

LEAF LITTER

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Cover photo: Leaves of *Ginkgo biloba*, also known as the Maiden Hair Tree, native of China but now widely planted.



COP's in business

The first Conference of Parties was held in Berlin in 1995. Since then, these annual meetings have taken place under the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), essentially to assess the progress made in dealing with climate change. Some researchers have begun to call it a *climate crisis*. The last such meetings have been held in Paris (2015), in Morocco (2016), Germany (2017), Poland (2018), Spain (2019), and the UK (2021); this year's (2022) COP 27 was held in November in Egypt. There were 35,000 participants and over a 100 Heads of State and Governments.

The key term in these conferences is *negotiation*, as if we can negotiate¹ ourselves out of a crisis.

The pressure is high on the leaders of developing nations to appear 'tough', to demand sufficient funds from developed nations, and time, to phase out, (sorry, phase down) carbon emissions. At the same time they need to show that they actually are concerned about the crisis, and will do something about it. When they go back to their home countries the leaders have to get back to their GDPs, their vote-banks, and patronize the industrialists who fund their elections. A difficult tight-rope to walk on, balancing the wise international image with that of the home-grown son of the soil. Especially, as it's no longer just climate change, but a *climate crisis*, whose effects are already being felt in countries like India.

Let's take a look at India, and zoom into what's going on, and see how the cookie crumbles alongside the COP 27. Quite recently, the Indian coal minister said that there is "no transition away from coal happening in the foreseeable future in India,"

at least until 2040 and beyond. To cater to the rising energy demand the government will open up 99 new coal mines. An energy shortage was experienced as temperatures rose this summer due to heatwaves in parts of the country, that demanded air-conditioning. These new mines will have a total capacity of 427 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) – completely contradicting India's net zero goals – and require 2.94 lakh hectares that will displace 165 villages and 87,630 families. Most of these lands are in Scheduled Areas of the central and eastern Indian region, where indigenous peoples live, and where it is mandatory to get the consent of the *gram sabhas*, village councils, before taking up any activity on their lands. But Article 6.4 of the Paris Agreement does not guarantee the Free Prior and Informed Consent of the indigenous peoples and local communities. An odd twist to the 99 new coal mines is that they will produce less energy than the already existing, but underutilized, mines (433 mtpa), according to the Global Energy Monitor. And yet create havoc in the region.

Other seemingly unrelated sectors, such as public transport or the automobile industry, too contribute to the climate crisis. The latter, aided by new financial options and a rising urban population, is on the increase at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 11.3% between 2020-27. Transportation causes about one-fifth of the greenhouse gas emissions; the decline in public transport will push more private vehicles onto the road, and increase GHG emissions. Likewise, almost half the synthetic fertilizers that are used normally go unutilized, and are leached into the water and soil and broken down by microbes, releasing nitrous oxide into the atmosphere; fertilizers contribute an average of 2.5% of the total GHG emissions. The elephant in the room, in the Indian scenario, is palm oil. With a target of a million hectares by 2030, (to be increased further), and a earmarked budget of Rs 11,040 crores, the impact of it's spread will be tremendous. Most of the palm oil subsidy is for fertilizers,

¹ME.Latin *negotiarī* 'to do business', from *negotium* 'business', from *neg* 'not' + *otium* 'leisure'

and bore-wells for irrigation that will demand electricity generated by coal. We shall not mention the potentials for land conflicts, biodiversity loss and water-scarcity that such a mission will obviously entail.

On a concluding note, we need to remember that one of the major sponsors of COP27 was Coca Cola, whose total GHG emissions in 2021 was 5.17 MtCO₂eq, 8% more than in 2020; it was also the world's largest plastic polluter that year. Other big names were Vodafone (10.29 MtCO₂eq) and Microsoft (3.8 MtCO₂eq). Corporate sponsorship has been the norm in COP events which are multi-million dollar affairs, quite like the FIFA World Cup tournaments. Increasingly, there is participation from industrial houses and their lobbyists, many of them from India. It must be a good marketplace, with a thriving business potential.

Can we expect any change on the ground in India, and elsewhere, after COP27? I doubt it and, for once in my life, would like to be completely and utterly mistaken.

Madhu Ramnath

Thinking Storms and Mini Mountains: On Natural and Human Scale

Alan Johnson

Do storms think? You would think so after reading news reports of hurricanes, typhoons, and snow storms. An Atlantic hurricane dubbed Nicole “threatened” Florida’s coastal “communities,” *The New York Times* reported recently. Storms are always capricious, toying with puny humans in their path. On eastern U.S. coasts, this year’s summer “hurricane season” is said to have begun late “before picking up its pace.” The *Times* quotes a Florida city councilman’s glum outlook: “It’s almost like winter up north—sometimes, it just doesn’t want to let go.” Before Nicole, there was Ian, the “deadliest” hurricane to hit Florida in decades, and also the costliest, both biotically and materially. As it happens, “up north,” a storm has just dumped 1.8 meters (6 feet) of snow on the city of Buffalo, New York.

It’s painfully obvious these days that storms are increasing in both frequency and power. We no longer have, to use government-speak, an isolated “state of emergency” here, and another one there. We are all in a state of planetary emergency. But how to comprehend this on an everyday scale? Our habit of naming hurricanes—Bonnie, Haiyan, Amphan—makes them feel more human, probably to give us a sense of control, of scaling them down. Strangely, though, people in areas hit hard by such calamities tend to scale them up, proud of having weathered the “biggest” one of all.

But scale—larger-than-human scale—is exactly what’s at stake in our warming planet. It’s not that we’ve never considered the power

and might of nature. Eighteenth-century Europeans liked to use the word “sublime” to describe feelings of insignificance and awe in the face of natural immensity: a mountain peak, a waterfall. But even these displays were containable: the spectator could leave them behind, scurry back home to put them in a poem or a painting. Or, today, in a photograph: Nanga Parbat glimpsed from a Srinagar balcony, Athirapilly Falls from a Chalakuddy embankment.

The great Kashmiri poet Agha Shahid Ali knew all about scale, its paradoxes and its possibilities. Here is his sonnet “Postcard from Kashmir,” composed in the U.S.:

Kashmir shrinks into my mailbox,
my home a neat four by six inches.
I always loved neatness. Now I hold
the half-inch Himalayas in my hand.
This is home. And this the closest
I’ll ever be to home. When I return,
the colors won’t be so brilliant,
the Jhelum’s waters so clean,
so ultramarine. My love
so overexposed.
And my memory will be a little
out of focus, in it
a giant negative, black
and white, still undeveloped.

Poems often hinge on surprising, even startling, contrasts, as here: tiny Himalayas, miniature Jhelum. A postcard “is home,” a hand-held proxy for the distant place the speaker longs for. The negative verb “won’t be” is a foil for the positive “will be.” Shahid doubles these verbal senses with the guiding metaphor of (pre-digital) photo processing, the postcard’s unreal hues stirring his emotions to produce alternately “overexposed” and “underdeveloped” sensations and memories. The poem extracts irony, too: the postcard’s colors seem more “brilliant” than the real thing because it compresses, and so intensifies, its object. And fitted into sonnet form, the poem mimics the postcard’s frame, distilling the speaker’s homesickness into words whose elegance, though no substitute for home, is nevertheless occasioned by it. Without home, there would be no longing; and without longing, no poem.

The reader understands this paradox as much as the speaker. Home at a distance is always finer than it is up close. Shahid's elegant words convey the Kashmiri speaker's emotions (to his non-Kashmiri readers, at least) in a way that a touristic visit to Srinagar may not do. A reader cannot, in any case, revisit each writer's precise environs, if only because the passage of time makes this impossible.

But postcards and poems, or any human medium, lack one distinct and inimitable attribute of home: its three dimensions. Like the receiver's postcard, the poem gestures to this attribute while acknowledging its inadequacy to reproduce it. In this, a poem—and any valued piece of writing or art, from music to manga—reminds us of our human inadequacy to fully comprehend, let alone convey, the world around us. We name storms in the hope of doing this, and we apply wondrous technologies to nearly everything around us, but despite having five evolution-refined senses, we humans perceive only a small spectrum of the physical world around us.

The science journalist Ed Yong uses the German word *Umwelt*, literally “environment,” in the way zoologist Jakob von Uexküll used it, to describe how non-human animals apprehend their interwoven, multi-dimensional surroundings.

Echolocation, electroreception, night vision, thermoreception—animals discern their world in so many more ways than we can. In fact, as Yong points out, it's not possible to designate the senses as five distinct ones. Our own (human) sense of smell is inseparable from taste.

All of which means that when we personify natural calamities—and other facets of nature—we may be limiting our understanding of them. We—or at least, we modern humans—want to scale them “up” or “down” to match our visual bias. Even when we rely on our nose, such as smelling dead fish after a storm, or on our fingers, as when rubbing the shed skin of a snake, we're bracketing these sensations, sorting them into definable sets. We also miss the interlinked senses that a snake, for example, enjoys, with its “heat sensors . . . wired to [its] brain's

visual center,” as Yong puts it. Tech gadgets make up for a great deal of this human deficit, certainly. But we can't plug this data into our everyday lives to, say, meld the odor and the heat of rotting remains to form a different kind of environmental apperception.

What we humans *can* do, as the poetry of Ali and the journalism of Yong exemplify, is embrace paradox in order to stretch our descriptive apparatus. Ali makes sense of his homesickness by miniaturizing the Himalayas; Yong exults in the wacky body of the platypus. And notably, Ali and Yong are *recording* their views, a process that activates both imaginative and analytical neurons to arrive at insights they might otherwise not have conceived. In writing, we surprise ourselves, and so surprise our reader. But how, exactly?

Ali, in anticipating that a return to his beloved Kashmir will disappoint him, would seem to taint any future experience of an actual return. What's the harm, one may ask, in clinging to an idealized image? But Ali is not trading in one-dimensional images. His loftier aim is to convey to us the many dimensions of his emotionally-charged memories. Ali's speaker surprises the entwined senses of himself. It's not the scale of the postcard-size Himalayas that disconcerts him, or us. What disturbs, or rather activates, our cross-wired senses is the recognition that the Himalayas have a life of their own, just as we do, and that these lives are not at cross-purposes. We don't need to scale the mountains up or down. We simply need to accept that they are, like storms, as variable as we are. In this sense, Ali's words help us see that a planetary crisis, precisely because it's not static or monolithic, is apprehensible.

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Beyond Joint Forest Management: towards a decentralized forest governance

Pravat Kumar Mishra

Background:

Forest policies, the forest department and forestry research institutions have operated and promoted the simple idea that ‘forests’ are ‘good’ for society, without deconstructing the notion of what kind of forest is ‘good’ and under what conditions. This has led to the simple targets of ‘33% forest cover’ (Odisha has 34% of forest cover because forests have been traditionally protected by the local communities). The starting point of the latter exercise was the fact that for tribal peoples a forest is not just a simple ecological construct, but a complex socio-cultural-economic-ecological space.

Different forest management systems provide different mixes of benefits to different sections of society. These beneficiaries are located at varying distances, from local to global. The notion of ‘beneficiary’ or ‘stakeholder’ has both material and cultural dimensions, and has been historically shaped. Framing and implementing forest policies has always been, and will always be, a political process. Though informed by ecology, it tries to balance and prioritize benefits and beneficiaries of different kinds of forest use systems. It is also profoundly socio-political in the way it sets up structures for achieving and maintaining this balance.

The new forest debate coincided with the emergence of wildlife concerns in the early 70s, but was modified by the general increase

in the environmental rhetoric and the social movements that emerged simultaneously. One sees four different trajectories of state intervention emerging from this period, which include, (a) the Wildlife Protection Act (1972) and the consequent expansion of the Protected Area network, (b) the Forest Conservation Act (1980) -which is seemingly about curtailing the conversion of forest land to non-forest uses, c) Joint Forest Management — which is seemingly about making forest management more participatory, and (d) the Forest Rights Act (2006) -which is seemingly individual/community rights over forest resources. On all four fronts, the success has been limited, initiatives have floundered, and conflicts have increased enormously. Broadly, the reasons for this state of affairs are the following.

- The driving concern of forest policy continues to be an oversimplified notion of ‘conservation’ and ‘ecological balance’ that leaves local people and livelihoods out of the equation except the FRA and the PESA.
- State initiatives have often overlooked ground realities, including the complexity of local forest rights and recognition of these rights, the often-fractured nature of ‘local community’, the changing relationship between people and forests, and the narrow notion of ‘forests’ that leaves out other common lands.
- The thinking about the process of implementation continues to be stuck in the rut of centralised bureaucracies and single-template laws, which for a country of the diversity and social differentiation of India is simply unworkable.

A Comparative Analysis

Thirty-four years after the adoption of the landmark National Forest Policy 1988 there are several issues and challenges that confront the forest sector. A plethora of resolutions (like

the JFM resolution of 1990, 1993, 1994, 1996, 2005, 2008, and 2011), notifications, and amendments have since been passed, purportedly to facilitate the involvement of forest fringe communities in forest management. No doubt the new JFM resolution 2011 looks optimistic, but, if we analyse the overall policy developments relating to participatory forest management in the state, many key issues have been bypassed. The question that faces the state today is where the JFM should be heading?

The FRA has been a step forward to undo the historical injustice against forest peoples, but the implementation rests with a ministry and departments that are weak and require much support.

Though researchers, forest officials and other observers have recognized that community forest management (CFM) has a positive impact on the ecological, institutional, and socio-economic conditions of the local communities there is no mention in the recent guidelines (JFM resolution 2011) to recognize self-initiated groups as a legitimate form of the PFM.

The democratic forest governance that is sensitive to the needs of multiple stakeholders, and particularly the local people is the only viable approach for managing the forests for the future. This is only possible through capacity building and decision making at the appropriate levels.

The Odia experience in JFM

Nearly 10 million people in Odisha rely and depend directly or indirectly on forests for a wide range of basic needs such as fuel wood, fodder and food. Many forest peoples view forest areas from a religious perspective, and forest wealth and beauty as sacred. Studies have shown that rural people have been protecting and managing their forests for

hundreds of years. And that forest management during the British colonial period, and the post-independence period, encouraged the commercial exploitation of forest resources.

From 1950 to 1970, the government of India leased out lands to industries eager to exploit the natural resources, which led to further forest degradation. Neither the British nor the Indian governments recognized people's rights and needs for forest resources. In the 1970s, thousands of fast-growing tree species, such as eucalyptus, were planted in the name of social forestry or farm forestry. However, these programmes did not prove successful because they did not provide enough benefits to the local people who were expected to implement these activities. Though success was limited, these reforestation programmes provided an opportunity for forest department officials to begin a dialogue with village communities. One of the foundations for collaborative management of forest resources was laid.

In 1988, the National Forest Policy, envisaged the people's involvement in the development and protection of forests. The policy states, "The life of tribals and other poor living within and near forests revolves around forests. The rights and concessions enjoyed by them should be fully protected. Their domestic requirements of fuel wood, fodder, minor forest produce and construction timber should be the first charge on forest produce. Similar consideration should be given to scheduled caste and other poor living near forest." The policy became a major instrument for the change in forest management and it opened the path to involve the communities in forest management.

The concept of Joint Forest Management (JFM) evolved from the Arabari experience of Midnapur, West Bengal in 1971. This was the first recorded case of a joint effort by a government officer (forest department) and a community in forest management activities. The success at Arabari drew the attention of the state forest department. In 1989, the West Bengal Forest department issued the first government order to involve the communities

as joint partners in forest protection, allowing people to receive 25% of the revenue from timber harvests.

The Indian National Forest Policy 1988 and the Joint Forest Management (JFM) resolution of 1st June 1990 began reshaping the policy environment, acknowledging the need to give greater rights and authority to communities. This arrangement sought the involvement of village communities and voluntary agencies in the regeneration of degraded forestlands. The programme seeks to establish management 'partnerships' between local forest-dependent communities and the state for the sustainable management and benefit sharing of forest.

Under the programme, the forest department (usually a local forest official, appointed as the secretary of the committee) and the village community enter into an agreement to constitute a committee to jointly protect and manage the forest. The key understanding in the arrangement is that in return for protecting forest lands and helping in the regeneration and management of the said forest, the people will be entitled to usufruct rights over dead fuelwood, timber, NTFPs as well as a significant share ranging between 50 to 100% (it varies from state to state) of poles/timbers (in cash or in kind) on final harvesting.

However, the community and the forest department are expected to share not just the benefits, but the responsibilities too. In other words, the JFM strategies bring local forest users and the forest department into a common platform for the management of forests. The institutional framework and the operational procedure varies between states, as each state has its own JFM resolution. The JFM programme, over the past decade, has spread all over the country and the area covered under the JFM is now 17,331,955.12 ha and protected by 84,632 committees in 27 states.

The flexibility of government orders allows them to be modified, updated and repealed at executive will. For example, the Andhra Pradesh JFM order has been modified at least six times, each time on the pretext of improving the earlier order. Odisha and other

states have made their share of amendments. While on the one hand, flexibility allows a new programme to adjust to new circumstances, such changes re-enforce the fears that have been expressed with regard to the stability of the legal foundation of the JFM.

While the 1988 forest policy did not limit people's involvement to a particular quality of forests, the government of India guidelines for JFM restricted it to degraded forests. The arbitrary nature of defining degraded forests is evident from the fact that whereas about 40 per cent of the country's total forest area is considered degraded, the area under JFM is barely 2-3 per cent of the total in some states. Certain states have adopted a crown density of less than 0.4, others consider a crown density of less than 0.25 as degraded forests. Though the government of India, through its JFM guidelines (year 2000), has extended the programme to high forest, there is still confusion in its implementation.

Apart from legal issues in the JFM there are numerous issues in its operational framework. Regarding the financial allocation to the JFM programme the forest department hardly makes any budgetary allocations for JFM-related activities. Consequently, the programme relies heavily on foreign aid (like the World Bank) funds, which is important but needs to be balanced against long-term sustainability.

A study of the village JFM sector in Odisha noted that funds came from five main sources. First, from the JFM plot itself, directly through charges for collection, auction or sale of produce. Second, from members' contributions and membership fees, and third, through hiring charges of utensils, sound system, etc., purchased by Forest Protection Committees. Fourth, through fines, and, fifth through external sources.

In contrast to the other states, in the community managed forests of Odisha, funds are largely generated from protected patch itself- through purchase of timber by individuals or from major sales to outsiders. These funds are used for some community activities, such as

building a school or financing a local festival. Thus villagers have a greater degree of control over both the source and use of their finances. In other states, where villagers manage funds themselves, the uses include protection of the JFM plot, credit to members, community assets and community services. Another study indicates that in the villages where funds come from outside, fund management lacks transparency and, consequently, rumors of misuse are rife, directed against both the forester and the chairperson of the JFM committees.

Another study in Odisha states that, “Many of the local VSS groups are extremely weak institutions, and are beset with a number of problems. The study estimated that as many as half of the total VSS formed are dormant and inactive. Problems have arisen due to a number of factors. In order to fulfill the formation targets of the VSS, many indigenous CFM groups have been persuaded by the forest department to register themselves as VSS groups, so in fact it is simply a change of label in many cases and many of the converted VSS groups do not like the management arrangements followed. Because none of these groups have legal status and the forest department doesn’t take the CFM groups seriously. There is no tenurial security to the VSS as these have been created by an administrative order of state, despite the fact that the guidelines issued in 2000 by the Central Government that VSS should be registered under the society act 1860.” The study further states that micro plans have not been prepared for 90 per cent of the VSS and 60 per cent of the VSS have not signed the MoU with the forest department.

In Odisha, the JFM Resolution 2011 however, eliminated the Forester from the JFM Executive Committee who was earlier functioning as the Secretary and dealing with all the forest and village development activities as he had retained the financial control. In order to make it more democratic and transparent, one of the village members shall function as the Secretary in the committee and it has been amended in many committees across the state.

Emerging Issues in the FRA with regard to the JFM

In Odisha, the recognition of Community Forest Rights is very slow and low. In most areas, the CFRs are mistaken as JFM areas for which an MOU has been signed between the community and the Forest Department. So, titles are issued to the Van Sanrakshna Samitis instead of Gram Sabhas. The area over which titles are issued is equal to the area given under the VSS. This is not what the Act says and it is regarded as the dilution of the FRA.

Another aspect of not recognizing CFR titles is the utilization of overseas funding in the forestry sector. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) fund for the Odisha Forestry Sector Development Project (OFSDP) is going to be extended to other divisions where the money will be spent through the VSS. It will lead to a continuation of the VSS and to the denial of the CFR. The vital and most important aspect is the preparation of the CFR management plans by the Gram Sabhas, which require skill and knowledge, and hand-holding support from line departments, as per the demand of the Gram Sabhas. However, where the VSS exist, the forest department is preparing the micro-plans for the VSS and gets support from the Divisional Working Plans. The FRA Rules state that the CFR management plans will be a part of the Forest Working Plans. Now, the question is “whether the same micro-plans become the CFR management plan. Or whether the department staff will facilitate the planning process in the village.

Section 3.1(i) confers the right to protect, regenerate, conserve and manage the traditional accessed forest and section 5 of FRA provides the right to the Gram Sabha to manage the CFR area which may or may not be coterminous with the VSS area. So, the recognition of the VSS areas is not conferring rights under the FRA. (Please refer to the letter of MOTA to the AP Government)

The superseding effect of the FRA.

The Preamble of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition) Forest Rights Act 2006 has mandated to end the historic injustice done to the tribals and the forest dwelling communities during the pre and post-independence period due to the forest governance process and system. The inception of the Act has envisaged a fight for the rights that were squeezed and over powered by other forest stakeholders and due to forest conversion processes.

The nationwide people's Campaign for Survival with Dignity has been initiated to recognise the rights of forest dwelling communities and to stop the eviction of these people from forest lands. In 2002, the Government of India classified the large population of tribal people living inside forest areas as 'encroachers' of forestland and the Supreme Court ordered their eviction. Hence, the Campaign for Survival with Dignity started, in order to try to record the unrecorded rights of the STs and OTFDs over the forest land on which they lived and have been traditionally depending on for their livelihood needs.

The historic judgment of the Supreme Court on the T. Godavarman case along with the people's movement has paved the way for establishing people's traditional rights over the forest and the forest dwelling communities who have been residing for generations and cannot be displaced for any reason without recognition of their rights. This Act acknowledges both individual and community rights over the forest resources and allows for use, access and tenurial rights for sustainable livelihood and food security.

The Act has given importance to the lowest level constitutional institution i.e., the Gram Sabha to determine the nature and extent of the forest rights to which the District Level Committee recognises, records and vests the rights on the concerned Gram Sabha. So the community has a stake in the decision making process and the Act is participatory in nature.

For the first time the concept of the Community Forest Rights has been introduced through this Act.

Section 3 of the Forest Rights Act states that the Community Forest Rights are as follows:

- Rights over the cultivable and habited land.
- Nistar type of community rights.
- Ownership rights over NTFPs.
- Rights over water sources and its use.
- Rights over the grazing lands and seasonal access for the nomadic tribes.
- Habitation rights of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups and pre-agricultural communities.
- Rights over the disputed land and right of conversion of forest lands over which there are patta, grants and lease.
- Conversion of forest and un-surveyed villages into revenue villages.
- Right to protect, regenerate, conserve and manage the traditional forest for sustainable use.
- Rights over traditional and customary laws.
- Rights over the biodiversity, intellectual property and cultural diversity related traditional knowledge and skill.
- Resettlement Rights.

This Act provides tenurial rights, user rights, access rights over the forest resources and it recognizes the customary boundary as the limit and it is determined by the Gram Sabha. It also provides the duties to the communities to prepare CFR management plans and the Gram Sabha are empowered to take the technical assistance of the line departments to do so for sustainable management of the CFR.

Conclusion

The famous quote, “Jal, Jangal Aur Jameen, Yeh Janata Ki Hain Adhin”, essentially means that it is the community which should own and manage natural resources and that they are perfectly capable of doing so in a sustainable manner. Community rights were there in the

past. However, when the state (the eminent domain) took them away from the communities and tried to manage, it has seriously failed in its task. Community participation is needed and, where community rights were present, the state has committed a mistake by infringing these rights. So, the rights should be restored and the responsibility should be given to the community along with the required guidance for the proper management of forests.

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Forests and Agricultural Diversity in Bandi Pahar and Sera Pahar, Saraikela- Kharswan District, Jharkhand

Rohan Mukerjee

The landscape of the Saraikela area in Saraikela-Kharswan District, Jharkhand, is a study in contrast. As one travels through the Adityapur and Gamaria industrial belt one is often overwhelmed by exhaust fumes and the emissions from the numerous factories. It is difficult to imagine that hardly ten kilometres away there are forested hills where life goes on largely like it did during the rule of Raja Bikram Singh, who established the state of Saraikela in 1620. The Bandi Pahar Jungle and Sera Pahar Jungle in Saraikela and Gamaria Blocks consist of rich native Sal (*Shorea robusta*) forests. Other prominent tree species being Asan (*Terminalia alata*), Kendu (*Diospyros melanoxylon*), Pial (*Buchanania cochinchinensis*) and Bhela/Bhelwa (*Semecarpus anacardium*).

These forests are home to a number of Adivasi and other forest dwelling communities which include the Bhumij, Munda, Santal, Ho, Paharia, Lohar and Mahato. Keystone Foundation has recently commenced work in 5 villages in this area through a fellowship to Community Resource Person Budheswar Mahato from Hatnada village. Keystone's project promotes agroecological approaches, and the revival and strengthening of traditional food systems.

The livelihoods of the residents of Bandi Pahar and Sera Pahar primarily revolve around agriculture and forest produce, though there has been an increase in dependence on wage labour and migration. The average agricultural land holdings are small and vary from around 1 acre to 5 acres. There is a small percentage of landless households, but they are mostly recent entrants and even they have small homestead plots. Paddy is the primary *Kharif* crop; research carried out in Hudu and Mathkomdih Panchayats reveal that, in the past, around 67 local paddy varieties were cultivated. However, the number of paddy varieties cultivated has declined considerably; currently only 15 to 20 varieties are cultivated on a regular basis. These include 2 varieties of *Goda Dhan* (Upland Paddy) – white and red, and a variety of black rice known as *Bhoot Muri Dhan*. In the past farmers in the area cultivated several other *Kharif* crops but over the last decade the cultivation of many of these crops has declined, and several have disappeared from the area. The latter include *Kodo* millet, *Madua* (Finger millet), *Til* (Sesame), *Moong* (Green Gram). Others, like *Gangai* (Sorghum), *Makkai* (Maize), *Kudrum* (Roselle), *Kurthi* (Horse gram), *Biri* (Black gram), *Sutri* (Rice bean) and *Romha* (a variety of cowpea) are cultivated but in smaller quantities than earlier. However, despite the decline in cultivation of these crops, some farmers like Ramchandra Sardar, from Tirildih Tola of Janglikhas village, still cultivate a diverse mix of crops. He proudly showed me his fields where he was cultivating *Kurthi* and *Bihi*.

The *Rabi* crops cultivated include *Sarso* (mustard) and *Sakarkanda* (Sweet Potato). At one-point *Sakarkanda* was cultivated in substantial quantities and Sardarbera village was renowned for its *Sakarkanda*. However, of late there has been a decline in the cultivation of this crop.



Figure 3: Rutu Madh bamboo variety which is used to make a flute that is used during traditional cultural dances and ceremonies



Figure 4: Man Kochu (Giant Taro)



Figure 2: Janglikhas Jharna carrying leaf litter down to the agricultural fields of Janglikhas village



Figure 5: Kaanta Saag



Figure 1: Ganesh Sardar of Tirildih Tola, Janglikhas in a typical Kocha Badi



Figure 6: Hanjet Begun / Jangli Begun / Biroti



Figure 7: Madua / Finger Millet



Figure 8: Kudrum



Figure 9: Mangal Munda of School Tola, Janglikhas village near his paddy fields



Figure 10: Desi Nanua (sponge gourd)



Figure 11: Ganesh Sardar's Kocha Badi in Tirildih Tola, Janglikhas



Figure 12: Paddy fields of local rice varieties adjoining forest areas in Janglikhas village



Figure 13: Rameshwar Sardar of Tirildih tola with Bhindi, which will be used for future sowing



Figure 14: Bamboo Haldi / Turmeric, Kochu/ Taro and Man Kochu (Giant Taro) growing alongside each other in Rameshwar's Kocha Badi

Forests and streams play a vital role in the agricultural practices of the farmers in the villages of Bandi Pahar and Sera Pahar. As Mangal Munda, a farmer from School tola in Janglikhas village said, the leaf litter and humus washed down from the adjoining forests ensures the fertility of their agricultural lands. None of the villagers in Janglikhas need to use chemical fertilisers; the surrounding trees and forests also ensure adequate moisture content that the crops require.

In addition to paddy, households also cultivate a diverse variety of crops in their *Kocha Badi* (homestead plots immediately adjoining habitation) and *Badi* (larger homestead area). Their homestead plots range from 2 *Katha* (4 decimal) to 10 *katha* (20 decimal). The *Kocha Badi* or *Badi* is an excellent example of multilayer mixed cropping with creepers and greens grown in the understory, maize and sorghum in the middle and upper story and trees and bamboo surrounding the plot. The principal crops cultivated include Yellow *Makka* (Maize), *Kudrum* (Roselle), *Begun* (Brinjal), *Tamatar* (Tomato), 4 to 5 types of *Mirchi* (Chilli), *Karela* (Bitter gourd), *Ghee Karla* (wild spine gourd), *Nanua* (sponge gourd), *Kundru* (Ivy gourd), 2 types of *Khera* (cucumber), 5 types of *Shim* (flat green beans), 3 types of *Kohonda* (Pumpkin), 3 types of *Jhinga* (ridge gourd), 3 types of *Lau* (Bottle gourd). A variety of greens like *Pui saag* (Indian spinach), *Lal saag* (Red spinach), *Harra saag*, *Dhanta Saag*. A variety of root and tuber crops are also cultivated, and they include 2 types of *Mula* (radish), *Sakarkanda* (sweet potato), *Susni aloo*, *Kham aloo* (Greater Yam), 3 types of *Haldi* (Turmeric), *Ol* (Elephant foot yam), 3 types of *Kochu* (Taro), *Man Kochu* (Giant Taro), 2 types of *Aalti*.

A variety of wild greens and uncultivated food plants are also found in and around the *Kocha Badi*. These include *Kaanta Saag*,

Sirkitia, *Kana Saag*, *Khapra Saag*, *Chaal Dua Saag*, *Beng Saag*, *Dhela Saag*, *Susni Saag*, *Kuiliakhada*, *Brahmi / Chida Saag*. *Hanjet Begun / Jangli Begun / Biroti* is a wild vegetable plant with small round fruits and white flowers and is eaten as a vegetable. Cooked along with ghee it is used to prevent cough.

In addition, there are several tree species found in and around the *Kocha Badi*. These include 2 varieties of *Kaala / Banana*, 2 to three types of *Papaya*, *Kathal / Jackfruit*, *Munga / Drumstick*, 2 types of *Lemon*, *Amrut / Guava*, *Sitaphal / Custard Apple*, 4 to 5 types of *Aam / Mango*, *Jamun / Java plum*. A number of wild or uncultivated tree species are also found alongside the cultivated varieties and these include *Kudol* (*Bahunia purpurea*), *Gamhar* (*Gmelina arborea*), *Neem* (*Azadirachta indica*), *Mahua* (*Madhuca longifolia*), *Kusum* (*Schleichera oleosa*) and *Karam* (*Neolamarckia cadamba*). 3 to 4 varieties of *Bamboo* are also grown around the *Kocha Badi* and they are put to a variety of uses by the villagers. One of the bamboo varieties known as *Rutu Madh* is used to make a flute which is used by the local communities during their traditional cultural dances and ceremonies.

One of the most striking plants found in the *Kocha Badi* is the *Man Kochu* or Greater Yam (*Alocasia Macrorrhizos*). With the largest un-split leaf in the world the *Man Kochu* stands head and shoulders above a majority of the crops in the *Kocha Badi*. *Man Kochu* is a shade tolerant plant with its' giant leaves adapted to absorbing the small amount of light that reaches the forest floor under the dense tree canopy, which makes them ideally suited to the *Kocha Badi* which is often dark and shady owing to the large number of other crops and tree species cultivated here. The stem is consumed as a vegetable when tender. The villagers also consume the corm after frying

it thoroughly in oil. In the raw state, the giant taro is poisonous to humans if eaten in large quantities; prolonged boiling removes the toxin calcium oxalate. The villagers were aware of this and said that if not fried the corm causes irritation in the throat and, even after frying, they consume it in moderation. They also fry the corm in ghee and use it to address throat ailments like cough, soreness, and irritation.

The *Kocha Badi* and *Badi* are an important source of a diverse variety of crops that help meet the food and nutritional needs of the local communities for a large portion of the year. An advantage of cultivating local varieties in the *Kocha Badi* is that they are less susceptible to pest attacks, compared to the hybrid, high yielding varieties. The villagers deal with pests by using local remedies, such as the application of ash to brinjal plants; pest repellents are made from neem, *Karanj* and available leaves. Water scarcity is a problem in maintaining the *Kocha Badi* throughout the year; for 4 months of the summer season the villagers experience acute water scarcity, and even accessing drinking water becomes a challenge. However, despite this, a few crops like *Begun*, *Papita*, *Kundri*, *Mirchi* and one or two greens are still available. Usually, women need to source water from considerable distances for their *Kocha Badi* during summer months.

While the farmers in Bandi Pahar and Sera Pahar still cultivate a diverse variety of crops, the region as a whole is experiencing a steady decline in crop diversity. Jaghbandu Sanda, a consultant working with farmers for around two decades says that the region has witnessed a startling decline and loss of a number of crops and crop varieties in the last decade. Some of these varieties include Lal bhindi, pui saag, desi Jhinga, desi barbatti, which comprised of 3 varieties that ripened at different times; kaanta begun, and a local

tomato variety which is very fleshy with a thin skin. Budheswar shared that when villagers migrate for wage labour and other work, they come across high yielding and hybrid varieties of crops and are very impressed with the yields and are tempted to bring these varieties back and cultivate them in their lands. The villagers are mostly influenced by the large-scale cultivation of hybrid vegetables, paddy, pulses, and other crops in Tamar Block of Ranchi District. Not having an understanding of the long-term impacts of hybrid crops requiring chemical inputs some villagers have started to cultivate these crops. This poses a serious threat to the survival of diverse local crop varieties, as other farmers are beginning to switch to hybrid crops. However, the negative impacts of hybrid crops are also coming to the fore. There is a decline in the fertility and quality of the soil, with farmers forced to spend more and more on chemical fertilisers. Also, hybrid crops are more susceptible to pests and climate change. A delayed monsoon affects hybrid crops adversely, and their productivity declines. If hybrid crops are infested by pests or disease it is difficult to mitigate this. Comparatively, local crops are hardy and able to withstand erratic monsoons and pests. Budheswar pointed out that 2022 was a year of very low rainfall with Saraikela and many other parts of Jharkhand witnessing drought like conditions. Farmers who had cultivated hybrid crops were hit hard and faced major crop losses. Those who cultivated local crops faced losses but had a better harvest.

Keystone Foundation, through the efforts of Jaghbandhu Sanada and Budheswar Mahato, is promoting the revival and strengthening of traditional agriculture and mixed cropping practices. They are carrying out a variety of awareness and training programs to emphasise the importance and benefits of traditional agriculture and associated local crop

varieties. Several local and climate resilient varieties of crops have been distributed to farmers and they have successfully cultivated them in their fields and *Kocha Badi* and *Badi* plots. Cereal and pulses like *Madua* / finger millet, *Gundli* / little millet, *Makkai* / Maize, *Rahar* / Pigeon pea, *Kurthi* / Horse gram have been distributed. A variety of vegetables and greens were also distributed. Budheswar also conducted a training program on the preparation of organic pesticides and pest repellents. Despite the challenges and temptations to adopt modern chemical intensive agricultural practices a majority of farmers are coming forward to protect and conserve their local crop varieties and traditional agricultural practices. The establishment of a community seed bank of local seed varieties and a resource centre for bio inputs is being explored. There is also a need to look into and make available sustainable and viable livelihood avenues based on organic and traditional agricultural practices and forest products. This will go a long way in incentivising the continued protection and conservation of forests and natural resources in Bandi Pahar and Sera Pahar.

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The wolf is back in the Netherlands

Wiert Wiersema

Since the last five years or so the wolf is back in the Netherlands. Historians say that the last wolves were (hunted down?) killed in the middle of the 19th century. In 2014 the first stray wolf was spotted in the north, apparently on a visit from Germany. In 2016 a second wolf was seen close to the eastern border in the central region. In 2019 the first wolves were born in the Veluwe forests broadly in the central region. By now, the wolf seems to have settled in at least four territories in



different parts of the country.

Many conservationists are happy with the return of the wolf. Officially, the wolf is a protected animal with no natural enemies, other than the human being. The wolf mainly feeds on wild animals, but occasionally it may kill some sheep or other domestic animals. As a consequence not everybody is happy with its return, especially in the animal husbandry sector. People whose animals are attacked by wolves are eligible for financial compensation, but for many that is not sufficient. Rather than protecting their

animals behind fences, they call for the killing of the wolves. But given its protected status this is not allowed. Occasionally, wolves are found dead, most of them are victims of car traffic.

In recent months, the wolf also showed up in the “De Hoge Veluwe National Park”. This is a privately owned park with 5,400 hectares of woodland, heathland, drift sands and peat bogs. The park is a popular place to visit, where people can roam around on white painted bikes that are offered for free. According to its websiteⁱ, the big game population of the park (larger mammals) consists of:

- 200 red game (deer)
- 150 fawn game (roe)
- 50 black game (wild boar)
- 200 mouflons (Corsican sheep)

To maintain a ‘natural’ balance within the fenced park territory and to maximize the flora diversity in the park, the larger animals are considered essential.

According to the park management the wolf could only have entered the park due to holes being cut in the fence. Several dozens of the wild inhabitants of the park have since been killed by the wolvesⁱⁱ.



While the biodiversity of the park is affected by the arrival of the wolf, the wolf too is affected by the park. Usually wolves

are shy animals and avoid humans but in the “Hoge Veluwe” the wolf shows interest in the visitors, and even approaches themⁱⁱⁱ. Some hold the park management responsible for the ‘unnatural’ behaviour of the wolves in the park. Provincial authorities launched a plan to shoot the ‘un-wild’ wolves with paint-balls, to scare them off but not kill them. However, a Dutch court ruled that such an approach would be against the law.

It will be interesting to see how the delicate balance between the human being and the wolf will further evolve. It is quite obvious that the wolf cannot live well within fences. Hopefully the human being will learn new lessons about the unwanted impacts of fences as well.

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ⁱ <https://www.hogeveluwe.nl/en/about-the-park/organisation>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.hogeveluwe.nl/nl/ontdek-het-park/natuur-en-landschap/wolf>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://nos.nl/artikel/2451096-wolf-rent-achter-fietser-aan-op-de-hoge-veluwe>

<https://nos.nl/artikel/2447438-natuurfotografen-omsingelen-wolf-op-de-veluwe-zoogdiervereniging-woedend>

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Do we really need more data centers?

Maxime Köse

Have you ever found yourself looking at a tall apartment-like building and wondering: *why does this huge building not have windows?* There is a good chance you were looking at a data center, a secure building filled with computer hardware, where large quantities of digital information are stored and exchanged. As high-speed digitization takes place across the globe, there is a rapid and growing need for space to store digital data. To meet this need, large numbers of data centers are being built at a rapid tempo. Makes sense, one could say, as larger data storage capacities enable more people to stream their favorite show, or to manage their banking transactions online. Yet, critics point out that the benefits of the large expansion of data center capacity are enjoyed by a small group of big-tech entrepreneurs. The environmental impact of high energy-consuming data centres is perhaps more than the benefits gained, if the larger population is considered. I will argue for the resistance to an expansion of data centers and take the developments in Metropole Region Amsterdam as an example.



Figure 1: A datacenter in Amsterdam Science Park, built in 2017

The Metropole Region Amsterdam (which I will refer to as ‘Amsterdam’) belongs to a region with the most data centers in the world. With this large concentration of data centers, Amsterdam surpasses large European metropolises such as Frankfurt, London and Paris. This is remarkable for an urban area with a population of only 1.5 million people, which suggests that those data centers are not just there to ensure that people from Amsterdam can watch their Netflix show, or upload their holiday pictures on social media. [The municipality of Amsterdam](#) calls the region the ‘European Main Port’ in the field of ICT and praises itself for the good conditions in the area for companies in the ICT sector. Its location and connections, solid infrastructure, energy supply, and knowledge stand in favor of expansion of the data center capacities in the region.

Why would any region want to attract data centers? The municipality of Amsterdam emphasizes the need to support the transformation to a digital society and economy. Although this may be valid, it only justifies the expansion of data center capacity in the region to a limited extent (I will get back to this argument later). Furthermore, the municipality wants to provide an attractive climate for big (international) tech companies, which will partially be enabled by the expansion of data center capacity. The municipality asserts that the growth of the ICT-sector in the Amsterdam region yields several economic benefits, for instance in the form of employment opportunities. Yet, it remains uncertain as to who these benefits will accrue to, or how far this will be from the ‘average citizen’.

This brings me to the costs of data center expansion in the area. [Critics of the data center policy in Amsterdam](#) have pointed out that two-thirds to three-quarters of data center capacity is used by big companies

based abroad, and who are glad to make use of the ‘favorable business climate’ and the low electricity taxes in the Netherlands. A large share of data center capacity, in Amsterdam as well as in other parts of the world is used for rather specific digital activity, which include high-frequency trading in shares, information, and cryptocurrency and online gaming. This suggests that a digital transition does not require an exponential growth in data centres as it is clear that this favoritism towards ‘big tech companies’ fits the broader neo-liberal policy in the Netherlands, essentially favouring multinationals at the expense of small to middle size businesses and citizens. This understanding is crucial for the broader debate around data centers and their expansion, because it demonstrates the influence these companies have.

What makes the expansion of data center capacity problematic is that they are extremely energy intensive. In the Amsterdam area they use more electricity than what all the citizens consume together. In a time of impending energy deficits and sky-high energy prices, allowing more data centers is unjustified. In addition, apart from straining the energy supply, it would obstruct any transition to a renewable energy system. [The Dutch energy grid](#) (and the energy grids in many other countries) is severely overloaded. More data centers will only put pressure on this network, while there is not enough space for houses to connect to it in order to move away from natural gas. Moreover, the expansion of data center capacity can never be covered with the currently available renewable energy, with new centers powered by energy from fossil fuels. In allowing the creation of more data centers the municipality of Amsterdam would be jeopardizing the fulfillment of its climate goals.

In conclusion, developments around expansion of data center capacity in the Amsterdam region illustrate how this, without accurate regulation, can lead to a skewed distribution of costs and benefits. Most people in Amsterdam may not enjoy the direct benefits of this expansion, but pay the price for it because of the added pressure data centers put on existing energy problems. Without suggesting that data centers are a bad idea, I think it is important to raise questions regarding data, energy use and equity, and on distribution costs and benefits that arise from the decisions made by the State.

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Human Rights violations further besmirch FIFA's bad name

Rohan Sanjith

Every four years, whether you're an avid football fan or hardly enjoy the sport; you'll find yourself surrounded by the FIFA World Cup. Uruguay played host to the 1930 FIFA World Cup that began the football heritage, often deemed the greatest sporting event. The 2018 Russian World Cup saw 3.57 billion viewers tune into a month's long occasion, where 32 teams battled to earn their name in the history books.¹ It's safe to say that football has a certain grip on the world's population; often uniting people in conflicting times, or so it did...

2015 saw FIFA face a world of pain, as a bribery and corruption scandal took up several months of headlines all over the world. More than two dozen FIFA officials and their associates were implicated in a 24-year self-enrichment scheme that reached the highest levels of FIFA management.² Central to the scandal were the bribery accusations connected to awarding the hosting rights for the 2018 Russian World Cup and 2022 World Cup to Qatar.

In short, FIFA hosts a World Cup bidding process to decide the hosts of subsequent World Cups. Usually, 7 years prior to the competition being held, a 3-4 week window is offered to its member nations to express interest in hosting the event.³ The interested parties then apply in conjunction with government support and are lodged with FIFA. Each valid applicant then has a year to finalise their bid, outlining what the cost

structure will look like for stadia, required infrastructure etc. Finally, it comes down to the 24 most executive FIFA members putting all bids to a vote and deciding the applicants success.

Qatar

The 2022 FIFA World Cup was the first to be held in the Arab world, with the Qatari government investing an estimated cost of \$220 billion, making this the most expensive World Cup to date. The sheer buzz and magnitude of this event caused a global attraction that drawing millions of supporters from all over the world to travel and prop up their nations attempt at winning the greatest prize in football. It is therefore an honour bestowed upon the host nation, an opportunity to broadcast and display what their country has to offer with regards to their culture, the people and commercially most important, tourism. 64 matches being held in eight venues across five cities makes for a great sprawl across the country, showing tourists every edge of the nation. However, the process in which Qatar had secured this bid from FIFA has been under scrutiny and a large magnifying glass was placed over this event.

The Human rights watch published a 42 page guide, "Qatar: FIFA World Cup 2022 - Human Rights Guide for Reporters" that summarises concerns regarding Qatar's preparation for the event and the broader problems of protecting human rights in the country.⁴ Following years of migrant labour and serious human rights abuses in Qatar, the stage was to be set. It is astonishing to see the manner in which the public seems to have digested this information, regardless of the media attention on the topic. This dark side of the tournament seems to be overshadowing the game of football, but even the already existing magnifying glass on this event doesn't seem to enlarge this problem to a great enough extent. FIFA granted this bid in 2010 without discussing the issues of human rights and worker conditions for the migrant workers needed to construct the massive infrastructure.

FIFA also failed to examine the ongoing human rights concerns regarding journalists, or discrimination against women and LGBT people.

Despite repeated warnings from workers and civil society groups, FIFA has failed to impose strong conditions to protect worker's rights and has become a compliant enabler of the abuse faced by its employees. There is reported illegality in workers wages and injuries at work that are unethical.⁵ Qatar has long been in the headlines regarding multiple human rights violations; the world cup spotlights these faults in the system that affect the common people of Qatar.

Nations Acting Out

"Please, now let's focus on the football". FIFA asked the 32 teams participating in the tournament no to initiate any protest or criticism of the emirate for its human rights violation.⁶ The European Football Association did not agree and rejected this request. They stated: "We will continue to fight for human rights". National teams such as Denmark adopted approaches to show their protest while toeing the line of behaviour expected by FIFA. and wore toned down" jerseys in their protest, with a completely black third kit as a symbol of mourning for the 6,500 migrant workers who died building the infrastructure for the World Cup.⁷ The Australian national team issued a video criticising Qatar for its archaic human rights legislation, and demanded the decriminalisation of homosexual relationships, which are strictly forbidden in the country.⁸

In response, Gianni Infantino and Fatma Samoura [the president and general secretary of FIFA] issued a letter that asked nations to "...focus on the football". In essence, not to ruin the fun of a billion people despite the rights of a few million people being violated. Ironically, the letter then goes on to state "No one people or culture or nation is better than any other".

The fact that Denmark's "soft protest" was the most outspoken any country has been on this topic, warrants anger towards other footballing nations. As a fan this brings into question whether their silence is because nations sense the issue at hand isn't important or they don't want trouble with FIFA. I would have liked to see the more prestigious nations such as Brazil, Argentina etc. to make a statement which would have drawn media attention. "The silent are equally guilty" rings scarily true in this instance. It begs the question: are nations scared to anger FIFA? An organisation is only given the power by the nations themselves. I would have liked to see more outrage and unity from the qualified nations, that hold such a large voice and could have instigated the much needed investigation into this matter. For without learning from our history, how are we ever going to correct it?

Where to now?

The lack of character, and ignorance displayed by FIFA has shaken many fans to their core. A cherished sports event that was once seen to unite the world, its many people and religions is now a symbol of the open oppression of people. Greed and corruption have rotten its very core. A study conducted in the UK by the insights agency Opinium, found that 34% of fans plan to watch fewer matches this World Cup and 52% of fans think that mainstream media has the responsibility to raise awareness regarding these social concerns.

— Has mainstream media taken a backseat in this issue? And has social media too allowed such an unethical phenomenon to go unnoticed? I think not as, individually, this information has been widely spread and reported diligently by all outlets. It is a perception issue that we have at play here. Despite the news of widespread violations, the general public has looked away. The World Cup and it's prestige has swayed the fans, the sentimental value attached to the event allowing them to overlook these violations of human rights.

It doesn't help that simultaneously an egregious war is being waged in Ukraine that garners a lot of the world's attention, as it should. But are we forgetting the Qatari and migrant workers who helped create this momentous event that we all love and hold close to our hearts? As a lifelong fan of the sport, with heartfelt memories of this event and what it means to my family, I can say it's not a proud day for football as a sport.

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Footnotes:

¹ See 2022 FIFA World Cup (2022) Wikipedia.

² See article '2015 FIFA corruption scandal' (Nov 16 2022) *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

³ See article 'How Does the FIFA World Cup Bidding Process Work?'

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⁵ See article 'Qatar: Rights abuses stain FIFA World Cup'

⁶ See 'FIFA clashes with European countries over human rights at the Qatar World Cup.'

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Why does Bad Bunny make Spanish people dance but Chopin doesn't ?

Carla Robaina Rodríguez

Have you ever been to a party or a club to dance to classical music? In Berlin, there is a club called [Yellow Lounge](#) where they play live classical music, yet the audience doesn't dance but sits and listens carefully. Why don't we party to classical music? In the 18th century, it used to be very common to go to a ball and dance to the music of a live orchestra. However, nowadays unless you are part of a Ball Society in a European country such as Austria or Germany, it is most likely you have never been invited or even interested to go dance at a classical music party. We have collectively grown uninterested in casually dancing with our friends and strangers to classical music, most probably as a consequence of becoming more interested in dancing to other styles of music.

In Spain, reggaeton is one of the most played music styles at clubs, parties, and almost anywhere. This popularity and motivation to dance to a specific style of music can be observed in Spanish people's brain activity. In a study conducted last year by Martín Fernández and their team in Tenerife (Canary Islands), they explored how a group of young Spanish people reacted to different styles of music. Scientific research on how the brain perceives music is quite extensive, but the interactions between the auditory and motor areas had never been compared between different styles of music.

While the auditory cortex of the brain helps in recognizing and processing music, the effects of music in the motor cortex will guide you to move or dance. The participants in this Spanish study were non-musicians, which meant that any activation in the motor areas would indicate a motivation to dance instead of an impulse to play an instrument. They tested four different types of music: reggaeton, classical, electronic, and folk, and then compared people's brain activity between the different styles.

In their results, they found similar activation at the level of the auditory cortex but found differences in the activity of motor areas. The most significant difference was shown between the brain's responses to reggaeton and classical music, where motor areas were greatly activated when listening to reggaeton and barely activated when exposed to classical music. This suggests that young Spanish people are more likely to move their bodies to a song like "Tití me preguntó" by Bad Bunny¹ than "Nocturne Op. 9 No. 2" by Chopin. Additionally, they don't even show a motivation to dance to classical music.

This is in line with the amount of exposure we have to nightlife dancing to classical songs, which in Spain is close to none. However, as discussed earlier, in the 18th century it was pretty common to dance to an orchestra playing Mozart, so perhaps back in those days, people's motor areas would have been activated by listening to classical music. Following this idea, let's take another perspective, and imagine conducting this same experiment in the Netherlands. While in Spain young people are widely exposed to reggaeton, in the Netherlands there is a huge electronic dance music culture. Therefore, the Dutch youth might show greater activity in motor areas when listening to electronic music

compared to reggaeton, folk, and classical music. This way, it's fascinating how societal events, our local culture, and our personal surroundings, such as friends' music tastes, clubs, parties, and our own music preferences, shape our brain activity.

Our brain's switch from partying and shaking our bodies to classical music has deteriorated so much, that , nowadays, we find it amusing or even comical to watch a person dance to classical music as if they were at a club. A vivid example of this can be seen in the response to some viral videos by @iamchrstopher dancing to “[The Nutcracker Suite](#)” played by the London Symphony Orchestra or “[Fight of the Bumblebee](#)” by Nikolai Rimsky Korsakov. You can check them out on TikTok and see how they make you feel.

Furthermore, some music styles evolved as global movements of human rituals. For instance, electronic music was born as a rebellion, a sense of freedom; and religious music is used to express devotion and connection to a higher deity. These types of music are very different, yet what they have in common is that some of their dance cultures can make an audience achieve a state of “higher feeling”. This ability of the brain to reach a divine state is most likely a type of trance, an experience of semi-consciousness where one is present in the physical world (physically conscious) but unaware of it (mentally unconscious). The performance of these music rituals suggests the activation of motor areas for dancing, and furthermore the shaping of brain networks of consciousness, to achieve a higher state of mind.

This way, musical human rituals are an interesting subject that goes beyond dancing and connects us to the mysteriousness of the biological origins of human consciousness.

¹ Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio, known artistically as Bad Bunny, is a Puerto Rican singer and rapper. He is one of the biggest latin artists and a reggaetón icon, as well as the most streamed artist on Spotify globally for the past two years.

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The little-known treasures of Kongur Lake

Satheesh Muthu Gopal

The very first time I came to know about the Kongur lake was from the Tamil book *Iyarkkai Varalaru* (Natural History) written by Mr Mohammed Ali. The Kongur lake is located 25 km from Palani and the lake receives water from Shanmuga Nadhi which originates from the Palani Hills in Tamil Nadu, South India. I came to know that the lake is a heavenly location for many migratory birds. So I began visiting the lake since 2009 and recorded the birds. Once I shared my experience with the writer Mr Theodore Baskaran, well-known for his wonderful essays on nature. He acknowledged my views and shared his experiences as he too comes from the nearby town of Dharapuram. This remote location without noise and light pollution has become a peaceful habitat for the avifauna which migrates from distant places.



Figure 1: Rose Ringed Parakeet

We heard about a few poaching incidents of birds and conducted an awareness campaign among the villagers, explaining why birds are important, and how they are linked to agriculture. We also distributed cloth bags with various environmental 'quotes'. The *Acacia nilotica* (babul) trees inside the lake provide a roosting place for many bird species. We requested the local people not to cut the trees in the summer when the water level goes down. I have visited the lake during all the seasons of the year and each time I have had a wonderful experience and new lifers. I usually go birding in the evening to see the birds return to roost on the babul trees.

A myriad of Woolly-necked storks, Painted Storks, Asian Openbill storks, Spot-billed Pelicans, Darters, Cormorants, egrets and starlings can be seen in and around the lake. In addition, there are Spot-billed ducks, Northern Shoveler, Garganey and Pin-tailed ducks. The most common resident is the Eurasian Collared-Dove which I observed in all the seasons. Once I saw a flock of Little Ringed Plovers rolling near a waterhole in April when the lake was almost dry. Though I have visited this lake for over 10 years I have never seen the water hyacinth. As there are no effluents that are polluting the water here the quality of water is still good and helps both the farmers and the birds. There are palmyra trees on the lake bund which provide good shelter for the Rose-ringed parakeets, the Spotted Owlet and the Indian rollers. In October 2012, we sighted 2 Greater Flamingos in the lake. Usually, the flamingos prefer the coastal areas for their habitat. So it was a surprise to see them in the lake, and one of them was a juvenile.



Figure 2: Spotted Owlet

The local birder, the Late Mr. Shanmugam Kalidass recorded 113 bird species in the lake alone. He spent a good amount of time around this lake and did some great documentation. The Western-reef heron and Whiskered tern are his remarkable records in the lake. As both species are mainly found in the coastal regions his records are important.

The water level was too low in October as the



Figure 3: Whiskered Tern photographed by the Late Mr. Shanmugam Kalidass

dams were closed, storing the monsoon rain. Man made dams control the natural flow of water which impact wildlife that depend on fresh water. As the main source of water for this lake is the Palani hills, the protection of natural habitat is important in the hills too. For instance, due to the encroachment of exotic trees in the upper Palanis, the Nilgiri Pipit lost its habitat. In addition, the grasslands are unable to store the monsoon rain and the water flows down to the dam. Once the natural habitat of the Nilgiri Pipit provided water for many freshwater species in the plains.

The lake is surrounded by agricultural fields, with millets being one of the common crops. There are many bird species that feed on millet and these can be spotted here. The Indian Silverbill is one of the species common around the lake. The Green Bee-eaters can be seen commonly too and the Bay Backed Shrike, a migratory bird, can be seen between October and March. Egrets and Cormorants prefer to perch on the snags in the lake during the evening. During sunset, it is always a pleasure to see the birds coming back to the lake to roost.

The water management in Tamil Nadu is well-planned and many centuries old, and Kongur is one of the best examples. The water comes from the river through a canal and once the lake is full the discharge flows through the canal to the next lake. The connectivity between the lakes is very good in the state but, due to the loss of habitat in the hills, and new dams, natural cycles of these water bodies are being adversely affected.



Figure 4: Indian Silverbill

Though there is not much disturbance for the birdlife here, the boom of windmills coming up in recent years need to be considered. Are they a threat to birdlife? The larger issue of climate change has made states move to renewable energy, which is understandable. But installing the windmills near the birding hotspots should be considered before taking this step.

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***Landscapes of Silence, From
Childhood to the Arctic,*
by Hugh Brody. London: Faber &
Faber, 2022**

Malvika Gupta and Felix Padel

This is a book of outstanding depth and acumen, where an anthropologist reflects on a lifetime's work with indigenous people through a particular lens. That of Silence, and being silenced, when certain topics become taboo to talk about.

The book charts the author's life, from a childhood in Sheffield where his parents' silence about the Holocaust they survived haunted his upbringing; through Israel, where he found similar silences, compounded by silence about atrocities towards Palestinians; to immersion into the lives of Inuit, and their language, Inuktitut, in Canada's far north.

Like so many indigenous languages, including most of India's tribal languages, Inuktitut has suffered a drastic decline recently, largely due to schools that banned it, and youth's immersion into virtual reality - a generational gap that has undermined young people's interest in the countless stories that used to enthrall families from the mouths of elders back when Brody did his first fieldwork in the 1970s.

But the silencing of vibrant voices is not just the decline of a powerful language and storytelling. Invited to return to Inuit lands some years later, Brody was presented with a shocking list of names: of hundreds of young Inuit who had committed suicide in recent years. It seems the Inuit had suffered one of the highest suicide rates recorded worldwide, and Brody's quest to understand why involved the journey of this book, which also became 'an anthropology of myself'. He realised he 'couldn't write about others and not disclose who I am'. This involved revisiting his Inuit work in a new way.

One of the disturbing facts he reveals is his own attempted suicide as a teenager; and his understanding that this came out of the emptiness of life dominated by the silence of things that aren't to be spoken about. Sharing this deepens his connection to the Inuit story. When he first lived in the Arctic it was with an Inuit family who invited him in and taught him through deep immersion into their language and daily life of hunting and surviving in an extreme environment. He felt brought back into connection with life by the warmth of people sharing their stories, from myths and legends to telling one's daily activities.

His second fieldwork location – very distant from the first, across the vast Arctic landscape – was in a remote island settlement where several white schoolteachers lived and taught. One particular schoolteacher used to visit Brody regularly, though avoided by the community and never inviting Hugh into his own house. This was suddenly broken into and trashed by an Inuit youth, who then disappeared into the distance on a snowmobile, never to be seen again – an early encounter with Inuit youth suicide.

Later, this schoolteacher was convicted of sexual abuse. Evidence suggests that he had coerced a large number of Inuit youth into sexual acts that had devastating, lifelong impacts on them and their families; and that many other schoolteachers had behaved similarly. What shocked Hugh was not just that a man he had known and 'befriended' had done this, but that no-one in the community who had known or sensed this was going on had talked to him about it – another dimension of oppressive silence about things that cannot be talked about.

'By going to the edge we can discover what lies at the centre.' Brody writes of this book, and his life's journey, as a move from the centre to the edges and back to the centre. Retelling his life journey in this way uncovers interpersonal silences in very

different spaces and cultures to evoke a larger politics and history as it unfolded in these seemingly disconnected locations.

Sexual abuse in boarding schools for indigenous children is terrifyingly widespread: residential schools throughout North America and Australia are now notorious for this, and many other countries have similar hidden histories. In India's tribal schools such abuse has surfaced repeatedly in recent years.

The only illustrations in this book are a series of beautifully drawn maps, locating his European history and Israel-Palestine - showing the demographic displacement of Palestinians within just a few years - as well as the remote communities in Canada's far north where Brody lived and learnt.

The courage and vulnerability of revealing one's own experience makes this book an outstanding contribution to anthropology, raising fundamental questions about the nature of objectivity, and whether deeper truths aren't revealed by basing one's methodology in a trained subjectivity. In social sciences, as in so many professions, one is constantly taught to 'be objective' and 'lay your feelings aside'. Arguably, this perpetrates a form of violence and silence. Behind this word 'subjectivity' is the whole quest of self-knowledge. We're not taught even the basics of self-knowledge at school. Yet if one doesn't know oneself, how can one know other people? How 'objectively' can one know people from another culture if one doesn't thoroughly understand oneself and one's relationship with them? This involves one's own positionality in class, politics, education and much more.

Brody tells how his first teacher of Inuktitut once told him why he devoted such care to teaching him. Working with indigenous peoples in the years since, he 'realised that Anaviapik had assigned me a much larger, long-term task. I was to join with him, and everyone, in challenging the forces that were threatening to wreck or appropriate everything that was of value - respect between people, caring for one another, the languages of those

who lived in these places on the edge, and all knowledge they carry, and, above all, the land itself.'

Storytelling is intrinsic to people's link with the land. 'Inuit, and other hunter-gatherers, have stayed on their lands without seeking to transform them, and have made linkage to those lands a core of their personal and collective stories.' Brody is telling his own story in this book, and in doing so, breaking the silence - and showing how silences are related and stories stop. 'In the conquest and domination of colonial frontiers, whole ways of life are devalued and silenced; stories cannot be told.'

Similar silences dominate many of our lives. Voices that question or try to debate official media narratives are silenced, and silence grows between polarised viewpoints. Anthropology can have a liberating role in opening up a wider social, political and even self-awareness.

The book starts with a list of Inuktitut words for different forms of snow, and ends with the concept of *iliva*, which Brody translates as fear of the unknown of a kind that induces silence. Learning an indigenous language Brody understands as a form of resistance, and an affirmation that 'Capitalism and its colonial frontiers are just one version of humanity...'

In *Landscapes of Silence*, we find storytelling revived as a means of writing about indigenous people, reinforcing a sense of their oral culture, and how much they have to teach us about what it means to be human.

Malvika Gupta is an anthropologist; Felix Padel is a writer and activist.

NATURE NOTES



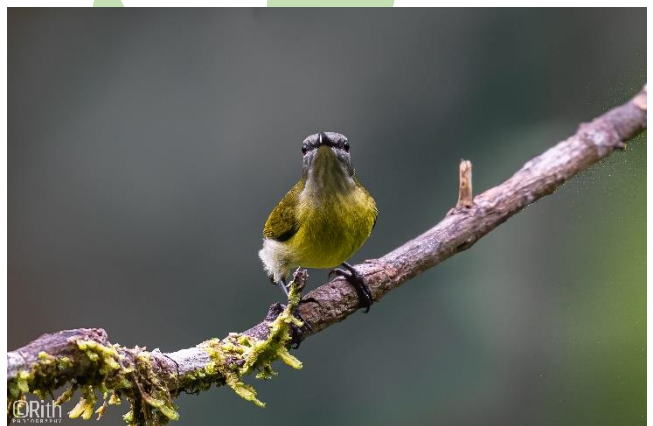
Yellowish White-eye



Sulphur-billed Nuthatch



Elegant Tit



Mountain Sunbird (female)



Mountain Sunbird (male)



Blue-headed Fantail

Pictures by Vannarith Nob from NTFP Exchange Cambodia. The photos were taken in the forests of Imugan barangay in the province of Nueva Vizcaya, the Philippines



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