

Very Much on the Map: The Timbaktu Revolution

Author - Ashish Kothari, Published on - 9.2.2014



In the Anantpur

district of Andhra Pradesh, close to the town of Penukonda, the Timbaktu Collective is an initiative to empower villagers (particularly the poorest amongst them) to take charge of their own future. And the future of their land and natural resources. It began as a tiny effort by Mary Vattamattam and C.K. ('Bablu') Ganguly, a couple tired of a constant agitationist mode they were involved in as part of the Young India Project (organizing farm labour), to do constructive work in a few villages. Aided by a few other individuals such as John D'Souza (one of the founders of the well-known Centre for Education and Documentation), in 1989, they bought some land near Chennethapalli village, in the middle of an area where deforestation and land mismanagement had converted the hills into barren rock and the soil unproductive. It was a bold, almost foolish attempt at doing something in an area that had been given up as a gone case, both by the government and by many of the villagers themselves...

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