

## Monsoon School

### Perspectives on Environment, Society and Well-being

#### An Update<sup>1</sup>



*Cards made by participants during Education activity*

Kalpavriksh organised a Monsoon School on Perspectives on Environment, Society and Well-being from 17 June to 23 June 2014 at United World College, Mulshi. The course was an opportunity for coming together of individuals from various paths of life to interact and reflect upon conservation, development and environmental governance in India.

#### **Why this course**

The objective of the school was to enhance understanding of our current policies and practices that have a bearing on the environment, society and well-being. Along with this, the idea was to provide a platform for sharing examples of the alternative vision and practices on conservation, education, governance which seek to combine social justice and environmental sustainability. The attempt was to reflect on the Indian environmental history; to trace the roots of contemporary perspectives and practices in conservation, development and governance; and lead it to the existing and potential alternative discourses paying greater attention to social justice and environmental sustainability.

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<sup>1</sup> About the update: This is based on our memory and notes and we apologise if we have excluded any important points. Please feel free to add to this, and let us know if you do. For more information about the event, contact Shiba Desor ([desor.shiba@gmail.com](mailto:desor.shiba@gmail.com)) or Meenal Tatpati ([meenaltatpati@gmail.com](mailto:meenaltatpati@gmail.com))

The course gave a platform for information sharing and exchange between many people involved in research, advocacy and interventions related to these issues (including many Kalpavriksh members) and people from different paths of society (particularly youth) interested in exploring these issues. The idea was to highlight these issues as well as alternative discourses, which are generally neglected by mainstream education courses and media.

### Structure

The course comprised of a series of sessions focusing on sharing of experiences by people involved in research, advocacy and interventions related to these issues. There were discussions, readings, screenings, activities and a field trip to Hivare Bazar. A day-wise agenda is annexed.

Participation was diverse since there were no limits with regards to who may or may not attend the course. Participants included students from various universities (Ravenshaw University, TERI University, IIT Chennai, Pandit Deendayal Petroleum University), professors (from Gujarat Vidyapith, Ravenshaw University) and persons working in NGOs (Greenpeace India, Terre De Holmes India, Hunnarshala, and Arghyam). A list of all participants is annexed.



*Above: Different participants' artwork from the colouring activity and the shadow-watching activity with Madhuvanti Anantharajan.*

### Reflections

Participants shared their reflections about the course on the last day. Some of the take-aways that came out were:

It has made me realise that we need to think less stubbornly and accept other persons' view-points.

It was a period of self-reflection to mull over questions of compromises, unity, values and world-views.

I try to learn something new everyday. In that way the course was a great experience since while some of the things discussed were familiar, others were very new. I think it is important that our education does not put us in silos and enables us to communicate without alienating the person being communicated with. Also, I realise that the key in initiatives towards real empowerment is to make one self obsolete.

IT'S LIKE TO SEE A SOCIETY  
WHERE DOING THE MORAL  
THING; THE ETHICAL THING,  
BECOMES  
THE RIGHT THING IS ALL  
IMPORTANT.  
-WHERE



PRACTICAL  
FREE FOR ALL  
PARTICIPATORY

The kind that inspires  
me to connect all the  
dots in this universe

- OPEN-MINDED
- ~~BE~~ READY TO EXPLORE AND IMPLEMENT NEW IDEAS
- DIVERSE
- ENCOURAGING
- NATURE SHOULD PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE FOR TEACHING THE STUDENTS

Above: A few responses to an activity conducted by Shri Ramdas asking participants about the kind of society they would like to live in, and the kind of education that they feel should be imparted

There was a good mix of theory and practice. Such courses need to be organised for a more diverse audience, such as colleges not linked to environmental/ social studies and NGOs and government functionaries.

As a researcher, the course has thrown up many research questions for me about the notion of development and the complexity of framing and implementing policies.

That certain expectation of getting definite solutions was definitely not met, but the discussions are leading me to realise that I need to have more faith in people and in a people-centric approach.

The course was a good exposure to diverse views. The significance of our rural economy as primary producers struck me in particular

We understand the meaning of quality but we cannot clearly define what it means. Its different for all yet when it is there, it is recognized by all. Personally I felt we raised relevant questions about



justice and activism. These strive to make things better for all or at least most. The culminate result of it is quality.



*Clockwise from top: Art activity, field walk with Ashwin Paranjpe, participants, at the watershed site of Hiware Bazar.*

### **Feedback about how the course was organised:**

Some of the points made, which should be considered for future such courses:

Keep the seating arrangement as semi-circle/ circle throughout.

Field trips need to be more evenly spread out.

More activities like the FRA role play should be organised.

Either the course should be longer or sessions fewer. At present there was an information overload at times.

## Annexures

DAYS	Programme
Day 1: 17 June, 2014	<p><i>9:30 to 12:30:</i></p> <p><i>Welcome note</i></p> <p><i>Knowing each other through interplay: Meenal Tatpati and Desneige Halbert</i></p> <p>Introduction to the course</p> <p><b>Basic overview of environment and conservation scenario in India:</b> Ashish Kothari (Includes screening of Amar Kanwar's film: Many faces of madness)</p> <p>LUNCH: 12:30-1:30</p> <p><b>1:30-3:30pm Biodiversity conservation in India-policies, history, socio-cultural reality:</b> Neema Pathak Broome</p> <p>4:00 tea break</p> <p><b>4:30-5:30 Sharing on landscape architecture:</b> Desneige Halbert</p> <p>5:30-6:30pm <i>Gardening Activity:</i> Desneige Halbert, Ashwin Paranjpe</p> <p>Screening:</p> <p>Chanda ke Jutey</p> <p>Many faces of Madness</p>
Day 2: 18 June, 2014	<p><i>6:30 am Pre-breakfast activity: Mindfulness and sustainability:</i> Milind Wani</p> <p>8:00-9:00am breakfast</p> <p><b>9:00am-12:15pm Dams, development and environmental governance in Northeast India:</b> Neeraj Vagholikar</p> <p>Lunch: 12:30 to 1:30</p> <p><b>1:30-3:00: Looking at the campus: biodiversity and sustainability-</b> Ashwin Paranjpe</p> <p><i>3:15pm to 7pm: Field walk to Gomukh (includes two hour-long walks to and from the farm)</i></p>
Day 3: 19 June 2014	Day long field trip: hiware bazaar
Day 4: 20 June 2014	<p><b>9-11: Alternatives: practices and frameworks:</b> Ashish Kothari</p> <p>11 am: tea break</p> <p><b>11:15-1 pm Emeraina alternatives in Latin America - Lessons for social activists in India:</b> Abhay Shukla</p> <p>1-2 pm: Lunch</p> <p><b>2-4pm: Is there a need for an environmental history of India:</b> Rohan D'souza</p> <p>4pm: tea break</p> <p>5 to 7pm: <i>Alternatives assignment:</i> Ashish Kothari</p>

<p>Day 5: 21 June 2014</p>	<p><i>6:30-8:00 am Bird watching around the campus: Ashish Kothari</i></p> <p>9:00-12 am <b>Attempts at alternatives in education: B Ramdas</b>(includes tea break from 11-11:15am)</p> <p>12:15-1pm <b>Locale specific environment education: Sujatha Padmanabhan</b></p> <p>1pm-2pm: Lunch</p> <p>2-5:30 (includes tea break at 4pm): <b>Discussion on issues of budgeting, waste, transport, energy in the context of urban governance-</b> Avinash Madhale (Centre for Environment Education), Lakshmi Narayan (KKPKP), Sujit Patwardhan (Parisar), Ashok Sreenivas (Prayas)</p> <p><i>Screening at 8:30pm:</i></p> <p><i>Pakkhe Nu Chhadnu Nahi: forest rights in Kutch</i></p> <p><i>From the heart of the world</i></p>
<p>Day 6: 22 June, 2014</p>	<p>9-11am <b>Social equity and environmental justice: Dr. Kannamma Raman</b></p> <p>11am Tea break</p> <p>11:15-4pm: <b>Community based governance in current contexts: Meenal Tatpati and Neema Pathak Broome</b></p> <p>4-6: <i>Colouring activity- Looking at nature: Madhuvanti Ananthrajan</i></p>
<p>Day 7: 23 June 2014</p>	<p>Reflections:</p> <p>9:30-4pm: Participants' assignments (individual/ group) based on learnings and impressions on environment, society and well-being.</p> <p>Short oral feedback session/ any concluding remarks</p>

## Participants

<b>NAME AND Organisation/ Affiliation</b>
Vinay Nair (Greenpeace India)
Ashish Kumar ( Greenpeace India)
Surendra Maurya ( Greenpeace India)
Prathamesh Pingle ( Greenpeace India)
Akshey Gupta ( Greenpeace India)
Sidharth Sreenivas ( Greenpeace India)
Vinay Chaturvedi ( Greenpeace India)
Anand Prabhu ( Greenpeace India)
Somdutta ( Greenpeace India)
Jyothika Lobo (Greenpeace India)
Nibedita Swain (Ravenshaw Univ)
Nibedita Pradhan (Ravenshaw Univ)
Dr. Gyanarajan Swain (Ravenshaw Univ)
Pramoda Tyagi (Ravenshaw Univ)
Sandeep Bal (Ravenshaw University)
Sulipta (Ravenshaw University)
Varun Murthy (IIT Madras)
Praveen Singh
Vilasini Kailasam (IIT Madras)
Vianca Damani (PDPU, Gandhinagar)
Prarthana Gupta (BA economics, DU)
Jyotika Minz (humanities, IIT Madras)
Ram Bragadish (IIT Madras)
Manohar (Arghyam)
Daryosh Tabez (TERI University)
Ahmad (TERI University)
Damini Patel (Srishti Design lab)
Nupur Bala(Srishti Design lab)
Sunakshi Bhatia (TERI University)
Vasundhara Krishnani
Hardika Dayalani (Hunnarshala)
Kishore, TDH
Dr. Dhara Vaghadia (Gujarat Vidyapeeth)