

Lesson 1

Earth Justice through Motherly Care and Compassion

Opening ritual: How did the opening ritual of visualizing the circle of women and of introducing yourself affect you? Would it be helpful for you to repeat this ritual at the beginning of each session and to silently acknowledge, "I am not alone. My co-learners (name each of them slowly, visualizing them as you do so) are out there wondering and waiting to see what I will do and say during this session. I anticipate interacting with them as I go forward." Embellish this ritual and make it your own. If after a few sessions, the ritual seems empty, feel free to drop it. If the impact grows on you, continue it and allow the mysterious presence of your co-learners to diffuse your studies.

[Buddhist singing bowl \(click to listen\)](#) The learning circle is now open. Write down your starting time.

Notice to user: The pdf version of lesson 1 and 2 are removed from the Moodle software; hence, the links are broken such that one cannot hear the sounds or recordings, one cannot see the pictures and one cannot post responses to the chatroom and to see what other participants have posted. Nonetheless, one can still learn much about the process and mood surrounding interactive learning and one can imagine the growing "sense of presence" that surrounds the learners who are using the "live version" of these case studies.

After each lesson, there is a live chat room experience or a face-to-face classroom experience of 90 minutes. The rituals and procedures used here expand upon the social interactions and the discoveries that have been made during the time of doing the lesson. Different viewpoints are expanded using impromptu role playing and fastspeaks. Oral readback lines enable the group to enter into a partial or full consensus as to what are the key discoveries that have emerged. This is a lively and playful experience. It cannot be imagined; it has to be experienced!

Aaron Milavec

Greetings! Namaste!

You will be pioneering a new way of thinking. You will discover how women from all over the world have taken steps to safeguard our Mother Earth. Get ready for some heart-rending and mind-bending learning!

My name is Dr. Aruna Gnanadason. I have provided the opening lessons for this course. Dr. Aaron Rose-Milavec has provided pictures, music, videos, feedback loops, case studies, etc. for this course.

I am currently the coordinator of justice, peace and creation with the World Council of Churches in Geneva, Switzerland.

I was not always a world theologian advocating with persons globally. As a young girl, I grew up in a very small village in Madras, India. My mother and grandmothers, however, prepared me with a large vision of life that later enabled me to address the challenges to women, youth and indigenous people regarding economic justice, racism, and ecological issues. My ecology begins, therefore, with a distinctly Indian perspective that I want to share with you.

Our overall objective

In just a moment, I will share with you my personal history of returning to my village of origin. It was here that I learned to love the change of the seasons, the cultivation of the earth, and my mother taught me the names and uses for various trees and herbs. It was here that I marvelled at the thousands of stars that filled the night sky--all of them distant suns very much like our own.

[Exploratory Question 1.1](#) <--Click here to post

1.1 At the very beginning of our Lesson, I invited you to tell something of the story of how you came to develop an appreciation and love of the natural world of plants and animals. Think back into your childhood. When and how did you first learn that nature is not just nasty insect bites and skinned knees but something friendly and awe-inspiring.

Importance of honoring each other with confidentiality

1. The most important gift that we can give to each other is to make a safe place where every member of our learning circle can find her true voice and to express herself freely.
2. By deliberately cultivating a "safe place," each of us will find an enlarged "comfort zone" in which to experiment, to fail, to express our deepest yearnings.
3. The gift we can offer each other is to nurture a sense of respect and mystery in the face of co-learners struggling to become their authentic selves even when they have for so long been beaten down and forced to adapt roles that conceal their true voices.
4. Everything posted here, accordingly will be honored as "confidential." No outsider or guest to this website can penetrate into this, our "sacred space." Meanwhile, no

participant will reveal to any outsider what has been posted here. For further details, see the ["Safety Curtain."](#)

How do you share your thoughts with your learning circle?

1. You have already clicked on the "Reflective Question 1.1" that will always be found just prior to any questions. This opens a new window in which you will find the questions repeated (as shown above).
2. Click on "Reply" found in the lower right way at the bottom. This opens a blank text box awaiting your response.
3. Type your reflections into this blank box. Don't think that you have to do research so that your responses are "perfect." Rather, risk writing spontaneously what you believe and feel about the issues at hand.
4. Feel free to experiment with the various features of the textbox editor. Be daring! You won't be able to break anything. From time to time, you might want to add a JPG picture to embellish your response.
5. Click on "Post to Forum" when finished. You are free to change the subject line if you wish and to provide, in its place, an apt title of your own choosing.

You can always go back and edit your former posts. This is not encouraged, however. Better to let your raw self-expression stand. If you are annoyed by what you wrote, add a few lines indicating who you are annoyed. Even if your mind has changed, it's better to add a few lines saying how your mind has changed and why. Each of us is "a wonderful work in progress."

My personal story

This journey matters to me deeply, not least because motherhood has been part of my life across three generations. Furthermore, I am aware that my children and grand-children have experienced an acceleration of India's ecological degradation. I fear for my great grand-children. How so?

According to government of India statistics, 19.7 percent of the country's geo-area is *forested* (as opposed to the desired target of 33 percent as stipulated in the 1988 national forest policy) and is presently declining at an estimated 1.3 million hectares a year.

The average annual availability of water per capita has declined from 5236 cubic meters in 1951 to 2464 cubic metres at present. It is estimated that by 2017, India will be a water-stressed country, because the per capita water availability will be as low as 1600 cubic metres.

Ground water exploitation is increasing rapidly (both for qualitative and quantitative reasons), resulting in the decline of the water table in most places. The number of tube wells has increased from 0.3 million in 1967 to 6 million in 1997. Today, there are [21 million tube wells in operation in India](#).

Again, according to official estimates, in 1980, 56.6 percent of the land suffered from environmental degradation, especially water and wind erosion. In some canal projects, one half of the area that could have been irrigated and cultivated has been lost due to water-logging. The area under periodic floods doubled between 1971 and 1981.

The soil is losing its fertility due to excessive use of chemical fertilizers. Fertilizer and pesticide run-offs into natural water sources have destroyed fish life and have polluted water for human use in several areas.

Water pollution is India's worst environmental problem--it is estimated that 70 percent of India's surface water resources are severely polluted--including urban discharges into water and toxic and other pollutants, especially heavy metals by industries.

Urban *air pollution* is increasing due to power consumption, industrialization, vehicle-use and refuse-burning (automobile production reached 4.6 million units in 1997-1998).

India is the world's sixth largest (and second fastest-growing) source of greenhouse gas emissions. The per capita carbon dioxide emissions in 1996 were estimated at 1.1 metric tons. Fuel combustion accounts for 66 percent of the total carbon dioxide emissions, followed by change in land use and forestry, cement manufacture and vehicular emissions.

The annual generation of non-hazardous waste by industry is 90 million tons, and of hazardous waste 9.3 million tons. Finally the rapid increase in India's urbanization has placed tremendous pressure on water supply, waste-water treatment, air quality and solid-waste management.

Returning to [Thittuvillai](#)

Every year, when we visit the ancestral village of our family, we see more changes and more of the "take-over" of Mother Earth by those who have the power and the money to do so. [Thittuvillai](#) is a small village in the southern-most part of India. Some ten years ago it was still "a little piece of heaven on earth". Rich greenery--paddy fields and the verdant mountain range of the Western Ghats--surround this little village. It is a region that has thrived for centuries steeped in mythology and nature-affirming folk tales. Thadagathi is one of these mountains ... she is in fact a slain "demon queen" (according to a popular version of the story), killed by the Lord Rama, one of the leading figures in the epic Ramayana.

Thadagathi was the reigning queen of the region. She was dark-skinned and "ugly" according to the standards of the invading Aryan culture, and became a "demon" in their eyes. She undoubtedly represents the Dalit peoples of India. The story goes that Rama was hunting in the region, on his way to Lanka to save his abducted queen Sita from the hands of her abductor the king of Lanka, Ravana. Thadagathi challenged Rama and asked him to desist from killing the wildlife of the territory she ruled over. Rama was not used to having his authority challenged by anyone, let alone by a dark-skinned "ugly" woman, and so he killed her. He is said to have deeply regretted having killed a woman, but he had his way. Read from the perspective of Dalit history the story can be given a whole new interpretation based on principles of respect and a protective attitude to the earth and the things of the earth.

Thadagathi lies there as a mountain, serene and majestic, having lost out to the selfish greed of the powerful one who considered hunting to be his birthright. Thadagathi lies there dead, reminding India of all that we are losing! The Western Ghats are, year after year, losing their greenery--the mountains are being mined for granite and other minerals and are threatened altogether to disappear. A region which has for centuries survived with its mountain streams and lakes, blessed in the protective care of Thadagathi, is now slowly dying. The water is being channelled into the neighbouring district, to water the Koodankulam nuclear reactor and other industrial projects. The paddy fields are slowly disappearing as the struggling farming community is forced to sell out and the nearby town spreads rapidly into the countryside, one more symbol of the dying India. But Thadagathi lies there still, reminding us daily of the power of the people who live with the earth. This mythological story is reflective of the traditions of prudent care that persist in all parts of the country.

[Personal Reflection 1.2](#) <--click here when ready to post

I've shared with you personal reflections upon reflecting upon my ancestral village, [Thittuvillai](#). Now I want to hear from you what impressions you have.

1.2a Does the story of Rama killing Thadagathi ring true for you? How so? Must those who challenge environmental degradation die for their efforts? [See the poem of resistance below.]

1.2b What does it mean for you that my village, [Thittuvillai](#), is slowly dying?

1.2c Do you have your own story of how parts of the Earth that are precious to you are dying? Please share it with me and with your learning circle.

Prudent Care and an Ethics of Resistance

For us, the rivers, the forests and our land

are the basis of our existence.

This earth is our mother.

No one can snatch her away from us.

No one has the right

to take away our land from us.

We therefore take an oath today

that we will always protect

our land and rivers.

Large dams being built in this area

are drowning our forests,

our mountains and our land.

We pledge never to let this happen.

Ecology is not a recent invention

Such prudent practices can be found in several areas of India where Indigenous peoples live. Indigenous peoples in India are called Adivasis, a word which, literally translated, means "the first inhabitants or peoples of the land". Among them is found the concept of *saran* that refers to the few kilometers of forest land, maintained by the community as protected land. It is believed

that the spirits of the ancestors reside here. Initiation rites of teenagers of Indigenous communities are normally held here. In other parts of the country sacred groves are known as *devaranya* (God's abode) or *nagaranya* (the abode of cobras). Here peepal and mahua trees (indigenous varieties) cannot be cut as they are considered to be the abodes of goddesses. The tiger is considered a totem and hence should not be killed.

Two Indian environmental scientists, Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha, propose that the prudent care of the earth should reflect genuine efforts at restraint by following communitarian rules and regulations. There is a quantitative restriction on the amount harvested of a given species, or of that which is harvested from a given locality. Certain habitat patches may be abandoned. Harvesting of some species or from a specific habitat may be abandoned. Some stages of life--categorized by age, sex, size or reproductive status may immunize an animal or bird from being harvested. Selected species may never be harvested either because of the relative difficulty of procuring them (risk or injury during the hunt) or because they carry parasites that can affect humans. Specified habitat patches may never be harvested or be subject to very low levels of harvest through strict regulations. Providing refuge through sacred groves, sacred ponds, etc. may be the most easily perceived and most efficient way of guarding against resource depletion.

This system of environmental ethics provides for communities a code of moral guidelines for environmental protection and conservation--to be followed by common people and also by kings and rulers. A great deal of locality-specific knowledge of bio-diversity resides with "eco-system peoples" and is significant to their life-styles. "Eco-system peoples" refers to Indigenous peoples, Dalits, etc. who live in a protective relationship with the land. This, for instance, is the case with specialist fisher-folk, who have an intimate knowledge of water bodies and ongoing changes in them with their snail, bivalve, shrimp, crab and other fish and fauna inhabitants. Nomadic shepherds know a great deal about large tracts of scrub savannahs and grasslands and their vegetation. This knowledge can and should be tapped to feed into a wider process of diversity conservation.'

There is a deep spirituality associated with the traditions of prudent care--most of these traditions can be dated to pre-Aryan days in India and to mother goddesses. Scientists assess that there are some 100,000 sacred groves in India that are being protected by communities and village government systems. A large majority of sacred groves are associated with female village deities. But with the gradual take-over of the groves by Hindu groups, women as priests ministering to the groves are rare, and women are in many cases not even permitted to enter the groves after reaching an age of menstruation as they are then considered polluting.

"Traditions of prudence" depend on two conditions. First, that some other lineage does not usurp the resource when it becomes available; and second, that the resource should continue to be of value to the lineage adopting prudence. There are cases cited by ecologists in India to substantiate this. The Dheever caste of the Bhandara district of Maharashtra never catch fish going upstream on spawning migration, although the fish are exhausted and easy to catch. There are entire sacred groves and ponds in which no plant or animal is damaged--some species of plants and animals survive only in such protected localities. Monkeys, peafowl, the banyan and fig trees and a variety of plants and animals are regarded as sacred and are protected widely in

many parts of India. In the village of Kokre-Bellur in the southern state of Karnataka, birds that are breeding are left undisturbed.

Hinduism offers the concept of *vasudhaiv kutumbakam* (the family of Mother Earth) that is closely interconnected with the understanding of *sarva-bhuta-hite-ratan* (to serve all beings equally). This is described as "dharmic ecology" with its origins in the Hindu Vedic heritage. This environmental model draws from the Hindu concept of *dharma* (a set of duties that hold the social and moral fabric of a society together) and *karma* (actions and the effects of such actions) and provides new ways of valuing and acting with the earth. It is believed that . . .

Dharma if universally manifested will provide the values necessary for an environmentally caring world and will not advance economic growth at the cost of greed, poverty, inequality and environmental degradation. There is an urgent need to instill in all people a respect for nature and to strengthen the decision-making processes in favour of environmental protection. The Hindu religion, like many other religions and spiritual traditions, has the capacity to move the individual towards the divine because of its belief in divinity in nature.

Reverence for trees pervades Hindu literature. Laws for the protection of plants and trees can be found in ancient sacred Hindu texts. Plants are seen as sentient beings that have consciousness and therefore should be protected from harm. The designation of certain trees as sacred objects because of their religious value, identified with certain deities, protects these tree varieties. Ironically, the respect for some trees includes the economic value of that particular tree. A certain penance was prescribed for the cutting down of trees--in proportion to the value of the tree. Vandana Shiva speaks of how the forests have been worshipped as Aranyani (the goddess of the forest):

The sacred tree serves as an image of the cosmos, a symbol of the inexhaustible source of cosmic fertility. The earth mother as primordial Mother says: "O ye gods, I shall support (i.e. nourish) the whole world with life sustaining vegetables which shall grow out of my body, during the period of heavy rain. I shall gain fame on earth then as Shakhambhari (goddess who feeds the herbs), and in that very period, I shall slay the great asura named Durgama (a personification of drought)" (Devimahatmya 90:43-44).

Exploratory Questions 1.3

1.3a What do you make of this?: The Dhevar caste of the Bhandara district of Maharashtra never catch fish going upstream on spawning migration, although the fish are exhausted and easy to catch. Is this superstition or a primitive science of ecology? Explain yourself.

1.3b What do you make of this?: Plants are seen as sentient beings that have consciousness and therefore should be protected from harm. Is this superstition or a primitive science of ecology or what? Explain yourself.

Feminine energy

In pre-Aryan thought, nature was symbolized as the embodiment of the feminine *shakti* (energy, power). *Prakriti* (nature) manifests this primordial energy from which women draw

their shakthi. Concepts such as Bhudevi (Earth Goddess) and Bhumata (Mother Earth) that are used in people's everyday language underline this. Vandana Shiva quotes the words of Itwari Devi, a woman leader in the struggle against mining operations in the Utharkhand region of the Himalayan mountains:

Our power is nature's power; our *shakthi* (power) comes from *prakriti* (nature). Our power against the contractor comes from these inner sources, and is strengthened by his trying to oppress and bully us with his false power of money and muscle. We have offered ourselves, even at the cost of our lives, for a peaceful protest to close this mine, to challenge and oppose the power that the government represents. Each attempt to violate us had strengthened our integrity. They stoned our children and hit them with iron rods, but they could not destroy our shakthi.'

Similar concepts can be found in Buddhism too. Buddhist iconography gives form to the multiple sentient beings of the trees, the air, the waters, and the earth. Islam, for its part, speaks of the earth as a Mother who needs periodic rest.

Taking a more critical approach to Hindu attitudes to the earth, environmentalist Anil Agarwal recognizes anthropomorphism in Hinduism too. He describes the relationship of Hindus to the earth as a form of "utilitarian conservationism" and not as "protectionist conservationism". This implies that Hindus value and protect those features of nature that "have gained significance within the ritual cycle of human flourishing".! He critiques Hinduism for being a highly individualistic religion. According to him, dharma, as a system of social responsibility, focuses on one's own behaviour, for the sake of one's own well-being first--one's behaviour to others plays a secondary role. Therefore personal hygiene takes prior position in a Hindu home; the garbage outside the door is ignored. "The streets around Hindu upper-caste settlements are often dirtier than poor tribal villages." However, Agarwal believes that Hinduism too can become an earth faith. In his understanding the hope for Hinduism lies in its reform in response to the present context. He has this hope because within the "eclectic nature of Hinduism, there is a vast reservoir of tenets, practices and beliefs that can help Hindus to reform Indian society.

Women as voices of prudence

Women have played a central role in the traditions of prudence in India, but women as bearers of prudence is not a phenomenon specific to India alone. Rosemary Radford Ruether writes of women as the mediators and caretakers of nature, drawing on the experiences of poor women of Latin America or the Dalits and women of the fishing communities in India; the Indigenous peoples of the Himalayan regions of India, the Cordillera in the Philippines or from Guatemala, or the women in Kenya, Zimbabwe or Southern Africa--all offer experiences of women healing [the] earth. Gladys Parentelli from Venezuela says, "The practices described are not simply quaint, isolated habits,"! They are the life-struggles of women who have been at the centre of

traditional practices of care of creation and women engaging in protests to protect the earth. Their experiences are situated in a wealth of myths, stories and religious practices from various Indigenous faith traditions and some from interpretations and reappropriations of an inherited Christianity.

Women-centered political struggles

Women-centered movements of political struggles to protect the earth are rooted in these traditions of prudence. Throughout Indian history there have been movements of resistance by communities in a bid to protect the earth.

One of the best-known movements took place in 1451 (over 500 years ago), in the midst of the Bishnoi group of people, in the Thar Desert of Rajasthan in North West India. This community gave absolute protection to the khejadi (proposed cineraria), a multipurpose leguminous, traditional tree, as it is of great importance to the villagers. The Bishnois were never known to uproot or kill a khejadi tree, nor would they allow anyone from outside to uproot or kill the trees in their villages. The account goes that the prince of Jodhpur needed wood to fuel his lime-kilns and to provide for the energy needs of the palace. He also needed the fuel to build a new palace and therefore ordered that a grove of khejadi trees be felled. It is said that the women of the village clung to the trees, defying the saws of the royal soldiers. Many women were killed and the soldiers finally had to stop the felling operations because other villagers immediately took the place of the fallen ones to protect their trees. The tree was sacred to the people, yet it was of value to them too. Its pods, leaves and thorny branches provided food, fodder, manure and fencing materials.

This was the movement that inspired two recent environmental movements--Chipko and Apiko--both of which follow a similar form of resistance to the cutting of trees for commercial purposes. Here too, women clung to the trees in order to protect them from the companies attempting to fell them. These largely Indigenous women-led movements have contributed not just to protecting a particular region of the country but have also played an influential role in environmental movements in other parts of the country.

Two women-led protest movements

The Deomali Mahila Society of Indigenous women in Koraput, Orissa, and the Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save the Narmada Movement) to protect the river Narmada from the mega-dam projects are two such protest movements in which women have played a pivotal role. The Deomali Adivasi Mahila Society (Deomali Indigenous Women's Society) is led by Indigenous and Dalit women in the Koraput region of Orissa, and grew out of their strong determination to challenge the many injustices they experience. The women have organized themselves against the pressures of "development", social forestry which promotes "foreign" tree varieties and mining operations, but also against the extra burdens they face in their families and community because they are women.

As traditional structures of Indigenous and Dalit community life break down, women lose some of the traditional rights they have enjoyed in their communities. Women do most of the back-

breaking work and are paid less than men. Women most often sacrifice everything for the sake of their families. Health care offered by the government is virtually non-existent. Women's roles in decision-making in the family and community is minimal. And to add to this, they experience violence at the hands of many men in their families.

Sonia Pongi and the other women of her community in Semiliguda in the Koraput district of Orissa watched the way in which their lives were falling apart around them, and how some of their own kith and kin exploited each other. They saw the way in which the "civilizing" influence of those who came from outside threatened to destroy them. The outsiders came with their English schools, cinema houses and "urban ways". They recognized that as women they were experiencing specific forms of discrimination and violence.

The women organized themselves and came together to talk about what was happening around them and decided to take control of their lives. [They formed themselves into the Deomali Adivasi Mahila Society](#) (significantly they took the name of the beloved and sacred mountain in their region, Deomali, to give them their identity as a federation of Indigenous and Dalit women). Each village has its own group and deals with the issues or struggles most relevant to it. They meet together regularly as a federation to share each other's struggles and strategies. The

women were not able to get rid of the national aluminum factory and other industrialization projects, [nor were they able to stop the mining operations in their area](#)--for that they were too late--but their actions against these developments brought the community together. Men and women of the Indigenous and Dalit communities living there decided that they had to try to reclaim some of their values and to rebuild their lives. They are on their way to re-educating their children to respect the traditional ways of life and to live in harmony with each other and with creation. Production of their traditional handicrafts and marketing their goods is a way in which they reclaim their traditions. Efforts are being made to restore their traditional wisdom regarding the medicinal value of certain herbs and plants. Additionally, the women are now fighting for equal wages with the men and against the production and sale of country-made liquor in their villages. They have also managed to acquire rights to own property in their own names or jointly with their husbands. The women have been elected into Panchayats (local government) bodies.

Sonia Pongi and her sisters know what environmental degradation is. In the social forestry programmes offered by the government only traditional tree varieties that are environmentally friendly are planted. The women are fully involved with their men in deciding alternatives in the field of agriculture, irrigation systems, medicines and technology as well as disaster management. The government, in collusion with industrialists, bureaucrats and upper-caste and upper-class peoples, could suffocate them and take away from them all they believe in. The women work closely with the organization of Indigenous peoples who have been resisting the industrialization of the region.

According to [Amnesty International](#), the organization of Indigenous peoples in this district has been perceived by the Indian government as being involved in "criminal activities and had incited tribal people to violence to prevent the establishment of industrial projects in the district".? Amnesty International has recognized that the Koraput district of Orissa is populated by a large percentage of Indigenous peoples who have been marginalized in the last fifty years, during which thousands of hectares of land have been taken over from the local populations for industries and mines. Several multinational companies are now involved in investing in this region rich in bauxite, to extract the ore and process it. Amnesty International protests against the use of force by the government to stop the legitimate demonstrations of the Indigenous peoples against these onslaughts on their lives and emphasizes their right to economic, social and cultural rights. Amnesty has considered this struggle as important enough to call for intervention to support it. But the use of force is indicative of the power of the powerful to take over and "develop" the Indigenous lands at all costs--even at the denial of the civil rights of Indigenous populations." For those living on the edge of survival, as for the millions of the Indigenous and Dalit communities in India, protection of nature is protection of life itself.

Exploratory Exercise 1.4

1.4a Now I want to place before you a challenge. I have shared with you stories of how women banded together to "mother the earth", that is, to save it from environmental degradation. Take ten minutes and search the internet and see whether you can find a women's movement (or even a single woman) somewhere that parallels those women that I described above. If you find one, good. If you fail to find one in ten minutes, then research one of the movements that I described above.

In either case, copy and paste 300-500 words that describe their actions into 1.4. Identify your source at the end of your pasting. Create a title for your story and enter it into the subject line. Offer a short introduction explaining (50-100 words) why you chose this topic and what importance it has for you.

1.4b After you have posted, then view the postings of AT LEAST 2 other students and offer them some feedback (as indicated below).

Now here is the fun part--giving and receiving feedback.

1. *Once you post your own reflections in 1.3, the reflections of one or more of your learning partners will appear. Click on them and read them quickly.*
2. *Feel free to thank others for what you find helpful, to pose clarifying questions, to link your story to theirs.*
3. *The best and the easiest kind of feedback is to offer readback lines. To do this, click on the "Reply" button at the bottom right. Then pick out a phrase or sentence in what your co-learner wrote that strikes a resonant cord in you. Highlight it with your mouse and copy it (Ctrl-C). Then move your cursor into your reply box and paste it (Ctrl-V). Repeat this process a second or third time if you feel so inclined.*

4. *The beauty of readback lines is that it offers a silent affirmation (a) that the words you have chosen have some special meaning for you as well and (b) that you are thankful to have "heard" such words. Give your feedback lines a short title and post them.*
5. *Try offering feedback lines for two or three of your co-learners each time you post your own reflections. If you are the first to post, then you will need to come back in a few days to offer feedback lines to those who had not yet posted.*
6. *You can later relish how others have responded to your post. Responding to feedback received with a sincere "thank you" or "that was helpful" note is always rewarding for the one who honored your work enough to puzzle over it. Clarifications or expansions can be asked for when needed.*
7. *It's generally not beneficial to critically analyze or to challenge someone's ideas unless she expressly invites her co-learners to do so. It would be a special gift to have a "strong antagonist" among us. Speaking for myself, I find that I learn more from those sharply different from me than from those who think like me.*

The Save the Narmada River movement

The Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save the Narmada River movement) is a struggle against the damming of the river Narmada, one of the longest rivers in India that flows for 1300 kms through three states of India--Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat--and empties itself into the Arabian Sea. The multi-million dam project includes plans to build 3200 dams on this river

and its 41 tributaries. Thirty will be major dams, 135 medium-sized dams and the rest small. This project is altering the ecology of this river valley: it is leading to the massive displacement and disruption of life and livelihood of some 25 million Indigenous peoples and will submerge 4000 square kilometres of deciduous forestlands.

[The protests began in the early 1980s](http://www.worldproutassembly.org/archives/2006/04/medha_patkar_th.html) led by several people including a woman activist, Medha Patkar [http://www.worldproutassembly.org/archives/2006/04/medha_patkar_th.html]. The dam project eroded traditional ways of the people--particularly of women. Informal trade links, local barter systems, labour markets and the complex social relationships providing avenues for representation, mediation and conflict resolution have all been disrupted. Additionally, ancestral sacred zones or graves and temples have been desecrated, the scattering of the people has disrupted and kinship groups, family systems and informal social networks that provide mutual support have become disorganized. This forced displacement has resulted in a spiral of impoverishment. Activists point out that for women, networks connected with place are crucial because they provide social support, financial assistance and shelter in times of distress. These systems cannot be easily replicated in resettlement sites.

One of their demands is to be compensated for the land they have lost. This is complicated because Indigenous communities do not have the papers to prove that they owned the land in the first place. Traditionally they did not "own" land as the land belonged to the whole community. And in attempts to address ownership, women have been left on the sidelines. When the government decides to regularize land ownership and registers the land with legal documents, the head of the family is given the papers to indicate their legal rights over the land, ignoring the fact that the investment of property rights to the men does not automatically imply that Indigenous

women will be compensated. The issue of intrafamily inequalities is not often taken seriously when land is redistributed.

Considering that in rural India it is estimated that a third of women between the ages of eighteen and thirty are deserted or leave their husbands, female-headed households are still not recognized when land is redistributed. To Bina Agarwal, "The gender gap in the ownership and control of property is the single most critical contributor to the gender gap in economic well-being, social status and empowerment. In primarily rural economies such as those of South Asia the most important property in question is arable land." Women have often been in the forefront of demonstrations, because of their ability to endure personal hardship (Mohandas Gandhi used the same logic in involving women in the freedom movement).

As in many other places in the world, governmental projects refuse to recognize that Indigenous peoples have their own ways of life and that they cannot be streamlined into the life-styles of the dominant groups because they are so different from them culturally and socially.

In fact displaced tribals are thrust into an alien context which "others" them and seeks to absorb them completely into the lowest levels of society and economy...Tribal women, especially, bear the brunt of sexual attacks and harassment. These are justified by the attackers who see tribal women as "loose".

Since women's wages are crucial for displaced populations, tribal women most likely face sexual advances in their everyday work. In fact, the lack of employment opportunities combined with social stigma has led many tribal women to prostitution.

The movement has been inspired by an Indigenous cosmology that respects the earth as mother, as life-giving and life-sustaining and resists the desacralization of sacred sites. "Our links with our ancestors are the basis of our society and of the reproduction of our society. Our children grow up playing around the stones which mark the burial sites of our ancestors."

The suffering of those displaced by dams

Different Points of View

For over a century we've believed that Big Dams would deliver the people of India from hunger and poverty. The opposite has happened. -- Arundhati Roy

"If you are to suffer, you should suffer in the interest of the country." -- Jawaharlal Nehru, speaking to villagers who were to be displaced by the Hirakud Dam in 1948.

[Arundhati Roy](#), the Booker Prize-winning author and writer, draws attention to the plight of those displaced by dams who now earn a few rupees a day (less than a dollar) to stay alive. They

have been alienated from the forest on which they depended and which had traditionally provided all they needed--food, fodder, fuel, rope, gum, tobacco, medicinal herbs, housing materials and even tooth powder--they now have lost it all.

Instead of a river, they have a hand pump. In their old villages, they had no money, but they were insured. If the rains failed, they had the forest to turn to. The river to fish in. Their livestock was their fixed deposit. [Without all this, they are a heartbeat away from destitution.](#)

All this is indeed violence against the people who will be displaced. It is intentional death to the land. It is an intentional way to break a people's sacred bond with the earth:

To slow a beast, you break its limbs. To slow a nation, you break its people. You rob them of volition. You demonstrate your absolute command over their destiny. You make it clear that it ultimately falls to you to decide who lives, who dies, who prospers, and who doesn't. To exhibit your capability you show off all you can do, and how easily you can do it. How easily you could press a button and annihilate the earth. How you can start a war, or sue for peace. How you can snatch a river away from one and gift it to another. How you can green a desert or fell a forest and plant one somewhere else. You use caprice to fracture a people's faith in ancient things earth, forest, water, air (Roy).

The big dams have eroded traditional systems of maintaining water resources and careful use of smaller village tanks and tributaries. All over India, village tanks have been taken over by the government-run minor irrigation department, leading to the collapse of local management systems and the "dying" of the ponds due to silting. Impact studies of different dam projects have shown that the ecological and social costs far surpassed the benefits, and "typically, the benefits were grossly exaggerated in order to accommodate the World Bank's logic of returns of investment."

The struggle to save the Narmada continues ... more Indigenous protestors are killed; more efforts are made to displace the people forcibly. And yet, the spirit of resistance of the people will not be suppressed!

The earth as our mother

Women's actions for justice and for the protection of the earth give just a small glimpse of what women in India and all over the world are engaged in. The many ways in which power is abused could lead to a feeling of despair and hopelessness, but to the women in resistance struggles there is no other alternative but to refuse to give in. The Indigenous woman's energy comes from her understanding of the earth as mother who will protect her and her people and will nurture them. Therefore to reappropriate motherhood as an ethical value is a way forward. But this requires critiquing the way patriarchy has used it and distorted its interpretation.

Narango Puri, an Indigenous woman leader from the Deomali Adivasi Mahila Association, speaks of what gives women like her the inspiration and courage to continue in the struggle despite the forces that attempt to destroy them. To Narango,

Life starts on the land for the woman, from the moment she is born. She wakes up each day on the land and the rivers, trees, birds are also living on the land--they are all our relatives ... There is a relationship between the woman and the land--that is why we begin cultivating the land only after we worship the mother, i.e. the land... Earth is like our mother. Ashumans we go through the life-cycle--we give birth, we nurture our young ones at the breast, we grow and we die. **The earth will never die, but this requires that we as women who also go through the same processes of birthing and caring for our children need to also nurture the earth.**

Exploratory Question 1.5

1.5a I have recounted the hidden, ugly underbelly of the Narmada River dam. For some people to improve their standard of living, other people must be uprooted and die. How does this story of 25 million displaced peoples affect you?

1.5b Reflect on these words of Narango Puri: **The earth will never die, but this requires that we as women who also go through the same processes of birthing and caring for our children need to also nurture the earth. How do these words touch you?**

1.5c What message of wisdom and of hope can you gain from the wisdom of Narango and the millions of women like her who protest the destruction of their ancestral way of life?

After you post, look at what others have posted. Comment and offer readback lines for at least TWO of your co-learners. To do this, click on the "Reply" button found at the bottom-right of their posting. If you are the first to post, come back later when others have posted.

In our first chatroom, be ready to discuss your responses to the reflective questions that you have shared in our learning circle.



Congratulations!

With this, you have finished your first session. If only a few have posted their response as of yet, return in a few days, [meet new members](#) and offer your feedback. In an online learning situation, it is critical to spend at least 20-30 minutes each week responding to what others have shared. This has the effect of contributing to their learning. You, of course, will find delight in how others respond to your postings.

Feedback 1.6: Quickly review your entire experience.

1.6a How many minutes did you use to complete Lesson One at this point? Was this more/less time than you had expected? Did you find yourself in a good place (both physically and mentally) to be able to work uninterrupted? Offer a few words of explanation. What changes can you make on your side to increase the satisfaction that you find in this learning circle?

1.6b Were there any processes, instructions, or questions in our text that were

difficult to understand or annoying for you? Explain. Name any technical difficulties encountered. How did you solve them? What help/improvement do you still require?

1.6c Overall (on a scale of +1 to +10), what is your satisfaction with Lesson One. Is there anything that the Instructional Team should include or remove from this lesson?

[Buddhist singing bowl \(click on arrow to listen\)](#)  The learning circle is now officially closed.

Take out 10 minutes during the next few days to do some housekeeping matters found in [Getting Started #3](#).

Further Explorations for those so inclined

[The Narmada Valley Dam Projects](#) (case study) ([Wikipedia details](#))

Nelly P. Stromquist, *The Theoretical and Practical Bases for Empowerment* (1995).

ARUNDHATI ROY, [Friends of River Narmada](#) (blog 1999)

Jean Friedman-Rudovsky, [Return to Cochabamba: Eight Years Later, the Bolivian Water War Continues](#) (2008)

Katja Schumacher and Jayant Sathaye, [India's Pulp and Paper Industry: Productivity and Energy Efficiency](#) (1999)

Mother takes on Monsanto, wins global prize



Fri, 2012-04-13 15:37

Kristin Schafer





Hats off to this mother of three who got fed up and took charge. Thirteen years ago, Sofia Gatica's newborn died of kidney failure after being exposed to pesticides in the womb. After the despair came anger, then a fierce determination to protect the children in her community and beyond.

Today, she's one of six grassroots leaders from around the world receiving the [Goldman Environmental Prize](#), in recognition of her courageous — and successful — efforts.

We at Pesticide Action Network are deeply honored to host Sofia as she travels to San Francisco for tonight's ceremony and celebration. And personally, I look forward to meeting a mom with the chutzpa to take on Monsanto to protect her children.

Pesticides drift from GE soy fields

Sofia lives in Ituzaingó Annex, a working-class neighborhood of 6,000 bordering commercial soy farms in the province of Córdoba in Argentina.

Argentina is the third largest exporter of soybeans in the world. It is also the [third largest producer](#) of genetically engineered (GE) crops worldwide, following closely behind the U.S. and neighboring Brazil. The explosion of GE soy production in Argentina has brought with it dramatic [increases in pesticide use](#), and specifically aerial spraying of Monsanto's weedkiller, RoundUp. Spraying of the antiquated insecticide endosulfan was also common until this year. Its use is now banned in Argentina as it moves toward a global [phaseout](#) under the Stockholm treaty.

RoundUp, long touted by Monsanto as all but harmless, has recently been linked to increased [risk of birth defects](#) when mothers are exposed during pregnancy. Endosulfan has also been linked to [health harms in children](#), including birth defects, reproductive harm and [autism](#).

Local mothers take charge

Here's where [Sofia's story](#) becomes truly inspirational.

After she lost her newborn, she realized that such losses were all too common in her small community. Building on Argentina's powerful history of [movements led by mothers](#), Sofia worked with other concerned moms to go door to door collecting stories about health problems in each family — essentially conducting the community's first-ever epidemiological study.

Despite few resources and very real threats, Sofia led the Mothers of Ituzaingó to concrete victory.

“The Mothers of Ituzaingó” discovered the community’s cancer rate to be *41 times* the national average. Rates of neurological problems, respiratory diseases and infant mortality were also astonishingly high.

The group then launched a “Stop the Spraying!” campaign, leading demonstrations and publishing materials warning the community about the dangers of pesticides.

Their efforts bore fruit. In 2008, Argentina’s president ordered an investigation of the health impacts of pesticides in Ituzaingó Annex; the resulting official study corroborated their informal door-to-door research. Sofia and the Mothers of Ituzaingó then won a municipal “buffer zone” ordinance, prohibiting aerial spraying less than 2,500 meters from homes.

Honoring leadership & courage



Each year since 1989, the [Goldman Prize](#) has honored grassroots leaders across the globe, unsung heroes who are campaigning for environmental justice and sustainability in their local communities. This global recognition of [Sofia's work](#) couldn't be more deserved.

Despite few resources and very real threats — including being held at gunpoint in her own home — Sofia led the Mothers of Ituzaingó to concrete victory: on-the-ground protections for the children in their community. The group also raised the profile of the broader issue of the health harms of pesticides to the national level, making room for a push for safer and [more sustainable approaches](#) to agriculture.

Sofia is now working with mothers in other Argentine communities, looking for ways to expand protections to families across the country. We at PAN salute her commitment, dedication and creativity, and congratulate her for the well deserved international recognition of today's Goldman Prize.

This blog was also posted on [MomsRising](http://www.MomsRising.com). (www)

The Plight of an Indigenous Woman Seeing her Heaven Destroyed by [Globalization](#)

by Jocelyn (participant in 2012c)

Introduction

Great wisdom sometimes lies on something we consider as mediocre. I heard so much from influential people, professionals, and community leaders speaking about the impact of current developments. They were often the target of media interview, they're often at the limelight, and they're mostly men. I wonder if they have the same lens with an elder woman, the wobbly unlisten voice at present. Alas my grandparents were all gone. I found Obayan, in one of the communities I'm serving- and I asked her the plight of a Manobo woman amidst current development framework and height in Kinawayan, Arakan.

Analysis of the situation

The vast majority of the people of Kinawayan are the Lumads or tribal people called Manobo. They are all peasants that mainly survive through subsistence agriculture. Over the years the vast bulk of their ancestral domain has been stolen from them by state backed land grabbers and settler encroachment. The people of Arakan have been neglected by the state, the delivery of social services has been negligent and they suffer from appalling social indicators (poverty, illiteracy, health). Women being the prime in-charge in the fields, at home, and even in community activities were mostly affected by this changes brought by present government dubbed as "development".

The Manobos wanted to revive their governance, their culture and traditions, but, their lands, nature- which are their very connector to it is waning. To seek help from the present government was a big mistake; they were the culprits' arms in effecting the so called change. The Manobos knew and felt the risks but they could hardly see the imperialist players behind the game of [globalization](#). This leads them to partake in community educations which soon have linked them to cause-oriented organization and institutions. It made them aware and felt empowered. But as they learn to assert their rights, they're often tagged as rebels by the arms of the present government.

Obayan Sugcawan, 75 of age, Manobo by tribe shares her story

I belong to the third generation of our native elders who was born in Poblacion Arakan, but, I preferred to settle here in barangay Kinawayan with my late husband since 1950's. Our tribe can ask no more from our Maker- Manama for the verdant plains were abundantly bearing fruits, providing our daily living: rice in hundreds of varieties, corn, root crops, vegetables, etc. The creek and rivers were full of fish and other co-water inhabitants. The mountains were covered with thick and variety of fruit and indigenous trees. The

Manobo people don't have any idea of what and how poverty is for our "patil" (storage place of farm produce) is everywhere and chock full. Our land is vast and we could plant or look for food everywhere. [Everybody works for the need of everybody in the tribe or community. No paid labor, just helping each other. No selling of goods, just giving and taking. Life then is like heaven for us Manobo women who took charge in the fields, at home and in rearing our children.](#)

We have no structured school like yours or like our young ones now. Our elders and parents were our oral and experiential teachers. They taught us how to plant, hunt and nurture our food. They taught us of our music, our dance...we design our clothes. And all of these depict our tribe, our culture and nature. Even illness was not a problem before. We have our great baylans (tribe healers), free and safe medicines in the forest- our hospital which guaranteed our cure and fast recovery.

In everything we do, we consulted Manama [our God]. We don't have giant churches or cathedrals to worship but we have everything in nature; the mountains, forest, trees, rivers-they are like cellular phones that channel our prayers direct to Manama for our ancestors' spirits dwell there.

We don't have much problem with our youths, there's no influence of any vices before. They are with us in cultivating the fields, inhunting, worship and in celebrating our rituals. As a woman and elder, my words were valued by our tribe. I partake in designing and defining our political, economic and socio-cultural system. I can say life before for us Manobo women in Kinawayan as heaven!

But, all the seemingly heaven slowly vanished as the government imposed changes under their "development" framework. Our forest trees were logged. Settlers gradually settled in our place in 1973. They asked some portions of our land which we undoubtedly granted for them to have their livelihood, besides, our ancestral land is still vast that time. Some gave us horse or

something in exchange of the land area we provided them. From then, they started to cultivate the area, which was abandoned by logging concessionaire. Our remaining forest slowly disappears. Along its disappearance was the disappearance of our market, our hospital and our sacred place of worship. Farming is expanding and commercial fertilizer, pesticides, herbicides and hybrid seed was introduced in the area. Crop harvests were no longer stored in our patils (storage house for farm produce), these are traded to the nearest trading center in town. I could hardly understand their life's pacing.

Like any other Manobo farmer I am forced to adopt permanent farming for we can't move anywhere; from a communal land stewardship to individual ownership- this is very hard for a woman farmer like me. I have to do rigid cultivation of the soil, after harvest I have to plant immediately so we won't be starving for food. I have to do it alone for our bayanihan (group of Manobo women farmers) was no more for they too have engaged to individual farming. My children could not help for they were still young. My husband seemed to do a lot of adjustment; from purely hunting to daily labor in the farm--he has the difficulty in adopting abrupt changes. So, I have to do it.

Along the years of permanent farming, I can observe that the soil is getting tired and sick for the plants/crops planted on it were minimally producing. Climate is getting unstable too. We have experienced El Niño and that's eight months of no regular meal/food. Hunger and diseases were experienced that time. [My heart bleeds for my children who were crying because they were hungry, but, I really don't have something to give for food.](#)

I don't know how to feel... As Kinawayan became a regular barangay in 1988 the primary school was elevated into elementary category. Day care services and adult literacy education were provided. I'm happy because somehow our children are able to read and write. [But, as this formal education progress it seems our youth are getting detach from nature--the very core of our existence. Our indigenous way of worship was gradually considered as un-Godly as various religious affiliations built their chapels and organized members among our tribe. Despite the religious teachings, it doesn't stop the encroachment of vices](#) from influencing especially our men and youth in the tribe.

Our tribal Chieftain who lead our people has no more control with the governance in our place for a new barangay structure has took place, and we have to abide on it. Our chieftain or I as an elder sometimes are consulted by the barangay officials when it comes to IP matters, but, our place is no longer our own territory to fully implement our Kalasag (Indigenous Laws and governance). I ask my self- where is heaven?

Now, I'm certain with what I feel... I feel sad with this kind of development. Aside from extinguishing our culture, it's wantonly destroying nature. I'm very much worried with the recurring landslides here in Kinawayan. I fear for this recent one which happened last May 18, 2011 after the occurrence of a heavy downpour. Multiple ground fissures were very evident in the entire barangay site ruining two houses, various permanent crops and farmers' farmland. According to the Mines and Geo-Sciences Bureau (MGB) who conducted the assessment of the reported landslide we (58 households) have to vacate the area and should be relocated to a safer site due to the very unstable condition of the soil in the barangay. For the meantime that the

relocation is not completed the residents of our barangay are advised to be extra vigilant especially during the occurrence of an intense rainfall. Our heaven is losing.

My tears fell down every time I look at the east portion of our place where sacred Mountain Sinaka laid. The forest is still thick and covered with fogs. But, even she is threatened by the intrusion of mining companies. I looked at the northern part and there is our Matigol Falls. Its strong current is substantial enough to generate high wattage of energy according to many professionals who happened to visit Kinawayan.

But, I, as a mother, grandmother, as an elder, as a Manobo woman- have enough of the sufferings which this current “development” is bringing. I can’t and I won’t let another development to destroy our remaining frontiers in exchange of money. This place is our kiabawi (ancestors’ home legacy), our heaven. Many asked if we can protect it; I just said, “so long as there is us- Manobo, we have our own way, Manama is there”.

The great challenge for us now is to re-gather our youth, to revive our panubaran (Manobo group of arts and worship), to revive our culture and tradition--our symbol as Manobo, and to recover our youth- the tribe’s future from the bad influences of development. We have planted trees but, the present and fast environmental degradation would require swift action to plant more. We are currently joining with few environmentalist groups who advocate sustainable agriculture and protection and conservation of nature. We are trying to rebuild our vanishing heaven. I hope you, the government, and others--could help in this effort instead of tagging us as rebels and indifferent for defending our rights and nature.

My discoveries

Generally the story of Obayan reminds me a lot of our lesson 3 and the rest. I was struck by three of her lines:

#1 -- As a woman and elder, my words were valued by our tribe. I partake in designing and defining our political, economic and socio-cultural system.

This line is inspiring. It portrays an empowered & respected role & character of an IP woman prior to colonization. Nowadays, women, in general, have been neglected in the mainstream of development. Their importance and contribution to socio-economic affairs have long been unrecognized and undervalued. Economic strategists and policy makers view socio-economic and even political development agenda as the men’s domain. Thus, women have not been able to benefit from these opportunities.

The sector that is most affected by this kind of perception is the rural women particularly the IPs. Development planners failed to realize that in a rural setting, women do not only perform reproductive or household maintenance roles but also market or productive roles-as farm laborer. If the programs continue to fail in addressing women’s needs and concerns, problems in the community prevail. Community problems are women’s problems as well because of their social role as nurturer of life.

In coming up with appropriate programs responsive to the needs and interests of IP women, there is a need to understand who they are, what things are important according to their own views and perspectives, and how these things should be addressed and attained. ([www](#))

#2 -- My husband seemed to do a lot of adjustment; from purely hunting to daily labor in the farm- he has the difficulty in adopting abrupt changes. So, I have to do it.

I'm amazed by the resilience and great courage which Obayan showed here. It confirmed my reading of the other version of history that women before really played an immense role in production, a contrasting "Maria Clara" (timid& house-confined) image which being tagged by the Spanish Colonizers to the Filipino women.

It furthers my discovery that women have a unique if not extra energy in terms of coping with stress. In terms of everyday behavior, the UCLA study found that women are far more likely than men to seek social contact when they are feeling stressed. They may phone relatives or friends, or ask directions if they are lost. This difference in seeking social support is one of the most basic differences between men's and women's behavior, according to Dr. Taylor. Women tend to cry if they feel like crying it out will ease their burden. For men, tears are sign of weakness. But, for Obayan and the majority of women, it's regaining strength to continue life's struggle. ([www](#))

#3 -- We have everything in nature; the mountains, forest, trees, rivers- they are like cellular phones that channel our prayers direct to Manana for our ancestors' spirits dwell there.

The line above depicts our various beliefs of as to where God is? When I was a child, I really believe that heaven is up there beyond the sky and God dwells there. That's how my religion teacher taught us. I can imagine how powerful God is because we humans are down here, trillions in number all over the world, yet, He, (because again, according to our Catechism, God is a male, as we read in the Bible, "the son of the Father") could monitor us if who's doing good and who's doing bad. Well, Obayan's words connote of an opposite God. A God which is not floating or flying, but a God which is embedded in his/her creation, in nature. It defies the wrong notion against the IP's that they are ungodly because they worship nature. It's not nature they're worshipping for sure, it's the Creator. And if they pay much respect to nature, its one way of thanking the Creator for giving them source of life and dwelling place of the spirit of their beloved ancestors. Obayan was so cute in using the cellphone as an example. She sounded young!

Lesson 2: The Struggle for Safe Drinking Water

Opening ritual: Repeat the opening ritual of visualizing the circle of women that await you. Silently acknowledge, "I am not alone. My co-learners (name each of them slowly, visualizing them as you do so) are out there wondering and waiting to see what I will do and say during this session. I anticipate interacting with them as I go forward." Embellish this ritual and make it your own. If after a few sessions, the ritual seems empty, feel free to drop it. If the impact grows on you, continue it and allow the mysterious presence of your co-learners to suffuse your studies.

[Buddhist singing bowl \(click to listen\)](#) The learning circle is now open.

Introduction

In our previous, we reflected on how caring for the earth is a precious form of motherhood. Now, in this chapter, we our thoughts go out to children who will be born ten years from now--Will they have safe drinking water?

Ironically, it is the World Bank that has predicted that by the year 2025 two-thirds of the world's population will not have access to clean drinking water! According to the United Nations Environmental Protection Organization, Asia will experience a shortage of clean water of up to 90 percent by 2050. Water has been defined as the "**oil of the 21st century**"--it is becoming a scarce resource and many predict that it could be the source of interstate conflicts. --**Aruna Granadason**

Surrounded by forests,
protected by the rivers,
I have been born
in such a wonderful land.

There is gold and silver
And precious metals in this earth
I have been born
in such a wonderful land.

Yes, I have been born
in such a wonderful land.

[But not] strangers are coming here
taking over our lakes and rivers.
Our spirits won't like it,
if we let others take over this land.

No, our spirits won't like it,
if we let others take over this land. I

Exploratory Questions 2.1

2.1a In my youth, we used to hike for miles into the forests. When thirsty, we would not hesitate to drink for the clear, cool waters of a spring or small creek. Now, we cannot allow our children to do so any more. Why so? These natural sources are now suspect of being polluted. Have you had any experience like this? Please share it with your learning circle.

2.1b Consider the poem above. Who wrote it? What is its message? What line in this poem most speaks to you? Explain.

2.1c What has been your experience with bottled water that is sold in stores? Are you drinking more or less now than five years ago? Reflect on this trend. What is happening here? What are the risks or dangers of this trend becoming a necessity and way of life?

India's ecological history is closely linked with global economic processes. After India's independence in 1948, the government set in place the process of planned development, built on the back of Western science and technology. The foundations were laid for a vast public sector for developing the infrastructure for industrial growth. At the same time the government encouraged the Indian capitalist class to invest in industrial expansion, giving birth to the concept of a mixed socialist economy. History textbooks often refer to Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of independent India, as "the architect of modern India". His efforts were on combining Western science and technology with "development" but under the frame of a socialist pattern of society. The Nehruvian model of development provided the direction for the path India chose when she became free. The neo-liberal market economy that came several decades later within the new phase of globalization has merely continued on this way, even more aggressively.

The introduction of mega dams as a part of the development process began right after independence. Nehru called the dams the "temples of modern India". He later regretted this statement, but he had set in process a development paradigm from which there is no turning back.

It has been assumed that big dams will deliver the people of India from hunger and poverty. Today, India is said to have 3600 big dams--3300 of them were built after Nehru set India on this path. Another 695 big dams are under construction. [This means that 40 percent of all big dams in the world are being built in India, in spite of the fact that one-fifth of the population of India does not have safe drinking water and two-thirds lack basic sanitation.](#)' The damming of rivers, however, has led to the destruction of peoples, their livelihood, their cultures and their lives. It can be callous, brutal and violent.

Consider the Tungabhadra Dam (shown above). The **Tungabhadra River** ([kannada](#):ತುಂಗಭದ್ರಾ, [Telugu](#):తుంగభద్రా) is a sacred river in [southern India](#) that flows through the state of [Karnataka](#) to [Andhra Pradesh](#), where it serves as the chief [tributary](#) of the [Krishna River](#). In the epic [Ramayana](#), the Tungabhadra river was known by the name of [Pampa](#). The Dam impounds about 15,000,000,000 cubic feet (0.42 km³) of water and irrigates about 300,000 acres (1,200 km²) of land in Kurnool and Kadapa districts. [Tungabhadra Dam](#) is a multipurpose dam which helps in generation of [electricity](#), [irrigation](#) of land, prevention and control of floods, etc. It has become a [picnic](#) or [tourist](#) spot over the years. The dam is near to world famous [heritage](#) site [Hampi](#).

Industrial pollution has damaged the Tungabhadra river. Industry and mining on its banks in the Chikkamagaluru, Shimoga, Davangere, Haveri, Bellary, Koppal and Raichur Districts of Karnataka and Kurnool and Mahaboobnagar in Andhra Pradesh (almost all the districts along the course of the river) generate enormous amounts of waste that is dumped into the river. According to M. Shankar, "It is disturbing to note that nearly three [crores](#) of litres of effluents were being released to the Tunga from [Shimoga] every year."^[3] This is the contribution of one city which, like Bhadravathi and Hospet, cannot boast of being an industrial city. [As such it is one of the most polluted rivers in the country.](#)

Downriver from the industries, the water has turned dark brown and has a pungent odour. Altogether, the Tungabhadra River pollution has affected 1,000,000 people in the sub-basin as most villages used the river water, previously obtained through the ancient tank system, for drinking, bathing, irrigating crops, fishing and livestock water. The livelihood of village fishermen has been harmed by regular fish kills that have exhausted Tungabhadra's fisheries.^[4] ([www](#))

Exploratory Questions 2.2

2.2a What are the effects of pollution of river waters in your own personal experience? Be very specific and graphic.

2.2b Do a web search and find pics that show water pollution (either on the Tungabhadra River or on the river you spoke of in 2.2a). Post it here with a few words of comment.

But now here is the contrast: If one travels upriver 16 km. from the Dam, one finds a natural paradise and a historic center at Hampi where the fish flourish and can be eaten and where it is safe to bathe or to swim in the river waters. This is a reminder of what the Tungbhadra River once was like prior to the industrial wastes and the raw sewage that is currently found downstream. Click on one or more of these "made for tourism" videos.

[Note: If you are unable to view one or all of these videos, then please tell me about this in 2.3 below. If you have a friend of a computer lab with a faster computer, you can ask to use it for this part of the lesson.]

[Fishing at Tungabhadra, Hampi](#)

[Play video](#)

[A river cruise in Tungabhadra](#)

[Play video](#)

[River Tungabhadra and...](#)

[Play video](#)

[Chakratirtha and Rishyamukha...](#)

[Play video](#)

Exploratory Questions 2.3

2.3a What do these videos convey? Who has access to waters like this?

2.3b But then, only 10 km downstream, it is totally a different story. How can industry dump its trash into the river and cities on its banks dump raw sewage only to have it carried away and out of sight? Yet, what is out of sight becomes the daily burden and suffering of all those who live further downstream. What is missing here? Where is there justice for all?

Impact of pollution upon women's lives

Women, and particularly Indigenous and Dalit women, in the Indian context, suffer the most when drinking-water resources become scarce. Women in the rural parts of India and in urban poor settlements, who had little access to water anyway, will now have less or, in some cases, none. It has other even more serious consequences on the lives of women. In one state in north India, it is said that the growing hardship of young women's lives due to ecological degradation has actually increased the number of suicides among them in recent years. "Their inability to obtain adequate quantities of water, fodder and fuel causes tensions with their mothers-in-law (in whose youth forests were plentiful) and soil erosion has compounded the difficulty of producing enough grain for subsistence in a region of high male out-migration."?

In the case of the Narmada project, referred to in the last chapter, the massive peoples' movements did manage to drive out the World Bank, yet this meant that the Bank and the International Monetary Fund have tightened their control on India by imposing even more conditions on other sectors of people's lives.

One area where the Bank and IMF have imposed the most worrying conditions is in ensuring the privatization of water--shifting control from the government to the corporate sector. **Ironically, it is the World Bank that has predicted that by the year 2025 two-thirds of the world's population will not have access to clean drinking water! According to the United Nations Environmental Protection Organization, Asia will experience a shortage of clean water of up to 90 percent by 2050. Water has been defined as the "oil of the 21st century"--it is becoming a scarce resource and many predict that it could be the source of interstate conflicts.**

Is it any wonder then that transnational corporations have entered the fray to profit from this newly discovered treasure? In India the corporations that have entered to access this strategic good are Suez, Vivendi, Bechtel and Rheinisch-Westfälische Elektrizitätswerke (RWE)--that now have been given the right to bottle water and sell it, as well as draw out the ground water for industrial purposes. They buy the water rights from small farmers, thus seriously reducing

ground water reserves. The corporate sector, in close alliance with the Bank and the International Monetary Fund, has managed to turn this scarce resource from a "common" resource into a tradable, profitable and economic product to be owned, over-exploited, marketed and sold to whoever can pay for it. This basically denies millions of the poor in India the basic human right to clean water.

The government has handed over its responsibility to the corporate sector, rather than focus attention and resources on looking for alternatives to ensure water availability for all, based on conservation and community control. [When water is privatized there is a false perception that the financial burden will shift from the government to the private sector and a more efficient system of water delivery will be set in place. In fact, it merely increases the price of water.](#) For example in Bolivia, the privatization of the public water system as a condition for a World Bank loan doubled the price of water. Hundreds of thousands of Bolivians protested, this led to violent retaliation on the part of the state and many protestors were shot dead. Ironically, Bechtel, which is the parent company of the Bolivian-subsiary Aguas del Tunari, checked out and is now threatening to sue Bolivia for nearly million! Bolivia, it must not be forgotten, is one of the poorest countries in South America. Additionally, the government's water department, which is a large public service sector in Bolivia that employs thousands of people, has laid off its workers. This is happening in other countries too. For example, in the Philippines half the original work-force in the metropolitan waterworks and sewerage system were laid off when this public works department was privatized.

Kemira Sees World Water Market At \$800 Billion By 2035

The global water market could be worth \$800 billion by 2035, with Asia making up half that value as rapid economic growth and a rising population boosts demand, the president and chief executive of Finnish chemicals firm Kemira said on Friday.

Some experts foresee the water market hitting \$1 trillion by as early as 2020.

"Water is the fastest growing market at the moment, with a size of \$500 billion globally," Harri Kerminen said in an interview in London. ([www](#))

The logic of privatization

In the maquiladora zone of Mexico, drinking water is so scarce that babies and children drink Coca-Cola and Pepsi. Water scarcity is clearly a source of corporate profits. Coca-Cola's products sell in 195 counties, generating revenues of \$ 16 billion. As an annual report of Coca-Cola says:

All of us in the Coca-Cola family wake up each morning knowing that every single one of the world's 5.6 billion people will get thirsty that day. If we make it impossible for these 5.6

billion people to escape Coca-Cola, then we assure our future success for many years to come. Doing anything else is not an option.

Companies like Coke are fully aware, however, that water is the real thirst quencher, and, with other corporations, they are jumping into the bottled-water business. Coca-Cola has its international label, Bon Aqua (the American version is called "Dasani"), and Pepsi has its Aquafina line. Coke predicts that its water line will surpass its soft drink line. In India, Coke's water line is Kinley. When Coke used a doctor to advertise its bottled water, the government was forced to take action. It decided to classify bottled water as "food" under the aegis of the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act. An earlier government notification does not allow medical professionals to endorse food production. Coke was forced to discontinue its ad campaign promoting Kinley.

Thus, the crisis of pollution and depletion of water resources is viewed by Monsanto as a business opportunity. For Monsanto, "sustainable development" means the conversion of an ecological crisis into a market of scarce resources.

The business logic of sustainable development is that population growth and economic development will apply increasing pressure on natural resource markets. Monsanto plans to earn revenues of \$420 million and net income of \$63 million by 2008 from its water business in India and Mexico. By the year 2010, it is projected that about 2.5 billion people in the world will lack access to safe drinking water. At least 30 percent of the population in China, India, Mexico, and the U.S. are expected to face severe water stress. By the year 2025, the supply of water in India will be 700 cubic Km per year, while the demand is expected to rise to 1,050 units. Control over this scarce resource will of course be a source of guaranteed profits.

The UN resolution declaring access to clear water as a human right

The UN General Assembly has declared [in July 2010] access to clean water and sanitation a "human right" in a resolution that more than 40 countries, including the US and Britain, did not support.

The resolution adopted by the 192-member world body expresses deep concern that an estimated 884 million people lack access to [safe drinking water](#) and more than 2.6 billion people do not have access to basic sanitation.

UN anti-poverty goals adopted by world leaders in 2000 call for the proportion of people without [access to safe drinking water](#) and basic sanitation to be halved by 2015.

The non-binding resolution, [sponsored by Bolivia](#), was approved by a vote of 122-0 with 41 abstentions, including the US and many Western nations, though Belgium, Italy, Germany, Spain and Norway all supported it.

Bolivia's representative said many rights have been recognised, including the rights to health, life, and [education](#). He said the Bolivian government introduced a resolution on the right to adequate water and sanitation because contaminated water causes more than 3.5 million deaths every year – more than any war.

American diplomat John Sammis told the General Assembly that the US "is deeply committed to finding solutions to our water challenges", but he said the resolution "describes a right to water and sanitation in a way that is not reflective of existing international law." ([www](#))

[Exploratory Questions 2.4](#)

2.4a Is clean water a "basic human right"? How so? If so, who defines and defends this right?

2.4b Why did a country like the USA which continually boasts of supporting "human rights" fail to support the resolution described above that was passed overwhelmingly in the UN? What does the USA know that all the 122 world-wide supporters do not know?

2.4c What do you think happens when a country like Bolivia agrees to put its water supply in the hands of for-profit businesses? Take a guess. Is there any connection between the massive protests in Bolivia against the privatization of the water supply and the fact that Bolivia sponsored the UN resolution.

The WCC resolution declaring clear water to be a divine right

Between 2003 and 2004 the World Council of Churches initiated a process of encounters with the Bretton Woods Institutions (the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) on their request for a dialogue. The intention of these organizations in inviting the dialogue was to encourage the WCC to make the churches more instrumental in some of their poverty reduction strategies. The WCC saw this as a moment to encounter these institutions on some of their policies, bringing to their attention the impact they are having on the third world. One of the issues addressed in these encounters was the question of the commodification of public goods and here water was identified as one of the most challenging questions of the day. Rogate Mshana, Tanzanian economist and the WCC staff person primarily responsible for the encounters, describes why this was identified as an issue for the dialogue:

[The ecumenical movement maintains that water is a gift of God and a fundamental human right. It should remain under public responsibility and should not be traded.](#) However, the World Bank, the IMP and corporations along with some governments favour the process of privatization following three methods--complete sale by governments of public water delivery and treatment systems to private corporations; long-term leases or concessions allowing corporations to take

over the delivery of water services and collection of revenues; and corporations contracted by governments to manage water services for an administrative fee.

The World Bank and the IMF, in the name of promoting efficiency in water delivery, are forcing all these methods on the developing world. In all cases there have been successes and failures, leading to increased protests particularly in poor countries--Bolivia as already mentioned but also South Africa, Philippines, etc. Corporations see investment in water as a fast-growing business. It is estimated to be an annual billion-dollar industry, 40 percent of the size of the oil sector and one-third larger than pharmaceuticals. Most of these companies are the beneficiaries of the USD 20 billion lending of the World Bank to water supply projects over the last 12 years. [A study of the International Centre for Public Integrity \(ICPI\) revealed that of the 276 World Bank water supply loans from 1990 to 2002 30 percent required privatization as a condition--the majority in the last five years.](#) ICPI reports that an Argentine businessman earned a profit of USD 100 million on privatization. Bottled water is also a USD 33 billion annual business. [So we have a scenario in the world of some who push for the marketing of water for profit, or water marketers, and others who are against it for moral and ethical reasons who are public service defenders.](#)

The ecumenical team that was present at the 13th session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, in New York in April 2005, decided to focus their attention on water. In their statement, [the ecumenical team reiterated that water is an essential gift of God and therefore must be protected for the whole of creation.](#) Human beings are part of the creation and human society can only exist within the bio-system; its survival depends on the survival of the whole. Therefore, the care for the whole of creation must be the basis for the churches' engagement and action. As far as human society is concerned, our starting-point is that the access to water is a basic human right. It is a matter of justice and of social and political sustainability of any society that it must be ordered in such a way that all people can benefit from the gift of water. Therefore the team held that the protection and control of water resources is a central public responsibility. [If water is a condition of life then water supply must be managed through structures representing all sectors of the population. Churches will call for comprehensive plans and measures to protect the availability of water. They asked that this right be enshrined in national constitutions.](#) States have the responsibility to create within their territory the best possible water conditions for all. This responsibility includes the protection of aquifers, measures against pollution and salinization, afforestation, etc. Public authorities are responsible for the adequate supply and the equitable distribution of water.

[Water must not be treated as a commercial good or a commodity of trade. An essential good, it should not be subject to the rules of profit-making. Increasingly becoming a scarce good, it must be used sparingly. Water must be placed under public responsibility to guarantee access for all, including the impoverished sectors of society who do not have the purchasing power. This requires that water be protected as a public good belonging to humanity and all life.](#) There is a pressing need to prevent water from being made into a commodity and degraded to a tradable good, so as to ensure that the human right to water takes precedence over international trade agreements (e.g. WTO). The team also urged that to the largest degree possible responsibility for the management and distribution of water should be placed in the hands of the communities

depending on it. The principle of subsidiarity is essential for the maintenance and protection of water resources. Churches and church agencies will therefore consistently support and encourage the control of water resources by local communities. The team also recognized that water issues transcend national borders and therefore solutions can only be found through international solidarity, underlining that as water becomes scarce it can easily become a source of conflict. To preserve water resources, conflict-prevention is essential.' This has led to a global movement for the protection of water sources, and women have been central here.

Exploratory Questions 2.5

2.5 Take out twenty minutes to search the internet relative to (a) WCC statements on clean water or (b) women banding together to safeguard water resources. After twenty minutes, copy and paste here 200-500 words describing what you discovered. Include a picture and give the web address of your sources.

Ah, congratulations! With this, you have finished your second session. If no one has posted their writings as of yet, return in a few days, and post your responses to their writing.

[Buddhist singing bowl \(click to listen\)](#) The learning circle is now officially closed.

When finished, take a break. Make some tea for yourself or take a five-minute walk or dance to your favorite music.

When finished, take a break. Make some tea for yourself or take a five-minute walk or dance to your favorite music. [Let me remind those from Nepal how delicious and nourishing I found the tea made in your country!]

Then, coming back refreshed, quickly review your entire experience. Share your experience in five parts: 2.6a How many minutes did you use to complete Lesson Two? Was this more/less time than you had expected? Did you find yourself in a good place (both physically and mentally) to be able to work uninterrupted? Offer a few words of explanation. What changes can you make on your side to increase the satisfaction that you find in this learning circle?

Feedback 2.6: 2.6b Name any technical difficulties encountered. How did you solve them? What help/improvement do you still require?

2.6c Overall (on a scale of +1 to +10), what is your satisfaction with Lesson Two.

Further Readings and Videos

[The Worldwide 'Thirst' For Clean Drinking Water](#) (audio podcast 2011)

[B. Suresh, S. Manjappa and E.T. Puttaiah, Seasonal Variation of Hyto Lankton in Tungabhadra River near Harihar-Karnataka](#) (Research Journal of Biological Sciences, 2011)

[The Tungabhadra River Basin - Proceedings of the first stakeholder meeting under the STRIVER project](#) (2007)

[Dr Sudheer Kumar Shukla, Indian river systems and pollution](#) (2011)

[Pune Municipal Corporation failed to curb river pollution](#) (2011)

[Pollution high in Tungabhadra: Study](#) (DH News Service, Bangalore, 2008)

[India Environment Portal](#)

[WATER QUALITY ASSESSMENT](#) (2005)

· Maria Clara Bingemer, “Women in the Future of the Theology of Liberation,” in Ursula King ed., *ibid.*, pp.308-317.

· Mary Grey, “A Theology for the Bearers of Dangerous Memory,” in Michael Hayes and David Tombs eds., [Truth and Memory: The Church and Human Rights in el Salvador and Guatemala](#) (Leominster: Gracewing 2001), pp.16-174. Here you will find the footnotes for the lesson resented above.

· Kathy Galloway, “Map of Bread,” in *The Dream of Learning our true Name*, (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications 2004), pp.23-25.

· Aruna Gnanadason, “Women and Spirituality in Asia,” in Ursula King ed., *Feminist Theology from the Third World: a Reader*, (SPCK/Orbis 1994), pp. 351-360.

· Mary John Mananzan, “Theological Perspectives of a Religious Woman Today: four Trends in an Emerging Spirituality, in Ursula King ed., *ibid.*, pp.340-350.

· Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Spirituality of Resistance and Reconstruction, in *Women Resisting Violence: Spirituality for Life*, eds Mananzan, Oduyoye, Tamez et al., (Maryknoll: Orbis 1996), pp.161-171.

· **Chung Hyun Kyung, “Your Comfort versus My Death,” in Mananzan, Oduyoye and Tamez et al., eds, pp. 129-140.**

Program for clean beaches = <http://www.nrdc.org/water/oceans/ttw/guide.asp>

Environment

DuPont

Spinning its Wheels in India

by Gary Cohen and Satinath Sarangi

GOA, INDIA - Lakshman Kolekar and his family have tended goats and planted rice and millet along the verdant slopes of India's Western Ghats for 70 years. They have ready access to water and are surrounded by terraced groves of cashew nut, mango, coconut and banana. On grounds they consider sacred near their lush forest home, they have cremated their ancestors and have built shrines to their spirits.

This bucolic backwater is an unlikely setting for one of the fiercest battles against a multinational company in the world today, but as Kolekar and other locals are quick to point out, they did not ask DuPont to build a chemical factory in their community. After the dramatic setbacks earlier this year, DuPont also may be wondering why it staked its fortunes on this remote mountain location.

For seven years, DuPont has tried to build a \$217 million synthetic nylon 6,6 factory in the jungle highlands of Goa, India's smallest state, to capture the booming Asian market in automobile tires. Because of India's longstanding prohibition against foreign companies owning a majority share in Indian businesses, DuPont hooked up with Thapar, a prominent industrial company. In 1985, the new partnership, Thapar-DuPont Ltd. (TDL), picked the village of Keri, 30 miles from the state capital of Panjim, as the site of its future nylon factory. The state [Economic Development](#) Corporation agreed to use its authority under the national Land Acquisition Act [to take the land from a local cooperative, then lease it back to TDL for a nominal rate in exchange for an 11 percent share in the project](#). The state's participation also guaranteed the company discount rates for water and electricity hookups.

Over the next several years, TDL built a road to a bulldozed plateau, where it constructed several administrative buildings, dug bore wells for water and put up a huge billboard at the front gate that greeted the occasional visitor: "Thapar DuPont Limited: Better Things for Better Living."

DuPont claimed the project would provide needed jobs in a state with high unemployment and, through the export of nylon, help boost India's push to develop an export-oriented economy.

DuPont has learned important lessons from the 1984 Bhopal disaster, in which thousands of Indians died in the aftermath of a deadly gas leak from a Union Carbide pesticide factory. Eager to avoid the liability problems that Union Carbide faced, [DuPont has written into its contract with TDL a limited liability clause that exempts the U.S.-based parent company in the event of a chemical accident or pollution problem](#).

For many years, local opposition to the factory was muted, principally because TDL claimed its production process was pollution free. To bolster its claims, DuPont took out a full-page ad in a Goan newspaper in which TDL President Eugene Kreuzberger reiterated the company's environmental policy: ["We will not handle, use, sell, transport or dispose of a product unless we can do it in an environmentally sound manner."](#)

Challenging DuPont

But local activists, organized into the Anti-Nylon 6,6 Citizen's Committee, soon became skeptical of DuPont's claims. With information collected from U.S.-based environmental groups, the community pieced together a very different picture of DuPont. They learned from a Friends of the Earth report, "Hold the Applause," that DuPont had the highest pollution emissions of any company in the United States in 1989. Information from the National Toxics Campaign documented how DuPont continued to produce chlorofluorocarbons, which destroy the ozone layer, and leaded gasoline, which causes brain damage in children, long after research showed the destructive effects of these chemicals.

At a public meeting attended by company officials and elected members of the five local *panchayats* (village councils) in October 1994, project opponents presented documents that showed that adipic acid and hexamethylene diamine (HMDA), the primary chemicals used in the nylon 6,6 process, were classified as hazardous substances by the U.S. government. The *panchayats* also raised the objection that the 250,000 liters of water required each day to run the factory would drastically lower the water table, severely harming local agriculture. Additionally, an estimated 10,000 liters a day of effluent would contaminate drinking water for hundreds of thousands of people downstream.

Shortly after this meeting, all five *panchayats* voted to reject the proposed factory. Popular opposition also intensified. Villagers complained that they could not honor their ancestors since TDL controlled the land where the local cremation grounds had been located for generations. This loss was especially acute during the Hindu festival of Dussehra, which commemorates the victorious battle of good over evil, and is an auspicious time to offer prayers and gifts to the deceased.

After issuing an ultimatum to the government to tear down an illegal boundary wall that TDL had constructed, local people took matters into their own hands. On Dussehra eve, hundreds of villagers marched to the site, bearing sticks and torches. Within two hours, they completely demolished the boundary wall, torched the guard shed and ripped up the paved road leading to the factory. Bulldozers and other construction equipment were also disabled.

The government's response was swift and severe. Police jailed the entire leadership of the Anti-Nylon 6,6 movement under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA). The courts, however, disallowed this use of TADA, which is meant to imprison people threatening the security of the Indian state. The activists were released with no charges brought against them.

By November 1994, tensions in the area had created the atmosphere of a showdown. Police vans parked along the narrow roads leading into Keri and Savoi-Verem villages. TDL hired more than 75 security guards to camp out at the factory site.

Meanwhile, local village men guarded the entrance roads to the site and monitored any outsider coming to the area to work on the project. Villagers also instituted a total boycott of the project. Shops refused to sell any food or supplies to anyone working at the factory. When one of the

locals took a job with TDL as a public relations officer, his family was shunned by local villagers. His wife soon convinced him to resign.

The opposition movement was also aided by several key allies. The Goa Foundation, an environmental organization led by Claude Alvares, filed a writ in the Goan High Court, challenging TDL for violations of several national and state laws.

The writ alleged the government violated the Land Acquisition Act because land purchased under this law can only be used for public purposes and cannot be used to acquire land for a company. Once the land was illegally expropriated, TDL failed to get the necessary legal clearances under various environmental and industrial siting laws. Additionally, the writ argues, TDL withheld vital information regarding the impacts of adipic acid and HMDA, the two hazardous chemicals to be used at the site.

Finally, the Goa Foundation intercepted an electronic mail message from DuPont to Goan project manager Sam Singh, in which DuPont acknowledged that the company had not considered and taken appropriate measures regarding four critical areas of pollution control: groundwater protection, waste water treatment, solid waste recycling and air pollution control. The e-mail memo, dated October 13, 1994 - nine years after the project application - also raised the question of who would pay the \$100,000 consulting fee needed to design these pollution control systems.

"Not only is DuPont completely dishonest and cynical regarding its concern for India's environment, it is cheap as well," says Alvares. "DuPont is willing to invest tens of millions to make a hefty profit, but it doesn't want to invest a paltry \$100,000 to figure out how to avoid poisoning the local Goans."

Opposition gathers force

Despite his belief in the merits of the case, which has yet to be heard, Alvares advised the villagers in early 1995 that "people should never depend on the courts to solve all their problems."

This message was not lost on the anti-nylon activists. On January 18, 1995, 500 protesters rallied in front of the Goan Legislative Assembly and demanded that the project be scrapped. At the rally, they accused both Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao and Goan Chief Minister Pratapsing Rane of being public relations agents for U.S. multinationals.

Two days later, three leaders of the Anti-Nylon 6,6 Committee, including its coordinator Dr. Dattaram Desai, were arrested by Goan Superintendent of Police S.K. Gautam. No charges were brought against them. But, according to Desai, the police took the three to the police station in the nearby city of Ponda, where police stripped, handcuffed and beat them. They also forced the three activists to fill in trenches that had been dug in the road by local factory opponents. When news of the arrests circulated through the surrounding villages, 1,200 people converged on the police station and forced the police to release the activists.

The arrests ignited the already tense situation. Two days later, 500 protesters disrupted a clinic providing limited health services that was presided over by Goan Chief Minister Rane and Indian Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilizers Eduardo Faleiro. The activists forced a meeting with the officials and demanded punitive action against the offending police and immediate cancellation of the nylon project. They demanded a response within three days. The stage was set for a decisive confrontation, which came 48 hours later.

Opening fire

On the morning of January 23, a busload of U.S. DuPont officials, accompanied by three police jeeps, were met by 70 protesters, mostly women and children, sitting in the road leading to the factory. When the women refused to let the bus pass, police advised the DuPont officials to return to the state capital Panjim. In Panjim, they met with Chief Minister Rane and demanded that more aggressive action be taken against the activists. By 4:30 p.m., two busloads of police returned to the scene. According to eyewitnesses, the police opened fire without issuing a warning to disperse.

Nilesh Naik, age 25, was shot in the chest, while others received minor injuries. The villagers retaliated by burning one police bus and three jeeps. Naik died soon after admission to a nearby hospital.

In response to the police action, the opposition movement called for a general strike in Ponda. The next day, an angry crowd gathered outside the TDL office there. Forcing their way inside, according to eyewitnesses, they burned hundreds of files, computers, fax machines, three pistols and a suitcase containing more than \$7,000. The protesters also burned a TDL jeep and a fire engine that arrived to put out the blaze.

The government then issued an order banning the assembly of more than four citizens for any reason. The protesters, however, informed the police that only the police would be prevented from gathering in public places. They advised the police to lock their station gates and spend the rest of the day inside, which they did. From mid-morning onward, anti-nylon protesters controlled the city of Ponda. There were no reports of personal violence or vandalism.

On the following morning, the body of Nilesh Naik was brought to the Ponda bus station, where a crowd of 400 people gathered to escort his body to his village, Savoi- Verem, and then on to the factory site, where the body was to be cremated. The body was displayed in an open van and garlanded with flowers.

By late afternoon, the procession had swelled to more than 4,000 people, who converged on the deserted factory site, known locally as *Bhootkamb* (the place of spirits). Leaders of the Anti-Nylon 6,6 Committee had negotiated the previous night with TDL's security force to vacate the factory site. Factory officials were advised that their presence would provoke violence, and they agreed to leave the site, escorted by committee members.

Many prominent Goans spoke at the funeral service, standing on a platform made from the dismantled factory signboard. Naik was praised as the first martyr of the Goan environmental movement. The crowd renamed the plateau in his honor. But before Naik's pyre was lit, a large explosion went off at the factory site and a huge billow of smoke rose from the TDL administrative complex, where an electricity generator had been blown up.

Company officials were stunned. "We were completely shaken up over this issue," said TDL Manager Sam Singh following the event. "But we have no plans to move the factory from Goa."

After several meetings with both Thapar and DuPont officials, the government remained largely silent on the fate of the nylon plant, although Goan Chief Minister Rane, who had removed many administrative hurdles for the plant, complained that opponents of the factory "were against the development of Goa."

Redefining "better living"

The proposed chemical plant has assumed strong symbolic value in India, where the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and new liberalization laws have opened the country to foreign investment. One of the most protected Asian markets over the last 50 years, India has seen an explosion in foreign investment recently, from \$67 million in 1990 to \$1.2 billion in 1993. Power plants, oil refineries and food processing factories - industries associated with massive polluting - account for more than half of this investment.

A rejection of this chemical project, the largest single investment in Goa's history, could signal a more fundamental rejection of the corporate-dominated, export-oriented industrialization being promoted by the ruling Congress Party in Delhi.

This symbolism has not been lost on the largely illiterate and barefoot anti-nylon opposition. On December 19, the anniversary of Goan independence from the Portuguese in 1961, anti-nylon activists hoisted the Indian flag in front of the factory gate. They repeated the exercise on Republic Day, the day after Naik's funeral. The Committee's coordinator, Dr. Desai, says that the struggle against DuPont should be seen in the larger context of the independence struggle against the recolonization of India by multinational corporations.

Thapar DuPont officials argue that projects like theirs will be beneficial to the Goan economy. They point to the 650 full-time jobs they say their factory would create, and, after the January uprising, they promised that 80 percent of these jobs would be reserved for Goans.

But Kalanand Mani, director of Peaceful Society, a Goan rural development organization, argues that with an investment of \$217 million, each job will be created at a cost of \$333,000. The group has developed an alternative economic plan that it projects would enhance the horticultural and grazing activities, creating 4,500 jobs at a fraction of the nylon plant's investment costs. "We need development that enriches the natural and cultural heritage of Goa,

development that involves the participation of the people, not projects that benefit only one percent of the population," Mani says.

The anti-nylon movement has been remarkably non-partisan. Its membership includes people from every political party, as well as Catholics and Hindus, the two principal religious groups in the state. Since the killing of Naik, major institutions, including the Catholic Church and the main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party, have thrown their full support behind the campaign.

The struggle's future

Since the January uprising, Lakshman Kolekar has taken to grazing his goats again on the grounds of the still deserted factory site. Each day, he passes the newly-erected shrine to Goa's first environmental martyr and offers prayers to Nilesh Naik along with his ancestors.

Kolekar's prayers that the spirits of the place will keep Thapar DuPont from returning to the site have been answered. By February 1995, TDL had begun negotiations with the Indian state of Karnataka to shift its nylon 6,6 factory from Goa to Karnataka. Political pundits in India claim that Goa's ruling Congress Party could no longer run the political risk of supporting the project against such fierce popular opposition.

The Karnataka government is eager not to repeat the traumatic events that shook its northern neighbor. "We will not tolerate a Goa-type agitation against TDL in Karnataka," said Industries Minister R.V. Deshpande in a recent interview.

Even before the official announcement of TDL's departure from Goa was made public, the anti-nylon movement was heralding DuPont's ouster as a major people's victory against polluting industries and multinational corporations in India.

Goa Foundation's Claude Alvares says, "The recent events are a sign of hope that the people of this country have begun to resist the takeover of their resources by multinational corporations, even if they have to die while doing so."

But movement leaders acknowledge that their work will not be completed until DuPont is denied permission to operate its polluting plant in any Indian state - which is why they are busy contacting their counterparts in Karnataka to warn them about an unwelcome guest that is about to land on their shores. (www)



Re: 2.2 Fraser River

by [Victoria Marie](#) - Thursday, 19 July 2012, 09:44 PM

2.2a What are the effects of pollution of river waters in your own personal experience? Be very specific and graphic.

Everyday household chemicals are being dumped from our sewage systems into the Fraser River, there is also contamination from the viruses spread by fish farm salmon. The virus pollution is exacerbated by the medicinal chemicals used to treat the farmed fish. In 2012, Provincial Minister Don McRae Proposed a Bill that would suppress information concerning farmed fish infected with IHN. Infectious haematopoietic necrosis (IHN) is an infectious viral disease of salmon and trout. The disease has most economic significance for freshwater farms, however Pacific and Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar* L.) in both fresh and sea water have been severely affected. However, amid public outcry, the bill was withdrawn in May 2012.



Source: http://alexandramorton.typepad.com/alexandra_morton/2012/05/update-virus-

[spreading-law-to-suppress-disease-reports-coming-to-bc-.html](#)

2.2b Do a web search and find pics that show water pollution (either on the Tungabhadra River or on the river you spoke of in 2.2a). Post it here with a few words of comment.



Preliminary research suggested that the dumping of household chemical into the water supply may be killing the salmon and other fish. Yet in 2005, the federal government cut a \$5.4-million research program, known as the Toxic Chemicals Research Program. (source: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/story/2011/06/14/bc-salmon-inquiry-household-chemicals.html>)



Photo by Jakob Dulisse

The deadly virus, Infectious Salmon Anemia, has been linked to fish farms in Scotland, Norway and Chile. Now it has been found in wild pacific salmon in BC.

The virus is likely spread through the import of Atlantic salmon eggs from Europe. For many years, environmentalists and scientists have viewed an outbreak of ISA as the worst case scenario for wild salmon in BC. This discovery is devastating news for wild salmon, and if serious action is not taken our wild salmon stocks may never be the same. (source: http://wildernesscommittee.org/write_wild_save_wild_salmon)