

Follow the Flow of Nature

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“Going with the flow is responding to cues from the universe. When you go with the flow, you’re surfing life force. It’s about wakeful trust and total collaboration with what’s showing up for you” - Danielle LaPorte.

Wakeup call

Quite a lot of literature is available today on ecological conservation. Yet destruction has not ceased. The universe is burdened everyday with loads of garbage and avoidable waste. Consequently, nature has threatened normal life in many ways. Humans are experiencing discomfort and deprivation daily. Water has become scarce. Conditions prevailing in Chennai City is indeed frightening. People now think twice before settling down in Chennai. Even a short visit today to Chennai is scary. Hotels are closed. IT personnel were advised to work from home. Some of the companies are also requesting their employees to bring with them sufficient drinking water. “Major companies in the IT-hub of Old Mahabalipuram Road (OMR) are taking various measures to control water usage, including controlling the water flow from the taps and reducing the number of toilets.”¹ If this is the

condition with the corporate houses, imagine the situation of the slum-dwellers! “Nobody has been spared – the water crisis has brought the rich and the poor, homes and industries to their knees”.²

Conditions of drought taking its toll on people, flora and fauna in different parts of the country are alarming. Unless environmental preservation is undertaken on war footing, life on this planet might be unthinkable. It may not take long for people to desert their own villages and migrate to places where water would be available. Take for instance the case of Uchapuli village in the District of Sivagangai in Tamil Nadu. People of Uchapuli had been experiencing severe drought for the past ten years. A pond that served as a main source of drinking water too has gone dry. Therefore, the inhabitants of the village are slowly moving out to different places. Once a home for 70 families has now been reduced to 15 families. These too may soon evacuate, reports *The Hindu Tamil Thisai*.³

Even the tiny but fertile District of Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu is facing severe drinking water crisis. It is not only because of the shortage in rainfall but also because of poor water management system. Felling of trees and filling of ponds for laying the Four Lane by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) have intensified the water crisis. Regular supply of drinking water was obstructed even as early as 2018. Nagercoil, the capital of Kanyakumari, received drinking water only once in 15 days.⁴ If the situation is so severe in a district as Kanyakumari, which usually gets sufficient rain, the crisis in other parts of the district imaginably can be critical.

The present water crisis in the country is a wakeup call to follow the flow of Nature! Water management needs immediate attention. Saving every single drop becomes the primary concern. It is a challenge that requires national commitment. However, there seems no easy solution to meet the emergency because the storage spaces have shrunk. Political will, an essential ingredient to preserve not only water but also of all livelihood resources, is

rare among the rulers. They seem to be preoccupied with what brings revenue to the treasury and profit to their pockets.

Read, for instance, the review on a new book by Krupa Ge, “Rivers Remember: #ChennaiRains and the Shocking Truth of a Manmade Flood”.⁵ The review states, “Every instance of heavy rainfall in a city reminds us what happens when our urban development authorities and administration ignore the rivers and wetlands in our cities is one more stark pointer.” Obviously, the Governments are apathetic towards the long-standing life issues of their citizens. So, the apparent way out is to follow the flow of nature.

Follow the Flow of Nature

Not the fury of Nature but human avarice and indifference has landed us into the present water predicament. Avarice is reflected in occupying the water sources for human habitat. Indifference could be observed in wasting precious rainwater, blocking its natural flow to the water-bodies. No use blaming Mother Earth! Human community reaps today what it has sown years ago. In the name of development, human persons have drifted far away from the cosmic rhythm. Tampering with the ecosystem has endangered human life. Several species of plants, fish, birds and animals are extinct because of the megaprojects of development. Meddling with the natural flow results in disasters. Nature reacts furiously through calamities, which no force on earth can control.⁶

Following the flow of Nature reflects a lifestyle.⁷ Environmental friendly lifestyle flows from the inner self. It vouches sustainable development that goes with a lifestyle. Ecological preservation springs from a credible way of life. A liberated self never indulges in any type of violation. An integrated self resists violation of every kind. In this case, humans grabbing the land that the rivers had used for years for their natural flow is a gross violation on Nature.

Being one with Nature is to follow the flow. Ecological rhythm is maintained at any cost! Flowing with nature does not infringe on the rights of the other, including that of the eco-system.

Small is Beautiful

Small is beautiful!⁸ Ernst Friedrich Schumacher, the author of “Small Is Beautiful” insisted on “a people-centred economics because that would, in his view, enable environmental and human sustainability.”⁹ He was totally opposed to the contemporary culture and economics of “gigantism”.¹⁰

“Small Is Beautiful” questioned “the shibboleth of economic growth as the central preoccupation of politics; he talked of resource constraints on economic development.”¹¹ An important challenge the book presented then is valid even now: “human happiness would not be achieved through material wealth.”¹³ Schumacher cautioned against issues which

we are now dealing with as levels of mental illness – depression, anxiety, panic attacks, stress – rise and the World Health Organisation predicts that depression will be the second most common health problem in western developed nations by 2020. This was what Schumacher feared, and his answer was “small is beautiful”. Go back to the human scale: human needs and human relationships, and from that springs the ethical response of stewardship to the environment.¹³

The perception that “Small Is Beautiful” came from Leopold Kohr,¹⁴ one of the teachers of Schumacher. Philosophy of Kohr was based on the premise that human stability and prosperity are best served by small-scale political, social, and economic institutions.¹⁵

Small no more looks beautiful. Beauty, in terms of development, has to look large and grandeur. Large projects seem to signify growth. So, Skyscrapers, Shopping Malls, Nuclear Power Plants, International

Transshipment Container Terminals reflect progress. Small schemes, therefore, have to give way to mega projects.

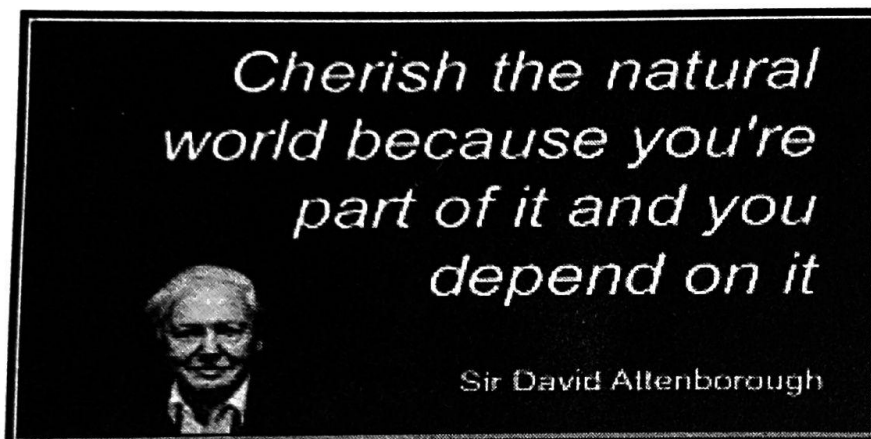
Modern Gurus of development dream big. Their plans, though stifle the natural rhythm, are accorded red carpet welcome. They are free to kill the eco-system. Merciless filling of waterbodies, felling of trees, flattening of hills, etc., are granted legal sanctioning. No need to worry about deforestation or displacement. After all, development means sacrifice. No harm in sacrificing the poor at the altar of development!

Displacing the natives, viz., the tribal landowners or the fish-workers matter little! Alienating them from their livelihood resources is not unjust or immoral! Development absolves every stain of corruption and highhandedness. Corporates and the Multinationals, the doyens of development, are the future! So, they deserve to be served - provided and protected because they do big business. To these deities of development, rulers as well as citizens who opt for development pay unconditional obeisance.

Pope Francis, on the contrary, requests reflection and debate “on certain models of development, production and consumption. It cannot be emphasized enough how everything is interconnected.”¹⁶ Pope Francis recommends, “Authentic development includes efforts to bring about an integral improvement in the quality of human life, and this entails considering the setting in which people live their lives. These settings influence the way we think, feel and act.”¹⁷

Small as beautiful too necessitates a way of life: Following the flow of Nature! Small does not oppose development. Development is for people. If development aims at ultimate wellbeing, it can hardly be destructive. Constructive development ensures the good of humans as well as nature. Not for a selected few but for all, humans and every living organism on earth. Let it be as Pope Francis intends, “May the relationship between man

and nature not be driven by greed, to manipulate and exploit, but may the divine harmony between beings and creation be conserved in the logic of respect and care.”¹⁸



Footnotes

- ¹ T. E. Narasimhan & Gireesh Babu, “Tamil Nadu water woes: Chennai goes thirsty, industry feels the heat”, *Business Standard*, June 17, 2019. See also, K. Lakshmi, “Thirsty City: Chennai’s Day Zero”, *The Hindu Magazine*, June 30, 2019, pp. 6-8.
- ² K. Lakshmi, “Thirsty City: Chennai’s Day Zero”, *The Hindu Magazine*, June 30, 2019, p. 7.
- ³ See E. Jeganathan, “10 Aanduhalaha Thodarntu Varatchi: Sivagangai Aruhe Kaaliyaahum Gramam”, *The Hindu Tamil Thisai*, June 28, 2019, p. 8. See also Hari Prasad A. R., “Water is back in village but not residents. Water scarcity saw a mass exodus from Meenakshipuram, District of Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu” in *The Hindu* (Thiruvananthapuram, Tamil Nadu Edition), July 10, 2019, p. 3.
- ⁴ *Tamil Samayam News*, May 07, 2018.
- ⁵ Himanshu Upadhyaya, “Rivers remember, but why don’t we? BOOK REVIEW: RIVERS REMEMBER”, *Citizens Matter Newsletter*, July 19, 2019. See also the review S. Arun Prasath, “Chennai: Neernilaihalin Samaathi”, in *Uyir Mochu, Hindu Tamil Thisai*, August 03, 2019.
- ⁶ See S. Arun Prasath, “Chennai: Neernilaihalin Samaathi”, in *Uyir Mochu, Hindu Tamil Thisai*, August 03, 2019. Interestingly, the author quotes the song by Kaber Vasuki, *Chennai Poromboke Paadal* sung by T. M. Krishna: “It was not the rivers that chose to flow through cities, Rather, it was around rivers that the cities chose to grow”.
- ⁷ Pope Francis in his Encyclical Letter, *Laudato Si on Care for Our Common Home*, categorically states, “Care for nature is part of a lifestyle which includes the capacity for living together and communion.” (No. 228).

- ⁸ Small is beautiful refers to “Small Is Beautiful: A Study of Economics As If People Mattered” (Blond & Briggs, 1973) by a German born British economist Ernst Friedrich Schumacher.
- ⁹ Madeleine Bunting, “Small is beautiful – an economic idea that has sadly been forgotten”, *The Guardian*, International Edition, November 10, 2011.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ Ibid. See also the link that Pope Francis makes in *Laudato Si* on development and happiness: “In the unstable neighbourhoods of mega-cities, the daily experience of overcrowding and social anonymity can create a sense of uprootedness which spawns antisocial behaviour and violence” (*Laudato Si*, no. 149).
- ¹⁴ Leopold Kohr, Austrian-born social philosopher (1909 - 1994), expounded on “the beauty of the small,” particularly in his major work, *The Breakdown of Nations* (1957). (See *Encyclopaedia Britannica*).
- ¹⁵ See Madeleine Bunting, art. cit.
- ¹⁶ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, no. 138.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., no. 147.
- ¹⁸ In a General Audience at the Vatican on April 22, 2015.