11th Nov'22 – Natural Food & Farming Committee - Minutes of Meeting

The Biggest Problem – Too much of packaged & processed food consumption – toxic food that creates sickness - associated garbage – increases pollution of air and water by these unhealthy food companies – too many food miles (large distances between fresh and real food growing places and the public), because the Town and Country planning departments separated towns in which people lived from the country where food is grown – all the ships, planes, trains, trucks, tempos, containers, etc. used to transport are a waste and they use so much of fuel (consumption of non-renewable resources). If food is grown close to where people live, the biggest daily damage and waste of time and labor and resources can be avoided – that is why we (EKC) are designing self-sufficient towns and villages.

1) Foods that we are getting nowadays especially in our cities, too much of it is artificial with too many chemicals, stabilizers, emulsifiers, tasting agents, coloring agents etc. and these foods are all over the place. So what do we do to reduce or stop people from consuming so much artificially processed foods and how do we get them to consume fresh, healthy natural food?

Solutions:

Ranjan – A lot of emphasis on the younger generation. Most of the artificial foods are consumed because it exists and not because people really want to consume that. This also creates a lot of trash that is initially used to package those foods, this trash must be returned to the shop keepers that sell these packaged processed foods and then that trash should be sent back to the distributors/factories. These processed foods are being made available even in the remote places in India. So educate & empower the children of these areas to take responsibility in keeping the area tidy by explaining how such products are destroying the environment and their health and wasting their hard earned money.

Chitra Lal – Reduce wet waste (fruit & veggie peels etc.) by means of composting. This can be placed in the balcony or on the terrace.

Ravi - i just throw my kitchen waste around the plants ..this helps the soil and is eaten by various sizes of animals and immediately exchanged for dung.. most excellent compost.. free of efforts

Darryl – Compost all your wet waste at home. You get earthen compost towers for the home. Take it as an incentive to grow a few flowers or herbs or handy vegetables at home. Up cycle/down cycle/recycle dry waste. As Earth Keepers we should put the most energy and focus at the stopping of garbage generation.

Darshana, 8999495889 – This being a systemic problem, requires a systemic solution. All trash/used packages eventually needs to be sent back to the manufacturers of these packages via the packers & distributors of these packaged foods, sent from the shop keepers that sell them to the people can collect the trash back from the people, it shouldn't have to go to the municipality department.

Shops needs to put up message boards saying, "Please don't ask for garbage", with reference to people asking for plastic bags, because we need to make people understand that plastic is garbage which can be done creatively via films or short videos and shared on social media.

Processed foods being so easily available can't be blamed on the shop keeper, as this too is a systemic problem, the companies have their own R&D team to create/manufacture products and have their own marketing & sales teams that go around to stores and convince shop keepers to sell them. So it is not that people want these products, these products are marketed and sold to people. We need to thoroughly

understand our food systems in a better and organized manner. It all comes down to marketing and selling, this is what people get addicted to by being manipulated into buying processed food. We need to have a large network of educators and educate the people in a fun and exciting way through short videos etc. We need to create a hype around healthy food, make it fancy and beautiful. Look into the Ministry for Women and Children, who had a wonderful 'Amrut Maha Utsav' and had made a wonderful fancy & beautiful poster called 'Manoranjan Ke Sang Poshan', so understanding the psyche of people is important, we need to understand how this is marketed.

Ravi - yes children are our future.. and what they learn they educate around to the whole community!

Meghana – With regards to children and working around raising their awareness about agricultural practices and wrong foods that we consume and also sharing positive experiences with them, it would be much more productive. If we have more organic farming spaces around in cities since children in cities are not exposed to nature or farms, so having these organic agricultural spaces in cities can create such experiences like harvesting/picking up seasonal fresh fruits & veggies, this can be for children and adults, the space can also incorporate cafeterias that serve natural healthy freshly picked foods, these are attractive activities for the whole family to experience.

Darryl – Within cities that are usually congested, certain open areas like parking spaces or a public garden area can house organic markets, but there is not enough space for farms. So through changing certain policies or implementing new ones organic farms can be set up around cities on the outskirts, which this committee will have to advise the Govt. We have to ask our state bodies - why can't they feed people with food grown closer to where they live to solve so many problems that we have already listed. As these concrete cities are just expanding into a bigger congestion, sickness, polluting zone, it is very important to move quickly towards a policy change to stop the expansion of the perimeter of a city and start asking for green food growing zones around it.

Ravi - 20 feet community garden farms are possible in parks..

Outskirts are more difficult for city folk as police work in cahoots with land-mafia and it is easy to be burglared, beaten up or even killed

Darshana – Need to understand what the Govt. has in mind as they would not just stop the expansion of concrete jungles as for them this is a profit making development and is also a source of investment for people, so we would need to shift their perspective to an alternate source of investment. We also need to keep in mind that setting up of new farms around the city would cost the other farmers their livelihood who are already supplying food to the city, so this needs to be looked at holistically, like how can we invest in farming land instead of concrete land, so until we understand and explain the deeper root of the problem, I don't think the Govt. will listen to us.

Train and educate farmers and they should further train and educate other farmers. And the farmers can then sell their produce directly to grocery stores instead of dealing with any middle men.

Ravi - most of farmers livelihood goes into buying fertilisers and machines and seeds etc.. and when crops fail they give up their lives also.. first let them grow their own food.. then show them how organic and natural is cheaper easier and healthier.. slowly

Darryl – We should not be listening to the Govt. anymore, because it is they who have created all of our problems by adopting the various crooked schemes of the capitalists that make them money, but destroy our lives and living spaces. We are making this committee in all 36 states of India, so that the Govt is forced to listen to us and implement the recommendations of our 30+ domain experts in each of these 36 committees. Each of our committee members has more knowledge on the topic that the mister has taken the portfolio of.

We can't be losing out to them on the science of it at least. If people want to invest, let them invest in farmlands around their city and let them invest in healthy food products businesses. We have been fools for too long allowing people to make profits of businesses that destroy our health and the planet. That's why this world is in such a mess. The good people never spoke up and defended the right things that needed to be done, so now we are doing it.

As we create new farms around cities, our earlier farmers from the villages, will lose business. So we have to create many other income avenues for them in their villages – this we have already detailed in our Eco Village Goa document. The farmers will have to produce less and yet they will earn more, so a lot of their labor and time will be saved. We have already adopted the most holistic view in our movement by considering planetary ecology and biology. This high level consideration is the most important. That is how our design makes this Earth habitable by another 3000 years. All other considerations of country policies and state policies and city policies and village policies need to be subordinated to their respective higher level. Because we have missed doing this, we have had hap hazard considerations and development that create health problems and environmental problems on this planet.

Farmers being the poorest working class in the country, how do we make farming profitable? Farmers grow commercial crops with toxic fertilizers and now with Genetically Modified Crops whose seeds are sterile, so they cannot grow into new plants. So this cycle keeps the farmer poor as they need to go back and buy new seeds every season. Most of the time they take loans from the bank and upon not being able to pay back they commit suicide.

Farmers are also producing seedless varieties of fruits and vegetables that make humans sterile in the long run. Our children and adults need to be taught about this and why it is wrong. As a committee we need to advise the Govt to change this policy.

Solution – How do we go about changing the whole system?

Darshana
i) Education – Although may be a very slow process.
ii) Marketing – As GMO companies have huge networks & systems in place for marketing, they have people who go to the farmers and sell it and these companies also lobby with the Govt. So do we have a lobby, do we have a group that will lobby with the Govt., first we need to have solutions, we need to have pilot projects, we need to have one village which is GMO free, garbage free, which implements permaculture or natural farming and then showcase the whole set up, we need to create that system and then go lobby with the Govt, make it profitable for the Govt.
iii) Working with farmers and creating a training center where we'd switch them from animal husbandry to permaculture, we need more people to reach out to farmers. It's not easy to get into the farmer community, so this was done through a gowshala, so this gowshala is the avenue that is helping me reach out to farmers, and now that they have a good idea, they are eager to follow it up. So we need to understand how we can get into the farmer community and show them how to make money.

Ravi - govts kill us.. and laws are impotent really.. ideal is to off-grid from system and localise through borderless like minded family networks like this one!

Darryl – As of today most natural or organic farmers are doing what they can on the ground and so many who have land available are all getting into natural farming, so we are trying to increase the amount of organic farming, we are teaching other people about organic/natural farming, permaculture, food forests and there are experts who are going around teaching farmers as well. This has to expand as a bigger movement. More people have to get into educating more farmers. So more natural farming, more seed saving is the ground work that needs to happen. The next thing is to secure whoever makes natural/organic produce. We need to

create demand and a market for them, a community where people will buy. Some of us in the Earth Keepers movement discussed about creating a website/app to publicize all the local seasonal varieties of heirloom seeds and plants and food for every state and every area in India, to the people and to the farmers as well, so from that people would drop their wrong notions of what they should be eating and instead by consuming more fresh and seasonal foods.

Ravi - we need to remember the desperate crying need to protect the last few remaining pockets of virgin wild jungles left.. before all are gone!

natural farming is about going back to the ideal of doing nothing but gathering.. among uncontrolled mixed diversity of thick native vegetation and fauna.. sharing with all species.. leaving zero footprint

Till we can achieve this we practice small staged steps towards that goal.. it is not about human sustained environments but abkjt nature self-sustained ecosystems

Also do-nothing requires a lot of doing in undoing human damages and prevention of further human damages.. but in the end we can almost totally let go of all doing!

Ranjan – In Delhi, outskirt farms have managed to reach out to people like us, they grow natural (but not certified) food and charge a certain amount (eg: rs.5000 per month) for around or more than 100 kg of produce per month according to your choice and there'd be so much extra that you'd have to share, so that did work out really well. You get food straight to your house and farmers get money directly.

Another person who is the largest supplier of organic food in Delhi (yededo.com), he has hired a single scientist to go to every farm in north India till where he can manage to get deliveries in a few hours. The scientist goes to farms stays there for a few days, offers practical organic solutions to the farmers on how to grow crop and avoid damages, how to regenerate the soil, and then buys from them what they grow they way he tells them to.

Another friend in Bangalore connected farmers directly to the city. Cut out the middle men, Go directly to the farmers and get them to come and sell their produce directly at a space (mandis) set up for them in the city, so they get all the benefits.

Ravi - wonderful.. but i hope govt and mnc.s do not attack these systems? I had met a farmer on the way to mysore.. near malvalli.. 3 member family.. each had their bit of the farm to grow what they liked in their own way.. and once a week they had a stall in the local village where people picked up and paid on faith.. i loved that approach..

6) **Siddharth** – Look at treating the garbage problem in a legal way, as we know how bad it is affecting the planet. As there are many dumping grounds in major cities which begin to stink a lot of times, we need to file RTIs and petitions on completely banning the manufacturing of plastic, considering taking action at the root cause.

Ravi - garbage mafia is one of the biggest and most dangerous.. they may kill over a 40 foot park where they are dumping temlorarily!

Darshana – A Ramdass Kokare an IAS/Police office, in Vengurla had got the shops shut that were selling plastic bags.

Ravi - after ban of thin plastic bags they are using thick plastic bags.. why govt did not shut down the factories.. these are all eyewash gimmicks

Ranjan – In Bir, Himachal Pradesh there was a huge garbage problem as there was no garbage collection happening over there, so everyone burn plastic and all other garbage in the area. A homeopath Dr. Spiro from Greece and his wife single handedly made a video on dioxins and on burning plastics, what dioxins do to you when you breathe them and how they settle on the ground. He then started a plastic garbage collection from nearby villages which got cleaned and dried and stuffed into plastic bottles and with epoxy sealed them and made plastic bricks and used them to construct boundary walls. So this was a good solution till a recycling center was set up.

In Manali people were fined about Rs.1000 for carrying a plastic bag, within one year people stopped using plastic bags.

Ravi - sealed and buried? Not dangerous? Plastic has a discharge! Everyone just passes on the problem and shuts their eyes.. right from people leaving their garbage bags in front of neighbours house, to cities dumping sewage and effluents in lakes that go to farmlands, to the giant plastic island-country floating in the Pacific

One idea was to legally make everyone locally responsible.. manage garbage sewage and source water and vegetables within 1 or 2 km radius!

Chitra Lal – Utilize terrace or balcony space to grow food, creating terrace gardens. Have experts teach people how to set up terrace gardens.

Ravi - roof garden well maintained also can supply not only family's needs but also sell excess at local shops

Ranjan – Pyramid technique of farming, 2 feet x 2 feet area of a pyramid filled with soil that can grow about 50 to 60 plants, which can even be done in a balcony. We can also set up an app to know what our neighbors are growing and the produce can be traded amongst each other. A 4 sided & 4 faced pyramid, the pyramid structure can be made out of bamboo, string and mud and a central channel in the middle through the top where you would put in the compost which would then be absorbed into the soil from the center chamber, there would be different slots made with the bamboo and each slot is like flower plot which grows at an angle/slant, the pyramid should cost about rs.800 to rs.1000.

8) **Darryl** – Problem – Less farm labour – Here in Goa we don’t have enough people from the local area practicing organic farming and we have to hire farmers from out of state and that is what makes it expensive. So the problem is that even children don’t want to get into farming before the money is very less and think it’s not something great to do.

Solution – Educating children right from their schooling days about what food is and how important it is and giving that a better value and how that is such an important profession and giving that profession respect and honor and not just those values but also how to earn money from it. So it’s good that we & others including farmers are working in ways in which the farmer can sell directly and get more produce. This is what was being done at the organic markets here in Goa, where farmers would directly come to the market which was for about 2 or 3 hrs, people & farmers would convene over there. An area has succeeded in organic farming when they can have almost a daily market. Being a farmer I know the produce comes out of the land on a daily basis, shouldn’t be harvesting anything that is too raw and you don’t want to be waiting for something to be over ripe with hardened seeds. What also needs to be taken care of is that in spaces where we have land, we can host these organic markets, where it will be convenient for both the people and the farmers to meet at.

We need to teach the farmers rain water harvesting and how to bring up their water table.

We need to teach farmers 5 layered natural farming model and how to make food forests that are self-propagating and need very less work on a daily basis.

We also need to expand the range of what each farmer grows. We have to teach them multi-cropping and how to also grow exotic oriental vegetables like broccoli, zuchhini, bak choy, baby corn, cherry tomatoes, etc. all these things that people like to put in their daily salads and soups.

We need to teach our farmers how to save heirloom seeds and how to exchange with others across their state and to maintain seed banks.

Ravi - more natural the farming less the labour, simple solution suggested was to plant 1 row in a day.. that way tending and harvesting also can be done 1 row in a day and you dont even need labour?

Education needs to be experiential.. actually farming and eating..

Think of adding cost of medication when sick at older age to the account book and its worth the costs now.. especially when self-grown foods are hundred to thousand times more potent than any medicines!

Water harvesting is most efficient in natural wild undisturbed spongy soil.. maximum storage till bedrock.. minimum loss only through transpiration.. automatic aquifer recharge through plants n trees roots and ants n other small animals tunnels.. great reduction in need for irrigation due to water humidity - and all free of cost.. just by leaving a portion wild and sacred

Ranjan – There are concept stores in Bangalore called Mangalore Stores, only products specific to Mangalore are sold at these stores. Each and every product is homemade (like sweet, snacks, local veggies etc.) and sent to these shops everyday, so nothing is from commercial places or govt involvement. So it is a good idea to encourage stores like these, where local people around in the area make these products using simple ingredients.

Also at an organic store they have a customer that buys their raw ingredients makes ready to eat homemade food and sells it back to the store. Gramin Angadi, dealing with farm based products, they go to various farms outside in a place called mandiya. Stores can suggest this to people, to make something using their raw products and will sell the finished ready to eat product at their store.

Richard D'souza, Whatsapp No. 8420102419 : I'm a social worker, willing to coordinate at an ‘all India’ level since I am in contact with people, especially for connecting farmers with common people to get food grains and for ‘day to day’ requirement of essential goods & items.

Ravi - yes thankyou we need more such network platforms to connect producers and consumers as well as advisers

Devang Patel: We will have to reduce the unnecessary buying of clothes since 93% of cotton supply in India is BT cotton. Bamboo plantation on the border could reduce the influx of chemicals into the farm.

Ravi - also cannabis where allowed in a few states like uttarakhand

Bamboo i personally dont like so much.. seems to be more of a cash crop.. its a grass.. spreads too much if uncontrolled, doesnt allow most other species to grow, hardly a few birds can nest in it, no fruits or flowers and the leaves do not mulch well.. and it drinks a lot of water

Permaculture designers/teachers/practioners:
i) Clea Chandmal, excellent Permaculture teacher from Goa

ii) Melwyn Dsouza, Permaculture Designer in Mumbai whose land can be visited, 9930943420

iii) Bharat Mansata, did a Permaculture Design Certificate course with Bill Mollison in 1987, bharatmansata@yahoo.com, 9967371183

iv) Akash Chourasia, Training in Multi Layer Farming in Sagar, Madhya Pradesh, 9755966275

v) Brig. Sudhir Sawant, sudhirsawant09@gmail.com

vi) Raja Satya, 7995783357Ravi - even caring for 1 plant in a connected diverse ecosystem with much love and appreciation.. will result in a beautiful healthy strong happy nourished plant.. this will cause all interacting beings to grow happier and healthier.. before you know it even if slowly you will notice an love tsunami.. i have seen native shrubs invading acacia auroculiformis invasive trees after a couple of years! Power of love!

Please try.. all it takes is a genuine intention.. all solutions are available!

Om..