

Living sustain-ably Honoring the sacredness of life

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The secret of sustaining life lies in the act of living sustain-ably - the sacred compact with nature that all life on the planet is imbued with. This innate intelligence – ability to live sustain-ably has been gambled with as different modes of ‘progress’ set in motion, especially with the onset of the modernist-post -industrial era.

To live sustain-ably in today’s context has become a difficult task. But it is not impossible. The starting point must be the realization of the deep disconnect engendered by the pursuit of progress, rather what we ascribe to the meaning of progress. Such a pursuit has given us a myopic vision of deeper issues governing life, sustaining life on the planet for billions of years.

The choice is still ours to engage with nature in a way that makes sense to our modern context. The choice is ours to re-shape the consensus reality of an extractive paradigm to a more co-creative paradigm. The choice is ours to co-create a grand re-design that can transmute the current reality using intelligence of nature to a deeper consciousness. Such a choice allows the deeper wisdom of science imbued in nature to blend with traditional wisdoms while fine tuning the already existing practical infrastructure to abide by simple non-extractive processes. We are truly living in the times of grand creation.

As I am writing this article, the phone rang. It was about a business group wanting to discuss Dr. Masaru Emoto’s work* and whether they could use images of the crystals etc for a bottled water company. Business of bottling water, however good the intentions are, has to be viewed seriously in terms of its sustain-ability.

Water – trapped dead in plastic bottles. Water extracted greedily from boreholes deeper and deeper for unsustainable lifestyles. No thought given on regenerating the ever lowering water tables!!!

Fascinating just when I am about to write on Sustain-ability and sacredness of life, I am drawn to think on water. It is no co-incidence that the phone rang just at that time. Something was telling me loud and clear, ‘you cannot write about sacredness of life and living sustain-ably with out focusing on water of life. How true. Without sufficient focus on regenerating, revitalizing the waters of life, we cannot even begin to contemplate the act of living sustain-ably. Thus I had to re-gear the article –to pay attention to bottled water and boreholes in the context of living sustain-ably.

Seldom do we ask when we pick up bottled water for a couple of rand, where do these bottles end up? What happens to these bottles? Where did the water come?

Seldom do we ask – is this water dead or alive...we have forgotten the simple fact that water can be dead. The whole process versus product disconnect is looming large here. The success to win-over a consumer depends on how a company can successfully hid the story of disconnect through major distractions (through suggestive advertisements) about the product itself.

Bottling water in plastics is a serious crime against nature, crime against waters of life. War on water is being waged by multinational bottled water industry.

The disconnect is deeper when one thinks about the role of water so necessary to keep the vital fluids in the body as well as of the waters regenerating the local eco-systems alive.

Given the new ways of defining progress (dead-living, called development, where each one is chasing 'dead-lines' to make a living) we have forgotten how to see the connections between the so many apparently progressive acts of ours causing more damage to the eco-system.

During my travels in India I discovered the pristine Lahul-Spiti area, the high altitude Himalayan plateaus are ravaged by tourism-related water abuse. A tiny little place that preserved its traditions, mainly Buddhist, for thousands of years, managing the harsh environment with appropriate simple systems of sanitations such as long drop toilets and living off with what is locally available has been replaced with demanding tourists meeting whose needs have become primary over and above the eco-system.

Number of hotels and flush toilets has sprung up with no thought how to dispose the sewage. The result is deadly sewage waters seeping through precious springs the only source of local waters. I was told bottled water is imperative if one travels to these remote places just as the sewage cannot be disposed, the plastic bottle cannot be disposed all that easily in these remote places...the price to pay for such development is devastating, even if it is justified in the name of sustainable tourism.

I typed Lahul-Spiti and got 205,000 hits, frightening on the one hand to see the desire of the people to experience such remote places; on the other hand the desire to please a tourist in such remote places through the same urban technocratic interventions is even more frightening.

Simple solutions inspired by nature are no longer considered effective, often these solutions have been around longer and can be made to work better with a discerning and thoughtful use of modern science. Take the case of boreholes

and rainwater harvesting as simple water regenerative mechanism, or decentralized sanitation using simple digester technology using natural bacteria and sun for treating the pathogens. In all of these science has been put to use in the most simplest non-invasive and non-extractive ways to work with nature as opposed to the extractive measures of working against nature - priority being quick, short term results and high volume turnover.

Boreholes was a thriving business not so long ago when Cape Town city council slapped water restrictions –rightly so- on the residents. . Proud home owners began to stick notices outside – Borehole Water - legitimizing the perpetual watering of their lawns (that DOES not feed any hungry stomachs).

The technological advancement of making the right kind of machinery to pump up water led us to forget that these same underground water tables need regenerating. Water is not going to miraculously appear in these boreholes forever and ever.

Seldom do we think of simple ideas of regenerating lowering ground-water tables. Seldom do we think about rainwater harvesting, storm water gardening, localized water management systems appropriate to localized micro-eco-climates. Be it drinking water, irrigation or sanitation, we have deep resistance to look at decentralized solutions.

Rainwater harvesting is happening in most rural Indian schools supported by Barefoot College, Rajasthan, an NGO committed to sustainable appropriate technology for rural areas. Deep underground well hold water assisting the locals to tide over sever draughts. Pani-panchayats, local –water-committees- decide what is the most appropriate way to harness water for the local village, and how water use will be restricted to benefit all. Simple check-dams regenerate water tables while creating local employment.

There are ample evidence from across the world around sustainable water management systems, that solutions must be local, technologies must be simple, locally suitable and sustainable.

Simple solutions often self organize, regenerate and provide solutions in an inclusive manner.

Seldom do we admit that the centralized mass-solutions are not the way to go. Seldom do we admit that increasing urban sprawls have contributed negatively to simple possibilities of water regenerative mechanisms. Roads, highways, buildings, tarred pavements, neatly laid out storm water drains all make it impossible for ground- water- percolation to take place.

Jean Francoise Audic looks like any other French man. A wise elder with his roots in

Brittany. He loves his coffee and croissant. He was one of the people coordinating my ZERI presentation when I visited Auroville in October 2006.**

Having worked with some of ZERI stalwarts like Prof. George Chan, as well as Dr. Masaru Emoto, Jean Francois has moved on to even simpler and more consciousness based simpler technologies working with sacred waters of life. Making the process of living waters simply available to all is his motto. Trained as an engineer, he is an honest critique of his own profession that refuses to learn anything new. Working silently with not much hype, certainly not in the league of today's arrogant sustainability consultants keen to make quick money and name, Jean Francoise has combined the simple beauty of John Todd's living waters, George Chan's bio-digesters, Viktor Schawberger's vortex and the bio-dynamic flow-forms. He was responsible for the setting up of dynamised waters in Auroville that got 'stolen' by another ego-tripping expert who took over the name and began a thriving business selling dynamised waters. I am sure such trickster business does not really blend well with any conscious living process, it will interesting to see how long the dynamism of such people will last.

Jean Francois lives in a 1400 square meter house where the entire water system is cleaned – both grey and black on site designed by his integrated water regenerative design. His garden is healthy and vibrant. A small paradise where waters of life is awash with pure energy. Water from the digesters routed through baffle beds and reed beds curving through living ponds spiraling sensuously up into the vortex creating a powerhouse of water energy spiraling through the umbilical cords of the yin-yang vortices before gently meandering through the flow forms, beautifully handcrafted in his workshop... I was amazed at the possibilities of water regeneration- so simple and so localized yet creating such beauty and vitality in the process.

He has installed a similar system for a local high school with 400 children. The children and teachers work on the system both as part of the collective maintenance as well as part of their deep-ecology classes. Lessons conducted outdoors examining the water riders, measuring the water surface tension, feeling the bounciness of the bees and birds entering the live garden continually being fertigated from the communal latrines of the school...all with no smell or pestering mosquitoes and flies – a sure sign and indicator something is not in balance.

Convinced that working with waters need a certain consciousness—not led by pure technological innovation alone, Jean Francoise has been experimenting with golden lines and water energies. He has evidence to believe that the waters come alive responding to pure integrity and surrender especially using life affirming simple spiral technologies such as vortex. Makes sense why belief systems across the world has total reverence to sacred waters of life often depicted in spirals– until engineers came along to trap waters in neat little piped prisons in long lines made of metal and cement- and hey presto... we have waters of today– totally dead and degenerating faster and faster. And we wonder why we have so many ailments!!!!

One of Jean Francois passionate experiments at the moment is growing spirulina in

dynamised waters. He reckons the tight spiraling curves of the micro-algae indicate the power house of energy stored in each coil. Experiments with non-dynamised waters showed loosely woven spirals as opposed to tight curls of dynamised –water- born spirulina –bursting with golden energy ready to unravel from the coils of life making abundant food source for all.

Spirulina, the green gold has been around almost 4 billion years on this planet. Used by ancient Aztecs, found across the globe, this powerhouse of nature's food became popular in the early forties when accidentally discovered by some food scientists working around Rift Valley and Chad basin. Discovered in the mother continent of Africa– spirulina soon rose to become the new super food, but not for the Africans.

The local tribes who lived and thrived on the green gold paid big time for this discovery. The sad story when anything local and traditional get 'discovered' by experts, be it for consumption or for tourism! The price shoots up, the commodity become exclusive, beyond accessibility and affordability of the locals!

The locals around lake Chad will never be able to live on spirulina just like the folks around Lahul- spiti will never be able to have access to their spring waters. The price paid for debilitating dumb development called progress come with irreparable loss and devastation to the people whose lives are intricately dependent on their local eco-systems.

The mother culture that came from the heart of Africa is now preciously grown in and around many parts of the world including South Africa guarded by barbed wires and electrical fences to make sure that the culture does not escape. Who knows the space is forbidden even for birds and bees flying around, wonder when a price tag will be put on our sunshine...

Nirmala Nair