

I don't plant trees, I don't do bird watching,
I don't do nature treks, I don't do any social work either.
Yet, I help nature and help the poor while I shop.
Do you know how? Read on...

CONSERVING NATURE



I use Organic or Ethnic Foods- Organically grown crops do not pollute soil or water, do not kill soil microbes or micro-fauna or pest-predator systems of insects and birds. They do not require chemical fertilisers or pesticides. So, the government does not have to import expensive petroleum products or fossil fuels to run these industries. My nation is not trapped in foreign debt because I save money for the government. Also, shopping organic or ethnic foods increases demand for traditional crop varieties and ethnic recipes, which get conserved through use; and satisfy consumer taste. More than anything else, they are healthy unlike the western fast food and drinks.



I use Handloom-made Clothes- Handloom-made clothes are good for skin because they do not use artificial, synthetic fibre. Cotton fibre may not be as durable as synthetic fibres, but then one can change handloom-made clothes every 6-8 months and keep up with the new fashion! Ironing is a waste of energy and even crease-resistant, low-iron clothes can be developed using natural fibre. Handloom industry provides employment to millions of rural artisans; it does not cause pollution unlike synthetic cloth industry, which makes use of petroleum products. Cotton and silk are main export commodities of many developing countries, whose economies rely on the revenue that these products generate.

I use Timber or Bamboo Furniture- Handicraft furniture is aesthetically pleasing and unique in design. In addition, handicraft industries help conserve livelihoods and traditional, ethnic skills of artisans from tribal and rural areas.



I use Biogas or Bio-diesel- Biogas makes me self sufficient - I use leaf litter, vegetable waste, gobar from my garden or farm; biogas requires no fossil fuels, and avoids carbon emission. It also avoids smoke unlike traditional stoves that use wood as fuel. Bio-diesel invented by Indian Institute of Science (<http://agni.csa.iisc.ernet.in/sutra/ntfp/>) can similarly save country from undesirable environmental effects of petroleum products. Pongamia or Jatropha trees grown to produce seed oil compensate for the carbon emitted by the use of petroleum products. The oil can also be useful for generating electricity in rural areas where infrastructure is unavailable.



I use Herbal Medicines- They have no side effects, they are time-tested remedies, and their marketing does not require profit-making pharmaceutical companies interested in

patenting medicines making drugs costly, and excluding Traditional Knowledge holders from benefit sharing.



These 5 options are eco-friendly with minimal waste and pollution. In addition, waste generated during their production degrades and generates bio-fertilisers. Eco-products also require less water and energy inputs, which are increasingly scarce commodities. Furthermore, rationing of bio-products the allocation of a certain quantity per head should not exceed ecosystem productivity thresholds. For instance, 15 kg food grain per month, 1 fish per week, 1 kg sugar per month, 1 egg per 2 days etc. per head are recommended as eco-friendly. A system of eco-taxing should also be introduced more consumptive people pay "eco-tax" to subsidise the goods for the poor. This will help in implementing locally a Kyoto Protocol principle of "polluter pays" and reduce per capita carbon emission from 2 kg per day by at least half in 10-15 years, if the "eco-rationing" system mentioned above is implemented soon.

ALLEVIATING POVERTY AND GENERATING RURAL INCOME

Above eco-friendly consumer options also help in alleviating poverty by generating greater rural employment than the industrial production mode, which is also more polluting. At least a dozen rural jobs in every village can be generated to organise bio-fertilisers and bio-pesticides, handloom, handicrafts, bio-energy and herbal medicines, using local resources and traditional skills (LRTS). Gram Mooligai Company Limited (GMCL) (www.village-herbs.com), a co-operative medicinal plants marketing company run by women's savings groups in Southern India, demonstrated this and that eco-friendly development is also socially equitable. These decentralised production-consumption systems can also use energy efficient modern technology such as electronic communication rather than paper correspondence, which is unfriendly to environment.



Poverty is the inability of an individual to meet basic necessities such as food, clothing, shelter, transport and medicine, besides appropriate waste disposal and availability of energy; as well as social needs such as education that equips the individual to meet these basic necessities. The growing poverty, especially in rural areas, arises due to modern development pattern, where villagers cannot meet these needs that their ancestors have earlier met using local resources and traditional skills. As Ecosystem People, villagers grew or gathered their own food on their farms, forests; met modest clothing needs from farm or market; built housing using forest timber, stones, mud or soil-bricks; travelled using bullock-carts or public transport such as bus and rail; and met healthcare needs from medicinal plants.

Bio-resources contributed 75% of GDP; people valued them and used them sustainably through regulated harvesting or hunting during breeding season; and conserved resources in part through distributed refugia such as sacred ponds or forests. With a shift to metal, chemical, synthetic products and development of mass production processes during industrial revolution, cities grew as production and service providers, but skills of artisans and nomads became redundant leaving them jobless. They became migrants to cities as slum dwellers, coolies, illegal traders, black market merchants and even prostitutes.



LRTS have now become obsolete as urban buyers do not buy their products pottery, timber or bamboo furniture etc., while modern education that the rural poor get does not involve any use of LRTS and does not equip them to meet even their own basic needs. Thus, rural poor migrate to urban slums as sundry labour, further straining the crowded cities. Urban growth, using non-renewable resources and fossil fuels has also polluted air, water, soil and caused global warming due to enormous carbon and other emissions. Bio-resources coupled with traditional skills and modern technology can produce a variety of goods and services; and reverse this trend while generating rural employment without any external capital or technology (www.ranwa.org/mea). LRTS-based micro-enterprises also trigger women's empowerment, and further ensure sustainability. Biodiversity Registers documents of peoples' knowledge of biodiversity in their surroundings are prepared at all villages countrywide to implement the biological diversity legislation. Such registers provide important instrument for making micro-plans of the rural production and urban consumption chains mentioned above. World Trade Organisation (WTO) also has to be forced to provide global market access to LRTS-based goods from developing countries, by also reducing import quota restrictions, tariff barriers, production and export subsidies in developed countries.



Traditions and knowledge can be best conserved through application, as these are governed by the principle, 'use it or lose it'. Future development paradigm could only be 'Reuse, Recycle, and Refuse' if not reduce altogether. Handmade goods produced at small scale will be costlier than the mass-produced factory goods that harm nature and society. The costs of LRTS-based bio-products can be minimised through subsidies obtained by levying taxes on polluting, carbon-emitting technologies, as envisaged in the Kyoto Protocol that aims to halt climate change. Such "green grants" and supply of organic food, handicrafts, bio-diesel will also grow in future, if more customers demand so from their vendors and politicians. The education will also gradually promote LRTS, as producer-consumer demand grows.



Indian health sector initiative embodying these ideas (www.rcmpcc.org, www.frlht.org.in) was recognised by the United Nations Development Programme through the Equator Award as one of the 30 best global projects of poverty alleviation through conservation, sustainable use and equitable benefit sharing of biodiversity in the tropics (www.undp.org/equatorinitiative/secondary/awards.htm). Thus, ideas to meet most human needs from bio-resource based development will find increasing support from researchers, donors, politicians beginning with consumers.

I hope you are also motivated to buy these items. In this demand-driven world, the market for, and supply of these items will grow gradually, if I motivate others to buy them. Buy your own nature park not a piece of land or water body right in your own shopping bag!

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This brochure indicates "Response Options" for ecologically sustainable and socially equitable world, to meet human needs within natural ecosystem productivity. Their feasibility is being discussed during 2003-5 with stakeholders such as citizens and consumer associations, trade unions, industries, NGOs, government officials and politicians, to develop regional and national eco-production-consumption scenario, under 'Indian Urban Resource Millennium Ecosystem Assessment'



Sustainable Urban Lifestyles and Rural Income

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