get out of this mess has to be a part of a holistic approach.

The present article is about a proposal to reclaim our lost greenery in a way that might strengthen village life and complement natural and diverse farming. The basic idea is to extend the system of share-cropping currently existing between land-owners and landless labourers, to mid- and long-term cultivation of diverse nature. The centre-piece of this proposal is shared greenery for all and with full societal participation. In economic terms, this proposal brings current needs and deficiencies together with unutilized or underutilized resources, so that one can expect a decent livelihood in the local community, without having to depend on the outside world for essential items. However, the essence of this proposal lies in the approach, and not merely in the balance sheet. One has to try and work on the root of the present problems, that is, to embrace a sustainable and healthy way of life. The proposed greening initiative can easily combine with other initiatives compatible with this basic goal.

Self-Sustained Green Society

It has been shortly focused in the foregoing analysis that the natural agricultural technology calls for a conducive social technology. Self-Sustained Green Society (SSGS) is that kind of alternative framework for both environmental and agricultural governance. Environmental problem is a global, national and local phenomenon, and it is to be addressed in all the three phases – globally, nationally and locally. In matters of meeting these two problems, work at local level bears much importance. It can make the activity a manageable one and give the achievement a concrete shape. Eventually it can spread naturally, if that might bear any truth and effectiveness. For this, an effective method, which could become wheels for the cart of the movement should be developed in course of exhaustive experimentation.

As we are not good enough at making immediate sacrifices for an abstract benefit in the future, the environmental and agricultural management must be a part of a wholesome holistic and integrated economic activity, which would generate short term gains for all at the time of fulfilling mid- and long-term goals.

The organisation or the institution will take initiative to develop Self-Sustained Green Society in the manner of setting up Self-Help Groups. Whatever is at present decided upon as necessary to be done, may have to be modified and/or expanded. And this may be

necessitated before the process of work starts. Or it may be necessitated comparatively to a greater degree in the process of working it out. But through all these processes of modification one must keep burning the flame of the spirit of this movement. This is that very thrust of involving the one thousand persons out of one thousand in adjacent societies – by virtue of an all-embracing affection and also of an explicit common sense. Primarily, for the activists things that are particularly worth knowing and performing are:-

One: To acquire a general idea about both these two matters – agriculture based on Gene-technology and agriculture based on Natural technology – and to be aware about the potentials and limitations of both.

Two: To devote oneself whole-heartedly to the efforts towards discovering the methodology of overcoming the limitation of Natural Technology. To equip oneself with well-thought out questionnaires for the purpose. It will be found that the best means of overcoming the limitations of agriculture based on Natural Technology is to opt for proper social-cum-spiritual technology of development.

Three: The membership of a Self-Sustained Green Society ought to be limited within five hundred to fifteen hundred. Twenty to thirty members should constitute a working committee or forum. The Society-head or Forum-head will be elected through the genuine consensus of all members. The Forum will be of a two year term. One can be elected only for two terms consecutively. The Forum will have to meet once in every week.

Four: The Forum has to arrange for planting and maintaining, at least, ten, chiefly fruit trees, big or small – by utilizing the little amount of labour or money offered by all members of the society. In water-intensive areas the Forum will also create opportunities for providing members with, at least, ten kg fish per head per year – through fisheries in paddy fields and marshes. But the new born second child of a family will have his/her due share of tree and fish out of the parental quota – the Society/Forum shall by no means provide for it.

Five: In the interest of both horticulture and animal husbandry the chief function of the Forum will be basically the production of fodder and its marketing or arrangement for its exchange.

Six: In the interest of developing the family-managed agriculture the Forum shall take part only in significant matters like arranging for preservation of agricultural products, their processing and marketing operations.

Seven: The Forum shall be pro-active in exploring the multifarious potential of agriculture-centric industry.

Eight: The income or production got from the short-duration and long-duration agriculture in unused and under-used lands will have to be distributed among the land owner, the labourer and the Forum in terms of three-share method. The owner here may be either any particular individual or the government. Following this social system even the landless labourers can get one of the three share of ten big fruit trees initially in exchange for nominal amount of

fees or labour. The forum may also take part in ten-to-fifteen percent short-duration agriculture, and that is just to set an example and also to ensure its own self-supportiveness.

Nine: Safeguarding the local plant-life and animal-species and preservation of seeds will be considered as one of the Forum's duties.

Ten: The Forum will engage ten to twenty labourers, whose means of livelihood should come from the accumulated fund or wealth from small fistful contributions by individuals, in addition to its fund or wealth from its one-share of the three-share earnings.

Eleven: Instead of getting involved in party-politics, the Forum should help in making the government programs effective and meaningful, and in exploring new areas of possibilities. For example, it may add new life to the now-running One-Hundred-Days-Work Programme by utilising the Forum's inherent rhythms creatively and convert it to a 365-day-work.

Twelve: The main objective of the movement is to extend the share-cropping system currently existing in ample cases of short-term agriculture to mid- and long-term ones.

Thirteen: Diversification of agriculture spells a lot of things. Inclusion of diversification in short, mid and long-term agriculture economizes water-use to a great extent in one hand, and facilitates water harvesting by partially reorienting paddy fields, on the other. Following this reorientation long stretch of paddy field would be dotted with pits and higher lands to unravel the huge possibility of fishery and cash crops. Side by side, an efficient management of flood and drought would usher in the "Second Green Revolution." Or more correctly, an Evergreen Revolution.

Fourteen: The existing Social forestry scheme has some good effect on the reserved and restricted forest giving rise to 10% of greenery in most cases. However, it failed to create anything beyond its jurisdiction, which was one of its main objectives. On the contrary, percentage of greenery has decreased by almost 20% in 70% of land outside declared forest zones. And again, it failed to include 99.5% of people living in the villages in the programme for making the country green. Eventually, it has become evident that the existing Social Forestry, which has so far been able to include only .5% of people, has sadly failed to become a *social* one.

Fifteen: Inclusion of all persons living in a village is not so easy a matter. Keeping the problem of management entrepreneurship should be made in the micro level, comprising, say, one hundred people. To ensure the involvement of every individual and so many types of us and them, promotion of a **third factor** is necessary. For this, we have planned to form a forum or a club taking all the persons of a locality as its members. We have named the micro level unit of this forum as **Self-Sustained Green Society**.

Sixteen: All – namely the land owners, the labourers and the SSGS – should achieve a three portion share of the production, which would be settled keeping in view the specific situation.

Seventeen: Since this platform will play a vital role in relation-making and in experimenting its possibility; its mode of formation would appear to be a matter of great concern. The members of the working committee would be elected through consensus. The head of the

platform would be elected or selected in the same manner. Democratic formula of majority-minority method is irrelevant for the purposeful and meaningful involvement of all living in a locality. In a word, religious, casteist or political sectarianism have nothing to do with this sky-kissing as well as down to earth entrepreneurship for the welfare of all, with whom the project would be undertaken.

Eighteen: Efforts are to be made to utilise the potentials of schools, colleges and universities, mandirs, mosques and churches in the making of such a creative movement.

Nineteen: Initially, there should be four sub-committees: A) Fodder sub-Committee [FC] B) Nursery sub-Committee [NC] C) Security sub-Committee [SC]. D) Marketing sub-Committee.

Twenty: Any sponsorship is welcome only when the sponsor becomes a part of the SSGS and the community makes a minimum contribution collected from every individual as fees in form of money or labour or both. Though the contribution of the individual, social or governmental sponsors shall not mean donation but investment for regenerating the beauty of social relationship as capital and explore its endless possibilities.

Twenty one: In order to develop resource material this Forum will go on exploring of establishing and Inter-Disciplinary Applied Research with specialists in different areas of natural and social sciences at the University/Institute level. Thus theoretical research and its application will be integrated more effectively, where the relation between the University/Institutions and the communities of its adjacent areas will be deepened and widened. Universities/institution are “white elephants” - this infamous aspersion shall be made to fling away, eventually.

Twenty two: Today the Corporate Farming is going to devour the Family Farming and make it dysfunctional altogether before its final collapse. We must have to make a way out now, in lieu of declaring an unmatched war against any one. In fact, we are to explore the possibility of a probable, robust two leg walking, taking in one hand the business relationship and protecting Family Farming from all types of atrocities made by the aggressive system of corporate functioning, on the other. For having this done we have to demarcate and designate their area of functioning and correlate them with a vision and let them function with the warp of one system and the weft of the other. And that is, perhaps, inevitable today.

Twenty three: Government or the party in Government and the opposition party may actively participate in the programme, but never try to take an aggressive stance, which may abate the enthusiasm of the civil society and disarray its potential.

Twenty four: Individual enterprise too can add a laudable value in making pro-nature, pro-people businesses to give the self-sustaining system a booster to consolidate.

What would be the effect of this New Movement? If we are allowed to have a dream, it would ultimately give a new shape to the villages of India and, perhaps, it would peacefully bring about major changes in the formation of towns and the cities of this country. And, of course, **transportation-biased** economic activities would get a healthy transformation, keeping space for the desired share of the **transportation- based** economy. Huge details are

there. It must be added that this spirit of cooperation tested in the making of SSGS in the grass root level will, perhaps, get extended to many desired directions – such as: becoming self-reliant, morally awakened, creating the hope of a resurrection of the civil society. In a word, **it would ultimately give birth to another renaissance for the 21st century.** Our humble view is that, if our mother Earth gets the chance to see another renaissance, it must be sheltered in the village-universe even if it may have its starting from the cities. This renaissance can only ensure the stability of the part of our local as well as global civilization, which is continually retreating towards an unprecedented environmental crisis in human history.