

mahua

News and conversations about the real economy of India



Dear friends,

In January this year, about a hundred of us came together in Auroville to collectively reimagine wealth and economics in our personal lives, our organisations and communities, our country and the world. We enquired on

How do we expand our idea of wealth to include its multiple forms?

How do we rebuild our economy based on relationships and trust?

What is the worldview that can help us heal from the false notions of scarcity and move us to experiencing abundance?

How do we redefine ownership as trusteeship?

Here is the link to [the detailed report](#) of the gathering.

So much has happened since then. COVID has flagged off a new era which is seeing more and more individuals, organisations and communities coming together seeking to understand what went wrong with our conception of the machine-like social and economic structures we have created and inhabit, and how we can reimagine and transform them.

Through this newsletter, we attempt to weave together the many conversations and news about the different initiatives and experiments that are aspiring to build back the *real* economy. *Real* economy because what we now have is an illusionary one based on false notions of scarcity, of infinite natural capacities and of wealth. A *real* economy will restore its rightful place as a subsystem of and in service of Ecology and Society.

We also aspire to weave together the personal with the political, the organizational with the systemic, for we believe that Change needs to be integral for it to shift paradigm and to sustain.

This being the week of Gandhi Jayanthi, we launch this news portal seeking the blessings of Gandhiji who articulated among the most powerful, comprehensive and compelling visions for how to organize our economy so that we may live peacefully and harmoniously with each other and with the Earth.

We invite you to contemplate and journey with us in all the creative ways that you can!

Warmly,
Team Mahua



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Systemic



Image of migrant workers walking back home to their villages during pandemic, taken from theweek.in

But there is no end to the victims destroyed in the fire of civilization. Its deadly effect is that people come under its scorching flames believing it to be all good. They become utterly irreligious and, in reality, derive little advantage from the world. Civilization is like a mouse gnawing while it is soothing us.

(Hind Swaraj)

God forbid that India should ever take to industrialism after the manner of the West. If an entire nation of 300 million took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts. Unless the capitalists of India help to avert the tragedy by becoming trustees of the welfare of the masses, and by devoting their talents not to amassing wealth for themselves but to the service of the masses in an altruistic spirit, they will end either by destroying the masses or being destroyed by them.

(Young India, 21-11-1931)

- Mahatma Gandhi

vikalp sutra

networking & action for local self-reliance & dignified livelihoods



These women are walking for a different reason from the migrant workers who walked home in pain and disappointment. These are dalit and pastoral women from Telangana carrying local seeds at a festival. They are walking with a sense of healthy pride and prosperity, sharing their abundance with others. *(Read their story on pg. 10)* On the one hand, the economic lockdown has taken away the livelihoods of about 400 million migrant workers. On the other hand, this has opened up an unprecedented opportunity to reimagine and create sustainable, local economies across rural India.

In June 2020, Vikalp Sangam initiated the 'Vikalp Sutra', a collective non-hierarchical platform to facilitate dignified livelihoods, worker rights and

economic democracy in India. The vision is to promote self-reliant local economies based on the principles of dignity, justice, equity, peace and ecological sustainability.

Currently, the following regional networks and organisations are part of Vikalp Sutra: Collaboration COVID Action Support Group (CoAST), [Rapid Community Response to COVID \(RCRC\)](#), [Foundation for Ecological Security \(FES\)](#), [Revitalising Rainfed Agriculture \(RRA\) Network](#), [Goonj](#), [WASSAN](#), [ComMutiny](#), [Non-traditional Livelihoods Network \(NTLN\)](#), [Welthungerhilfe](#), [Just Change](#), [ASHA](#), PAEG. For further details, please see the [Vikalp Sutra flyer](#) here and listen to the [30-minute conversation seeding the Vikalp Sutra](#) at a Vikalp Sangam Core Group meeting.

Vikalp Sutra invites organisations, institutions, government agencies, businesses, support groups, networks and individuals who are interested in participating in building-back rural India better, to join this collective process.

Please write to us at vikalpsutra@vikalpsangam.org

Just Change 2.0

building collaborative markets for solidarity and resilience



Just Change India | Tribal |
Forest Products | Adivasi Collective
www.justchangeindia.com



[ACCORD](#) is an organisation that has been working in the spirit of solidarity and co-learning with the adivasi communities of Gudalur in the Nilgiris. When tea prices crashed with liberalization in the 1990s weakening the Tea economy of Gudalur, ACCORD started 'Just Change' in 2006, an initiative to experiment with a collaborative and resilient market based on relationships and solidarity.

In this model, the entire market chain is regulated by the member communities, ensuring no money leaks out of the collective. The model looks at every producer as a consumer of other products as well. Producers get paid better, consumers get discounts, and the investors get to participate in the decisions on matters ranging from philosophical to practical. In addition, even most of the infrastructure involved was collectively owned by the community further ploughing the wealth back in. Unfortunately, in 2015, with two of the main shareholders closing shop, Just Change was also forced to wind up.

The Alternative Economies Vikalp Sangam saw the revival of Just Change – Just Change 2.0, as the young professionals who are its new members chose to call it.

During the lockdown which coincided with the honey gathering season, ACCORD was left with a huge backlog of honey that had been collected as well as a cash-flow problem. The 'Pay now, get-honey later' campaign got the support of more than 850 people from 24 states who paid for 1,500 kg of honey upfront to support the adivasis. This has really encouraged the team to start thinking about taking this to the next level.



Listen to the journey of ACCORD and Just Change in this [recording of the vikalp vārtā with Stan Thaekekar and Anil Misquith](#)

If you are interested in joining 'Just Change' as a conscious consumer, producer or investor, please write to us at secretariat@justchangeindia.com

COMPLEXITY UNIVERSITY

About Engage Testimonials

JOIN US

The Gigatonne Challenge

A radical new leadership programme.

Oct/Nov/Dec 2020

Online | 2 Weeks | Advanced

Complexity University invites bold and dynamic City Teams from around the world to join the Gigatonne Challenge Course. Guest Faculty include: Helena Norberg Hodge, Charles Eisenstein, Manish Bapna, Rob Hopkins, Bayo Akomolafe, Manish Jain.

We invite you to be brave - to join us and learn how to build a new post-Covid economy that is fair, providing meaningful work for everyone, while at the same time ensuring both the planet and people are thriving. We call this the “gigatonne economy,” an economy designed to ensure that we’re not emitting gigatons of greenhouse gas emissions. Our vision is for thousands of teams around the world to practically start building this gigatonne economy. It’s time to build something extraordinary together.

Register for this 2-week programme to learn how to create a Gigatonne Economy at complexity.university/the-gigatonne-challenge

The New-world Current-Sees!



As more and more of the world is waking up to the falsity, vulnerability, exploitative and oppressive nature of mainstream money, numerous local study circles and local currency initiatives are sprouting across the world. With a growing interest across India too, we are planning a series of explorations and initiatives on this theme.

Would you like to join in the collective exploration of mutual-credit systems, local / community / alternative currencies, time-banking, etc.?

Email us at aev.sangam@gmail.com with a note about your interest and we will keep you informed about events, courses and conversations around it.



RE-IMAGINING THE FUTURE

PEOPLES' AGENDA FOR A POST COVID ECONOMY

Centre for Financial Accountability (CFA) aims to bring in accountability in financial institutions who lend money to development projects, through research and campaigns. CFA organized a series of webinars called 'Re-imagining the future' the recordings of which are listed below.

(Click on the title for information about the speakers and to view the video recording.)

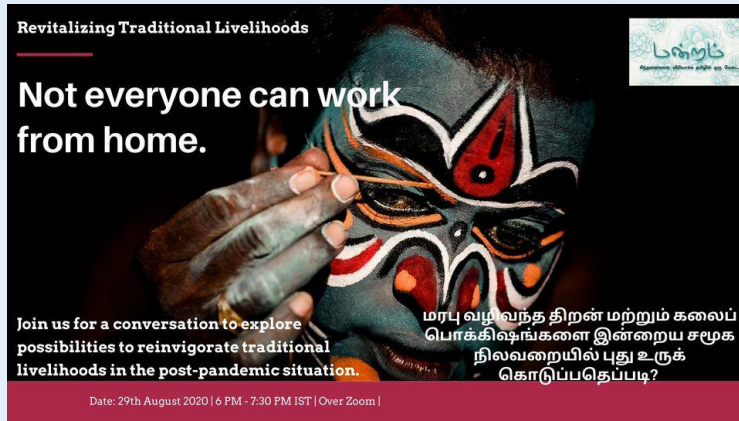
1. [Inaugural session](#)
2. [Towards A Transformative Political Economy](#)
3. [Asserting Livelihood with Dignity-1: Jal, Jangal, Jameen](#)
4. [Re-Visioning Traditional Knowledge, Artisanal Livelihood and Practices](#)
5. [Labour Rights and Future of Collective Bargaining](#)
6. [Re-visioning India's Unorganised Sector](#)
7. [Frontline Workers: Claims, Reality and Future](#)
8. [Asserting Livelihood with Dignity-3: Urban Livelihoods](#)
9. [Employment Guarantee and the Role of State](#)
10. [The Future of Banking and Finance in India:](#)
11. [Digital Economy: Outliers of the Future?](#)
12. [Envisioning an Accountable & Transparent Public Banking System](#)
13. [COVID as a Cover for Enhanced International Finance?](#)
14. [Urban Sustainability: Practice, Challenges and Way Forward](#)
15. [Unfiltered Narratives: Struggle to Reclaim Indigenous Communities Rights over Resources](#)
16. [Re-Imagining Education for Equitable Democratic and Inclusive Society](#)
17. [Universal Health Care - Dream or Reality?](#)
18. [Envisioning India's Energy and Power Sector](#)
19. [Online Education: Whose Agenda? Whose Benefit?](#)
20. [Rethinking Tourism](#)
21. [Rebooting Infrastructure & Development Paradigm: Discussing Alternative Frameworks for Inclusive and Sustainable Models](#)
22. [Blue Revolution Meets Green Revolution- Caste and Class Dynamics of Land-Use Change](#)
23. [Blue Revolution meets Green Revolution-Modernising Food Production Response by Women in Resistance](#)
24. [Radical Political and Economic Democracy](#)
25. [Towards an Ideal EIA framework](#)
26. [Valedictory Session](#)

Organised by: All India Union of Forest Working People | BIRSA | Centre for Financial Accountability | DASAM | Delhi Forum | Environics Trust | Environment Support Group | Financial Accountability Network India | Focus on the Global South | Indian Social Action Forum | Institute for Democracy and Sustainability | Jan Swasthya Abhiyan | Kalpavriksh | Let India Breathe | Mahalir Association for Literacy Awareness and Rights | MAUSAM | mines, minerals & People | Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan | National Alliance of Peoples Movements | National Confederation of Officers Associations | New Trade Union Initiative | People's First | People's Resource Centre | Pakistan-India Peoples Forum for Peace and Democracy | The Research Collective | Vikalp Sangam | YUVA

Subscribe to CFA's updates and conversations on
[Youtube](#) [Twitter](#) [Facebook](#) [Soundcloud](#)

Revitalising Traditional Livelihoods

conversations hosted by Mandram in Indic native languages



Mandram Indic Talks

Foundation is a platform created to curate

innovative ideas, insights and concepts in native

languages of India through

inclusive public discourse.

In 2018, Maggie Inbamuthiah and I started Mandram as a forum to foster creative imaginations and explore deep, beautiful thoughts in Indic native languages. Without polarizing politics. Without seducing advertisements. Without amusements and disguised vanity vehicles we take for granted in public discourse. The inspiration to start Mandram came from listening to a talk by Dr. Ganesh Devy of the [Baasha Research Foundation](#)

We invite Scientists, Linguists, Writers, Economists, Technologists, Artist(e)s, Farmers, Homemakers, Educationists and everyone else to share what they have discovered in their lives and hold an open dialogue about the questions they provoke in us. We strive to share the videos of the talks across the breadth of the country and promote vibrant, meaningful, intelligent conversations in many ways.

When we decided to pivot Mandram during the pandemic, we realized that our standard thali approach of bringing different speakers to speak in one single forum wasn't as relevant as before. We asked ourselves "How can we at Mandram

steward change that will inspire us to go back to our roots and catalyse social change?" This led us to starting Mandram Dialogues on Traditional Tamizh Livelihoods with a two-fold intention.

* To bring together constructive energies who can help revitalize traditional arts and livelihoods in the age of pandemic?

* To hold the space for social impact entrepreneurs to fall in love with our roots and create newer approaches to reinvigorate livelihoods which are at the verge of extinction?

With our community of venture capitalists, change makers, innovators and technologists already a part of Mandram, it seemed possible to dream of new possibilities and collaborations for such a revitalisation. We started with *Tamizh Koothu* tradition, an ancient art form which brings together music, dance, theatre and storytelling, as it was the closest to our hearts. The participants felt deeply evoked by the power of the tradition in helping them deal with existential double-binds in their lives.

- Venky Ramachandran

If you are an initiative working for the revitalisation of traditional livelihoods, please connect with us at mandramorg@gmail.com

Subscribe to Mandram Talks at [Youtube](#) [Twitter](#) [Facebook](#) [Soundcloud](#)

Community



Circle Garden community members of the Pondy Food System

Growth will not be a pyramid with the apex (the top of the pyramid-Privileged) sustained by the bottom (Underprivileged). But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual. Therefore the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it.

- Mahatma Gandhi

Deccan Development Society

a self-reliant village economy in Telangana



Until four decades ago, starvation and deprivation was the reality of thousands of villagers of Medhak district of Andhra Pradesh. 35 years ago, [Deccan Development Society \(DDS\)](#) facilitated dalit women from 70 villages to form groups called 'Sangams' and started with a people's plan. Through a systematic revival of local millets, traditional practices and local culture, these villages soon moved from being food receivers to food providers. The women set up and operate their own millet-based PDS. Today, 80% of them grow all the food and nutrition they need in their small farms. Their achievement inspired even the Government of India to introduce millets in the PDS. Every household conserves 15-20 seed varieties in a seed-bank. Every village has a community seed-bank conserving 70-80 local seeds. They also have their own autonomous healthcare system based on local knowledge. Using plant medicine, they cure more than 50 diseases in their villages free of cost.

They run their own autonomous market in the neighbouring town where they sell their excess produce. A 40% dividend is offered to all the members every year. All decisions are taken democratically with women leading this process.

Their crowning glory is their 15-year old Community Media Trust, through which they make their own films on a range of issues, which are circulated worldwide and translated into multiple languages. They also run an all-women FM radio station.

As the covid-crisis hit, these self-reliant villages have not only been food self-sufficient, but have been distributing nutritious millet-based food to migrant workers and others in need and contributing to the District Relief Fund. Through their recently launched [ConFarm](#), where urban consumers pay upfront for the produce, they have been feeding the cities through the crisis.

Here is a short film about DDS [Cultivating Sovereignty](#) and below, the video recording of the vikalp vārtā with Satheesh (co-founder of DDS), Chandramma, Narsamma, Mayuree and Narsamma.



*DDS team is happy to assist those interested in enabling self-reliant village economies.
Please write to jayasri.dds@gmail.com*

Pondy Food System

a local food and farming network in Pondicherry city

In 2018, the French Institute of Pondicherry launched a platform to bring together local food initiatives – organic farms, restaurants, organic food stores, food processing units and communities like the local fisherfolk – through their annual Local Food Festival. During the pandemic, a fresh impetus was given to this seed idea which soon grew into a more engaged network linking all the local food and farming initiatives in and around Pondicherry. This is being done with support from the Pondicherry Government.



Citizens formed the Circle Garden team, with support from Krishna from Solitude Farm (Auroville) and have been creating permaculture gardens in community spaces, schools, universities, hospitals, cafes, restaurants and private homes. The communities harvest from these circle gardens, cook together local food recipes and share meals in their Fair Food Circles.

Conversations around localisation, non-exploitative and non-discriminatory production practises that enhance the livelihood of vulnerable farming communities, circularity of food chain are a part of these community meals.

The PFS has been connecting with and enabling the local organic farmers to sell their produce to discerning consumers in the city, and organising visits to these farms as well. Starting farmers markets, promoting urban composting, organising cooking workshops and introducing local currencies are different initiatives that are in different stages of planning and actualisation.

Here is [the link to the recording of the Vikalp vārtā](#), a presentation by Anjali and Gijs, stewards of the PFS, followed by a lively conversation with stewards of similar initiatives from different towns and cities across India.

*If you are a member of an active group in your town / city working on localising the food system, please write to us at socent@auroville.org.in
We would love to connect with you and journey along!*

Sahaj Foundation

'Reimagining Life and Society' Series

We, at Sahaj Foundation, organised an online gathering on '[Reimagining Economy](#)' in Apr-May 2020 as the first of our ongoing series for re-imagining life and society. The 26 participants read and dialogued 'Kate Raworth's Doughnut Economics', 'J.C.Kumarappa's Economy of Permanence', 'E.F.Schumacher's Small is Beautiful' and 'Charles Eisenstein's Sacred Economics'. Our ongoing gathering (Aug-Oct) is on the theme of 'Understanding and Re-directing Technology'. In the future, we plan to explore themes related to worldview, governance, organizations, currencies etc.

We believe that it is impractical to get the entire society's / economy's design planned by a small group of people, however aligned their values might be to the ideals of love and compassion. In my understanding so far, the future designs of

the economy / society shall co-evolve with more and more people participating in the process in a natural way. As life outside of us is simply a reflection of life inside of us, it ultimately falls on all of us to work on ourselves and get consciously connected to each other at the energetic level. We believe that that is the way we can walk together with love, peace and harmony, in spite of our differences in perspectives or ideologies.

We wish to keep our ways of functioning organic / natural, without planning for projects with institutional funding. At a personal level, I find myself very much inclined towards the experiments related to local-currencies and community sharing.

- Ashish Arora

नया दौर, नयी कल्पना!

VIRTUAL GATHERINGS FOR RE-IMAGINING LIFE AND SOCIETY

WHAT DO YOU SEE?

HOPELESSNESS OR A POSSIBILITY OF TRANSITION?

SAHAJ FOUNDATION
-connecting people with their hearts-

Theme: Re-imagining Economy | April 20, 2020 - May 31, 2020
3 Books | 42 Days | 13 Online Circles | www.sahajfoundation.in

Sahaj Foundation in Himachal Pradesh works with social leaders from across the country who lead initiatives for change in rural and tribal areas, marrying inner change with outer change, and the personal with the systemic.

www.sahajfoundation.in

If you would like to join Sahaj Foundation's online courses, please write to sahajfoundationinfo@gmail.com

Personal



Aparna Rajagopal promoting dairy-free, cow-based zero-waste products for local consumption

“We but mirror the world. All the tendencies present in the outer world are to be found in the world of our body. If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change toward him. This is the divine mystery supreme. A wonderful thing it is and the source of our happiness. We need not wait to see what others do...”

Be the change you wish to see in the world.”

- Mahatma Gandhi



Alivelihoods

coming alive with our livelihoods

The pandemic has unleashed among many things, a certain deepening of search for meaning; meaning of one's life, which naturally extends to include the meaning of one's job. With more earthlings becoming aware of the ways the industrial society is laying waste our outer and inner landscapes pushing people into 'deadlihoods', they are also beginning to look for ways to heal themselves, their communities and the planet with a sense of urgency. "How can I choose a vocation that heals me, makes me come alive as well as take care of my needs? How do I show up for the world that is being born and be supported for that work?" is a question that many young and middle-aged people are asking themselves.

The Alivelihood Project was born out of a small group of us coming together to steward this process of celebrating the alivelihood shapers who have taken the courage to discover their dreams and created livelihoods out of them, and to offer support anyone who is ready 'to take the plunge' and switch to alternative career options.

Stay tuned to learn about the different events and offerings we have planned as our journey together unfolds!

The Alivelihoods Team



The Japanese idea of Ikigai 'the reason for being' is the equivalent of the Indian concept of an individual's swadharma (unique life path), based on her / his swabhāva (innate nature). We are attempting to enable seekers to find their Ikigai.

Alivelihoods Career Mela

Would you like to do work which engages your head, heart and hands and is in harmony with nature?

Are you tired of being exploited at your workplace and engaging in work that exploits our home planet?

Are you tired of employers not acknowledging your vibrant gifts and unique personality?

Are you ready for the big shift?

Join us to start your journey from livelihoods to *Alivelihoods*!

The Mela will bring together changemakers from India and beyond who are seasoned practitioners of varied alivelihoods. The **5-day mela** will enable participants to:

- * explore over 16 eco-careers over the span of 5 days
- * engage in dialogues with alivelihood practitioners to understand the nuances of each career
- * witness simulation of the life ahead if they choose to pursue a particular career
- * identify their purpose, passion and innate values and choose a career that combines the three through workshops and mentorship sessions
- * build skills, community and connections to launch and thrive in their journeys

The registrations for the Mela are open to **ages 15+** and starts from **21st September**. The event will be held in English, with a generous sprinkling of Hindi.

Registration Link: <https://rzp.io/l/alivelihoods>

For more details regarding the program design, please refer to www.alivelihoods.in and for any further information, please write to us at alivelihoods@gmail.com

The Alivelihood Unconference has been dreamed up and designed by friends in the field of change-making and alternative economy active in our Co-host organisations: Shikshantar (Udaipur), Swaraj University (Udaipur), Pitaara Unleashed, Social Entrepreneurship Association (Auroville) with the support of Indian Multiversity Alliance. Partner Organisations for the Mela are Lemon School Of Entrepreneurship, Digital Empowerment Foundation, Bhoomi College, Navgurukul, Creativity Adda, Start Up Oasis, Abhivyakti and Vikalp Sangam

Warmly,
Team Alivelihoods



Alivelihood Podcast Series



Join us every week to listen to exciting interviews and stories that show us the power of curiosity, compassion and courage that have helped different people discover their livelihood and *swadharma*. Click on [Alivelihoods Podcast](#) to listen to our trailer and interviews with alivelihood walkers.

- Rajat Bafna

Are you already living your alivelihood?

We'd love to connect with you!

This is an invitation to you to join us in this important work of our times, in any of the following ways that you can choose from. You can be featured in our online database along with information about what you do and your life journey that got you here. You can share your story in our upcoming webinar series. You can be interviewed for your story to be shared around, which can be in the form of a written story, interview podcast or a short film.

We also invite you to support the journeys of alivelihood-seekers. You may choose to offer regular coaching for those who would like to walk a similar path as you, offer apprenticeship where they can stay and learn with you (while offering their time, skills and energy towards your work) or be available over email / phone in case they need specific assistance. Please write to us at aev.sangam@gmail.com

A Call for Volunteers & Stories!

If you are interested in offering your time and skills in designing, illustrating, creating art and carrying out interviews of stewards of interesting initiatives, please write to us.

If you are involved in any form of experiment around reimagining and creating a radically different economy in your personal life, in your family, community, organization, neighbourhood, village or town, please share your story with us.

aev.sangam@gmail.com

Newsletter curated by

Alex Jensen, Gijs Spoor, Minhaj Ameen, Rohit Parakh, Sangeetha Sriram, Sujatha Padmanabhan



Photo credit: Lakshmi Prabhala

Mahua is an Indian tropical tree known by different names (madhuka, mahwa, mohulo, iluppai and vippa chettu) in different parts of the country. Mahua is a sacred tree of the adivasis across India. Its seeds and sweet flowers are used as both food and medicine. Mahua is abundant and versatile. We see Mahua as a symbol of reviving our sacred connection with the wilderness, the ancient wisdom and knowledge held and celebrated by the original inhabitants of this land and rebuilding an economy that can be of service to Life.