

2010 - 2022



# Live encounters

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH  
MAY 2022

**DR MEDHA BISHT**

**Decolonising Knowledge and Practices:  
Towards Relational Thinking**

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK ULYSEAS



Fisherman on the Nam Khan, Laos. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



### **SUPPORT LIVE ENCOUNTERS. DONATE NOW AND KEEP THE MAGAZINE LIVE IN 2022**

Live Encounters is a not-for-profit free online magazine that was founded in 2009 in Bali, Indonesia. It showcases some of the best writing from around the world. Poets, writers, academics, civil & human/animal rights activists, academics, environmentalists, social workers, photographers and more have contributed their time and knowledge for the benefit of the readers of:

*Live Encounters Magazine (2010), Live Encounters Poetry & Writing (2016), Live Encounters Young Poets & Writers (2019) and now, Live Encounters Books (August 2020).*

We are appealing for donations to pay for the administrative and technical aspects of the publication. **Please help by donating any amount for this just cause as events are threatening the very future of Live Encounters.**

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

Mark Ulyseas  
Publisher/Editor  
[markulyseas@liveencounters.net](mailto:markulyseas@liveencounters.net)

[Donate](#)

**All articles and photographs are the copyright of [www.liveencounters.net](http://www.liveencounters.net) and its contributors. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the explicit written permission of [www.liveencounters.net](http://www.liveencounters.net). Offenders will be criminally prosecuted to the full extent of the law prevailing in their home country and/or elsewhere.**



## CONTRIBUTORS

DR MEDHA BISHT

DR HOWARD RICHARDS

DR IVO COELHO

JILL GOCHER

DR BIBHU PRASAD ROUTRAY

BARRY DELANEY

MARK ULYSEAS



Dr Medha Bisht

Medha Bisht is a Senior Assistant Professor, Department of International Relations, South Asian University, in New Delhi. She has a PhD in Diplomatic Studies from Jawaharlal Nehru University, and her research interests include South Asia, water diplomacy, and non-Western epistemologies. She was a recipient of a McArthur Fellowship, Strategic and Economic Capacity Building Programme for Young Scholars and Asia Pacific Water Leadership Programme. She has also undertaken projects and done consultancies with UNIFEM, ICIMOD, UNDP, IUCN, OXFAM, DFID/Asia Foundation, and Mine Action Canada, with a focus on civil society, water diplomacy, women and governance. Dr Bisht also co-led a Winter School on Inclusive Water Governance jointly organised by South Asian University (SAU), TROSA OXFAM, and UNESCO Chair of International Cooperation, Uppsala University supported by the Government of Sweden. She has published on scenario building exercises and was subject matter expert on water security on DRDO-funded Strategic Trends project-2050, facilitated by Manohar Pannikar Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis, Ministry of Defence, India, 2012. Her publications include: *Kautilya's Arthashastra: Philosophy of Strategy*; *Monographs on Water Governance and Indigenous Communities in the Meghna Basin: Narratives from India and Bangladesh* (coauthored); *Local Narratives and Hydro Diplomacy: Case Studies of Indian and Pakistan Punjab* (co-authored); *Water Sector in Pakistan: Policy, Politics and Management*. She has published peer-reviewed chapters, and several articles in journals such as *Strategic Analyses*, *South Asian Survey*, *Social Change*, *International Studies*, *Contemporary South Asia*, *Water Policy*, *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region* and *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* amongst others.

## DR MEDHA BISHT

### DECOLONISING KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES: TOWARDS RELATIONAL THINKING

*Where there is a forest there is Khasi people [sic] (Pdeng), as our life (Jingim) depends on forest (Khlaw) and our livelihood on betel leaves (Pathi). Either in Bangladesh or India, where there is a forest there is a Khasi..” These enlightening words belong to Monika Khonglah, an indigenous woman from a small town of Moulvi Bazaar, Sylhet division, Bangladesh. She further adds, ‘taking care of forest means taking care (sumar) of stone (Shmia), stream (am khar/ wahliar), trees (Twia) and that without stream and water there would be no trees and no trees would mean no Khasi.*

This narrative came upfront in one of the interviews<sup>1</sup>, while doing a scoping study on Inclusive water governance in the Meghna Basin. The narrative is significant because it is not only reflective of the meanings that water and sustainable development hold for indigenous communities inhabiting the eastern borderlands of South Asia, but is also symbolic and indeed suggestive of an alternative worldview. Significantly, the meaning of water for these communities was not just about quantity or quality but took into account the entire ecosystem which emphasized the coexistence of both the human and the non-human.

Such perspectives hold importance in addressing the complexities of the world of 21st century. For example, take two dominant narratives in International Relations in the last few months- the Russia-Ukraine war and the multiple alliances which have been forged in the ‘Indo-Pacific’. Strategic narratives around these themes are oblivious of non-human dimensions. While in Russia’s Ukraine war little attention has been given to poisoning of air and rivers, in Indo-Pacific, environmental threats are often treated as isolated concerns. One of the major reasons for such omissions is a lack of relational thinking, because of which the human and the non-human are often seen as separate categories.

This limitation has been recognized and brought to perspective through the lens of alternate/pluriversal worldview, and the discipline of International Relations has for some time now engaged with this theme by reintroducing the term 'ontological turn', which foregrounds the notion of a pluriverse in contrast to a singular universe, where states, institutional collectives or individual collectives are the main actors. Given its importance towards decolonizing thinking of the 'international' in International Relations, Blaney and Tickner have emphasised on the notion of difference that different claims to knowledge can make in approaching the world. Making a case for multiple worlds, where both human and non-human co-exist and shape each other they note, "taking difference seriously means accepting that we are immersed in a politics/ethics of ontology, in which inter-human and inter-species encounters cannot be handled by supposedly neutral, technical, or universally liberal rules and norm<sup>3</sup>." This argument, which echoes the notion of what and how we study International Relations, has been referred to as one of the ways for decolonizing International Relations, which remains centric on how states are obsessed with survival at the cost of augmenting their power and security. Little in this analysis do we see how the non-human species are taken into account, and what role and impact non-human factor can play in responding to some key challenges in 21st century.

The focus on both human and non-human has also been highlighted by another scholar Bruno Latour, who has emphasized on action/interaction/relations based research. Introducing the concept of Actor Networks (actants-which are assemblage of both human and non-human), as his ontological starting point, for Latour a network becomes a recorded movement of things. Latour's work finds relevance for understanding not only the role of the non-human but also paves a relational way of understanding things and thinking about phenomenon. Thus, his definition of social- includes both the human and non-human, and is an important pointer to understand webs of connection which sustain, shape and transform a specific entity<sup>4</sup>.

The reason for highlighting some of the viewpoints is that it is reflective of a relational way of thinking, which as pointed out through the narrative in the opening paragraph, is an alternative worldview for seeing and understanding the world differently. More importantly, I argue that this relational worldview has been an important aspect of Asian thought and philosophy, and needs to

Against this backdrop, I take the example of *Arthashastra* - a classic on state and statecraft in ancient India, which is important for understanding this perspective from the lens of 'relational cosmology'<sup>5</sup>. Second, perspectives from Science and Technology Studies also help foregrounding, how critical perspectives can help in advancing the notion of 'relational cosmology', which is an alternate cosmivision to make sense of the world, offering us ways to theorise relational ways of thinking.

be emancipated and recognized for understanding how cosmivisions (beliefs about how the world operates), impact our conceptual pathways to make sense of the world in general and responding to contemporary issues in particular.

While taking the indigenous worldviews as its departure point to understand alternative ways of thinking, this short article presents a case of relational thinking for exploring intersections between the human and the non-human, which it argues can become explicit through relational thinking. I present a short narratives here, which brings upfront the consequences of ignoring the relational approaches particularly in view of the negotiated water treaties in South Asia. In order to foreground this argument, perspectives from Science and Technology studies are drawn upon. This perspective also helps in highlighting its resemblances with holistic yet relational thinking in Indian philosophy, and helps eliciting how relational thinking can be theorised in International Relations. Against this backdrop, I take the example of *Arthashastra* - a classic on state and statecraft in ancient India, which is important for understanding this perspective from the lens of 'relational cosmology'<sup>5</sup>. Second, perspectives from Science and Technology Studies also help foregrounding, how critical perspectives can help in advancing the notion of 'relational cosmology', which is an alternate cosmivision to make sense of the world, offering us ways to theorise relational ways of thinking. Finally, a vignette is presented in the third section, to emphasise a relational view of the world, particularly as one responds to the challenges posed by transboundary water politics in South Asia.

### Relational Cosmology

Relational cosmology, a term brought upfront by Milja Kurki, is suggestive of understanding the world in relational ways, i.e. it is a shift of perspective from seeing the international relations not as a chessboard but a webbed or networked based understanding of the world. More fundamentally it raises certain ontological questions, i.e., rather than analyzing substances or things- one starts studying relations and thus start making sense of the world through relations, rather than by focusing on attributes which are fixed, aspects which would direct one to look at specific state motivations, rationality and behaviour. This discussion is often captured through the concept of plural ontologies, and is tied to the fundamental nature of knowledge- which produces an alternate way of thinking.

Anvikshiki, in the case of Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is distinct, as it seeks to address the meaning of knowledge in political affairs. The earlier arthashastra traditions had emphasised dandniti as the primary branch of knowledge, even claiming it to be the only science. The school of Manu, meanwhile had rejected the claim of anvikshiki, as it was considered to be a branch of vedas<sup>9</sup>. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* on the other hand, employs Anvikshiki for emphasizing critical skepticism - logical reasoning, aiming to syncretise contrasting philosophical tradition.

In this regard, Milja Kurki, notes "Knowledge is [often] tied up with the cosmological visions of the universe and our understandings of our role in it"<sup>6</sup>. These different/plural ontologies, which takes cognizance of both human and non-human, as some scholars have termed it as the pluriverse, helps one to go beyond a singular understanding of universe- dominated principally by states in IR.

This thought is important because it draws our attention to distinct cosmovisions, which possibly existed but have been marginalized and have not been central in the discipline of International Relations. Understanding this cosmovision becomes significant because it draws attention not only to alternate meanings and vocabularies which stem from such cosmovision, but also advances different ways of theorizing International Relations. Ignoring such ways of thinking shall only perpetuate blind spots in (ab)using ideas to diversify thinking in International Relations.

In order to explain this, let me offer an example from the ancient classic *Arthashastra*, which is a well-known and researched text in International Relations. The text is often considered to be foundational, as it offers suggestion towards war, peace, espionage, treaties- aspects which are fundamental to the discipline. However, an often less spoken about theme is the cosmovision, which *Arthashastra* as a text is based on. As one delves into the text, the inspiration of a distinct cosmovision comes upfront through the concept of 'dharma'- which could be interpreted as duty, order, morality, justice etc. 'Dharma' etymologically is formed by the root dhr, dharti or earth which means something which holds things together. Thus, as we read the text- we find that dharma became central to understanding of social and political order, giving meaning to terms like power, order, morality, justice, state etc<sup>7</sup>.

It needs to be added here that this cosmovision, which revolved around dharma was not distinct to one particular religion or thought system. Infact, the cosmovisions related to dharma was distinct to Buddhism, Jainism, Sufism, Sikhism etc., all of them, which offered a relational understanding the world. A striking aspect between all these cosmovisions was that they emphasized a relational world rather than a substantialist understanding. This relational understanding also had striking semblance in the narrative of a young Khasi woman who was residing in the small village along the India- Bangladesh border. As noted in the introduction, this narrative of the Khasi indigenous woman was holistic but relational and appeared as striking because it was indicative not only of the

overarching impact that the imagery of forests have for indigenous identity, but was also suggestive of a relational world view which governed these imageries- an aspect/ or perhaps a cosmovision which was not very unfamiliar to ancient India.

This discussion can be made intelligible by dwelling in the philosophy of knowledge, as constituted and articulated in ancient India. Against this backdrop, I shall discuss some significant questions on how ancient Indian thinking has approached questions related to the philosophy of knowledge ('anvikshiki'), and in what ways do these ideas resonate/not resonate with critical IR.

### The Concept of Anvikshiki

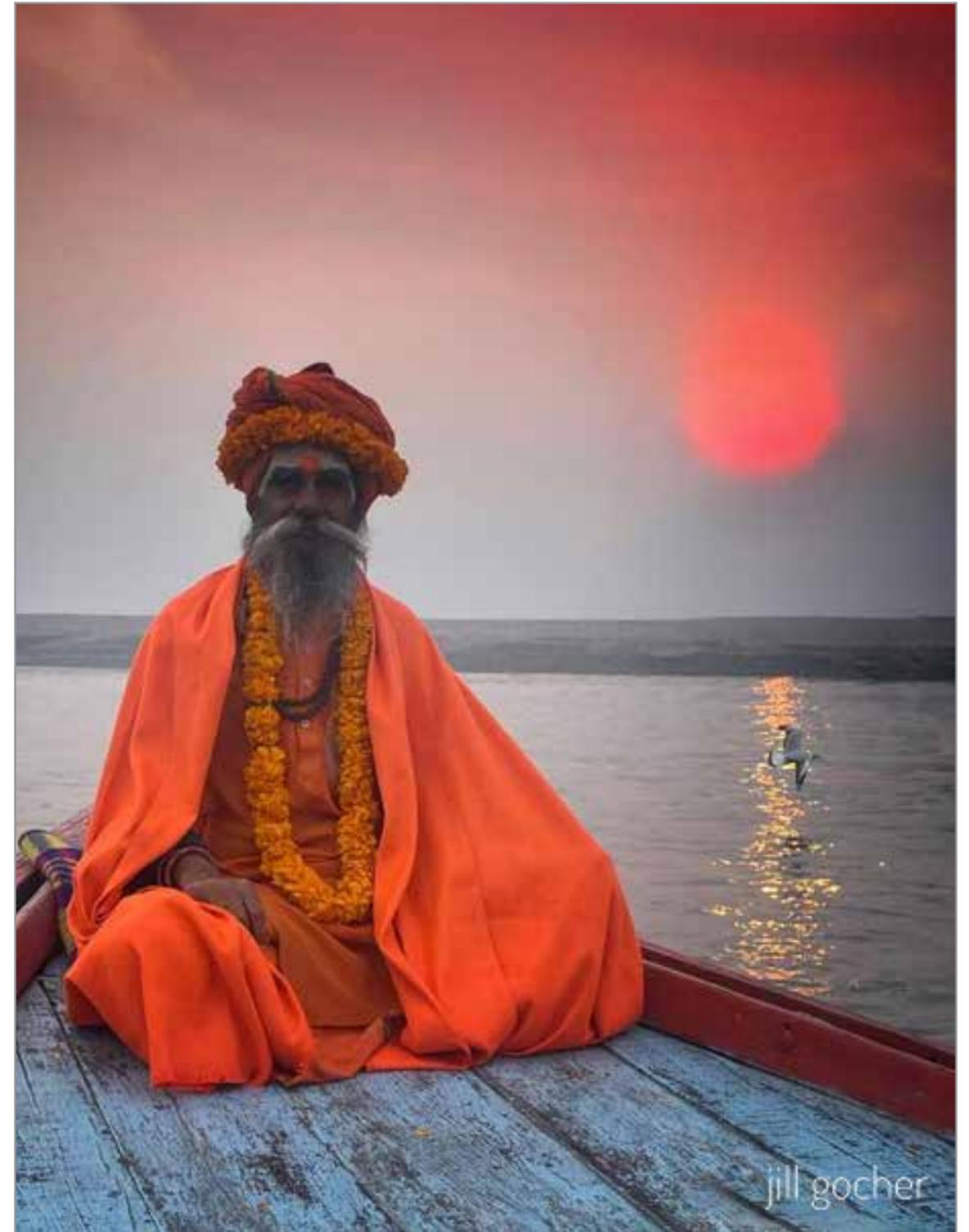
Anvikshiki, emerged as a primary lens to make sense of concepts used in *Arthashastra*, as it offers a philosophy of knowledge, a distinct logic of reasoning, which is reflective of holistic thinking in Indian classical thought. Significantly, this holism is informed by embracing contradictory elements (in this case contrasting philosophical traditions). More importantly, Anvikshiki draws our attention to distinct metatheoretical<sup>8</sup> insights, and dwells on questions related to the nature of knowledge itself. Meta-theoretical insights are important because they are different from theory as they explore underlying assumptions on which a specific theory is based on. For instance, assumptions on how one sees the world - and to what extent our knowledge about the world is based on distinct epistemological and methodological approaches is determined by where we stand as a researcher, or which theoretical approach are we inclined towards.

Anvikshiki, in the case of Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is distinct, as it seeks to address the meaning of knowledge in political affairs. The earlier arthashastra traditions had emphasised dandniti as the primary branch of knowledge, even claiming it to be the only science. The school of Manu, meanwhile had rejected the claim of anvikshiki, as it was considered to be a branch of vedas<sup>9</sup>. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* on the other hand, employs Anvikshiki for emphasizing critical skepticism- logical reasoning, aiming to syncretise contrasting philosophical tradition. In *Arthashastra*, it is not only underlined as a distinct branch of knowledge, but is also considered to be a lamp for all sciences. For instance, Kautilya's *Arthashastra* notes that there are four type of knowledge systems that need to be emphasized upon for understanding political life. The other three were vedas (religious chants), varta (economics ) and dandniti (political science).

What is thus important here is that as a metatheoretical lens to organise knowledge, Anvikshiki, offers insights for holistic thinking, challenging the tradition of dogmatic thinking in Hindu philosophical tradition. The mention of contradictory systems of thought (darshanas or ways of thinking) of Indian philosophy in *Arthashastra* as components of knowledge testify to this. For instance, articulating the meaning of Anvikshiki, the text notes that “*Samkhya, Yoga and Lokayata* these constitute philosophy (Anvikshiki).<sup>13</sup>” Notably, Samkhya emphasised dualism but converging on non-dualism (through a differentiation between *purusa* and *prakriti*) underlined the importance of discerning distinct qualities formed through the fusion of *purusa* (soul) and *prakriti* (matter).

The term Anvikshiki means investigation, which according to Kautilya was necessary for critically assessing the other branches of knowledge. *Arthashastra* notes that only by means of anvikshiki (logical reasoning), can one know “ what is spiritual good and evil in Vedic lore, material gain and loss in economics , good policy and weak policy in science of politics<sup>10</sup>”. In other words, these lines are instructive of the judgment based on logical arguments, which becomes a pre-requisite for any strategic decision making. Later, Kautilya applies this logic to multiple stratagems, which are reflective of how decisions should be based on a holistic assessment. Thus, Kautilya in *Arthashastra* sought to define the meaning of knowledge beyond a compartmentalised way of thinking, where religion, economics and political sciences were not treated as separate but were intertwined, and in a way relational with each other. This total way of thinking has received much attention by many scholars. For instance, Godwin points out, “India was a civilisation of proliferating totality. The totality of the Veda itself, supposed to be complete, is never closed off: it is open to commentaries (the Brahmanas) and to commentaries on commentaries (the Upanishads); so much so that Indian writing presents a positively unique case in the history of thought by nurturing a single organism behind its expansive variety.<sup>11</sup>” Being more specific, L. Dumont insists that totality represents the ontological unity in India. He further clarifies that, “totality is a multiplicity organised through its oppositions, more often than not hierarchical<sup>12</sup>.” Thus arguing for a more composite understanding, Godwin notes that Indian thought is more syncretic than synthetic, formed by competing thought traditions.

What is thus important here is that as a metatheoretical lens to organise knowledge, Anvikshiki, offers insights for holistic thinking, challenging the tradition of dogmatic thinking in Hindu philosophical tradition. The mention of contradictory systems of thought (darshanas or ways of thinking) of Indian philosophy in *Arthashastra* as components of knowledge testify to this. For instance, articulating the meaning of Anvikshiki, the text notes that “*Samkhya, Yoga and Lokayata* these constitute philosophy (Anvikshiki).<sup>13</sup>” Notably, Samkhya emphasised dualism but converging on non-dualism (through a differentiation between *purusa* and *prakriti*) underlined the importance of discerning distinct qualities formed through the fusion of *purusa* (soul) and *prakriti* (matter). Yoga emphasised on discipline/meditation, experiential knowledge -recognizing the need of *anubhava*, and internalization of knowledge. *Lokayata*, meanwhile emphasised on a materialist pursuits of the state, with a focus on empirical evidence (pramana) Anvikshiki thus as a form of epistemic practice is indicative of logical reasoning through which contradictory Hindu philosophical traditions ranging from positivism to post positivism, were employed<sup>14</sup>.



Photograph by Jill Gocher.

This conversation is important to the notion of Anvikshiki for two reasons. First, it offers an alternate cosmology of what Kurki calls relational cosmology. When applied to frameworks, this endows a distinct meaning to concepts, vocabularies which emerged from different ways of thinking. Thus, statecraft, strategy, power, order etc, need to be interpreted in relational ways, which should take cognisance of the importance of partial perspectives- which are important for advancing relational thinking.

Given this holistic thinking which goes beyond binaries, what one observes is that in *Arthashastra*, issues under discussion ranged from the micro to the macro, human to non-human, and from simple to complex, i.e. they focused on individual details which contributed to societal order, to matters which were relevant to the practice of effective 'statecraft' and to philosophical discussions and debates which brought value to the domain politics and strategy. This relationship was holistic, composite and relational, where one phenomenon gave rise to the other, and this can be articulated as the key vantage point for informing how strategy was envisioned in Kautilya's *Arthashastra*. Strategy was thus understood in relational terms. It is at this point that conversations between ancient concept of Anvikshiki and critical IR would help and in order to facilitate this conversation Donna Haraway's work can offer 'useful perspectives'. This is because, Haraway underlines the notion and meaning of partial perspectives and problematises the notion of objectivity which is inalienable from questions related to science. However, she goes beyond partial perspectives to highlight the relational aspects associated with them. Some important points which stem from Donna Haraway's analysis and can be a significant contribution to Anvikshiki are:

- (a) understanding of partial perspectives
- (b) how partial perspectives are related to the concept of relational thinking and webbed connections and
- (c) why this process is important to the very question of production of knowledge and can indeed help towards theorising non-Western IR.

Haraway's work stands offers a critical appraisal of history of science where she highlights the importance partial/situated perspectives in contrast to a 'god eyed view'- which is universal/ authoritative account of what reality is. She supports reflexivity as opposed to objectivity, as the latter is mostly inspired by Western/modern dualistic thinking. Destabilising dualistic mode of thinking by proposing metaphors (vocabularies), her work has been used extensively in action centered research, and an applied understanding of science which emphasises webbed connections between entities.

Haraway's critique of science most commonly is conveyed through the notion of 'cyborg', can only be meaningful through the powerful tool of 'situated knowledge'- which help in producing 'maps of consciousness'. These unmarked (but situated) knowledge fields which populate the heterogeneity of the world are important sites- a field to see and understand the world differently. Thus binaries

for Haraway construct each other and need to be rescued from dualistic thinking lest they will be interpreted within the larger framework of western history and philosophy.

Thus, relationality in many ways helps Haraway to go beyond binaries while bringing the notion of 'holism' and 'objectivity' to her analysis. However, her holism does not mean totality- but is a more nuanced version of shared epistemologies. She notes that shared epistemologies of practice are the "doctrine and practice of objectivity that privileges contestation, deconstruction, passionate construction, webbed connections and hope for transformation of systems of knowledge and ways of seeing<sup>15</sup>." These webbed connections can be understood through the notion of 'vision' -which is not total in terms of a gaze from no-where, but is a gaze of the unmarked, unseen claims to power and representation. For Haraway thus partial vision is an objective vision, which is a consequence of understanding processes and embraces contextual and situated knowledge. She notes, "feminist objectivity is about limited vision and partial knowledge". However for her unlike knowledge, which can be situated, fixed, as some feminists would define it, for Haraway, it is more dynamic, open, emergent and fluid.

One of primary questions that Haraway has thus responded to, centres around modes of producing knowledge. Through her work on primates, she underlines the union of political and physiological, which is the ancient modern justification of domination. For her marked figures- which are a reflection of kinship of feminist figurations can be a guide to knowledge from 'elsewhere'. She notes that "science and feminism, anti-racism and science studies, biology and cultural theory, fiction and fact closely cohabit and should do so<sup>16</sup>". While Haraway's work<sup>17</sup> offers a rich ground of engagement to understand social construction of knowledge, she insists on a cyborg vision which offers thus both a possibility of "solidarity and shared conversations" and the emancipation of those partial perspectives or situated knowledge, which might be left untouched or unmarked due to the intertwined nature- which so effectively has been conveyed through the power-knowledge nexus. This conversation is important to the notion of Anvikshiki for two reasons. First, it offers an alternate cosmology of what Kurki calls relational cosmology. When applied to frameworks, this endows a distinct meaning to concepts, vocabularies which emerged from different ways of thinking. Thus, statecraft, strategy, power, order etc, need to be interpreted in relational ways, which should take cognisance of the importance of partial perspectives- which are important for advancing relational thinking.

However, an aspect missing from this discourse are limitations to take the non-human into account. The relational ways of seeing and understanding connections between 'things' can help in offering solutions to the contemporary wicked problems in International Relations. However, how we understand the International and theorise the international is central to this endeavour.

Second, it raises critical reflections on the larger discourse on contributing to relational yet holistic thinking in Anvikshiki. Haraway's shared epistemologies and a relational understanding of things helps in making Anvikshiki intelligible towards understand concepts from a relational cosmology, Thus by offering useful insights such as partial perspectives in this regard, it offers ways through which one can arrive at relational -holistic ways of approach knowledge.

### A vignette from India-Bangladesh Borderlands

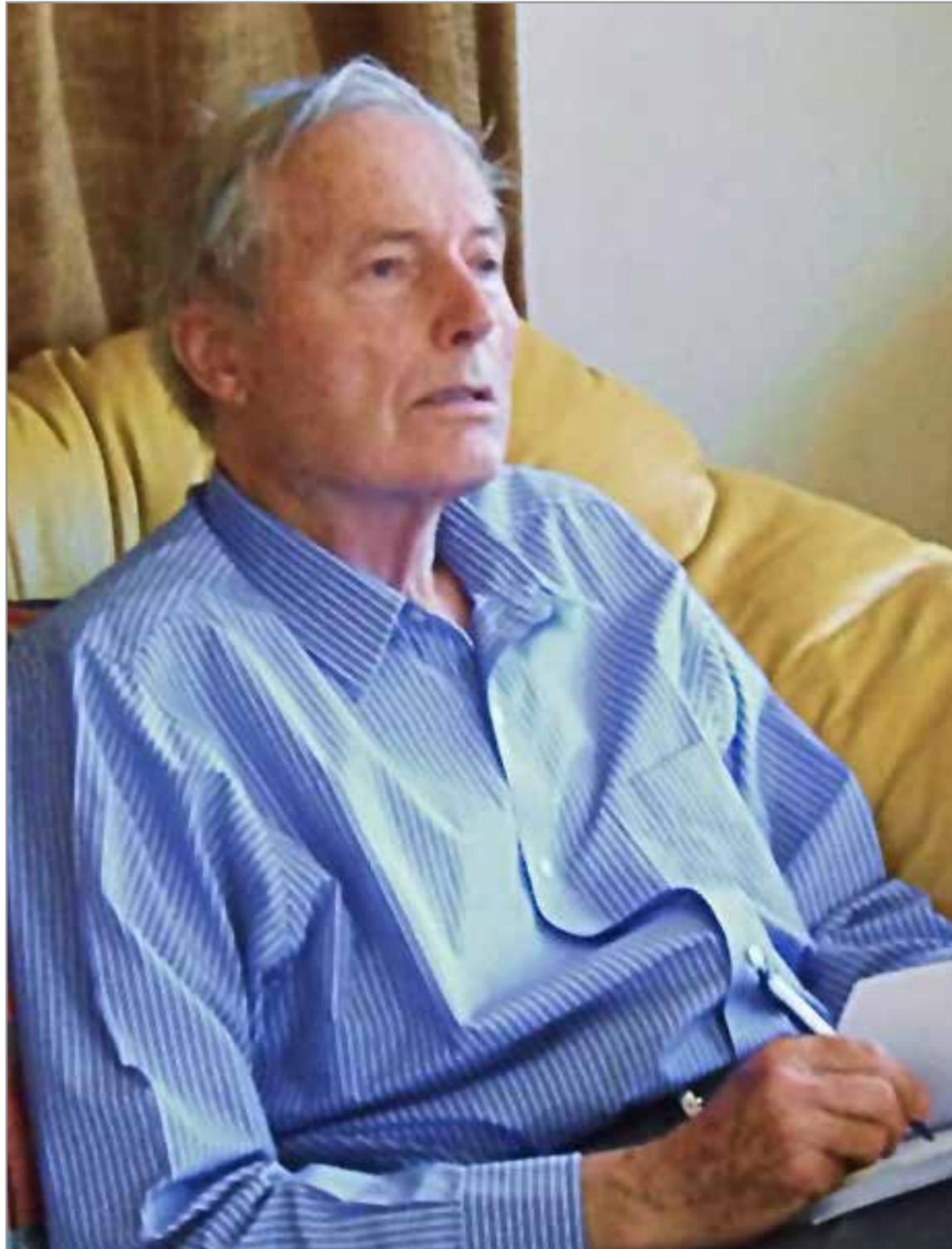
Against this backdrop, a recent example of flash floods in an India-Bangladesh borderland will be a timely reminder for a relational approach. The story for understanding this relational approach goes back to October 20, 2021, when a flash hit the Teesta Basin in Bangladesh. The water levels went up to dangerous level, costing the life of several people and impacting the livelihood of several thousands. The cause of the floods was the excessive rainfall in the upper catchment of Teesta Basin (Sikkim and Northern parts of Western Bengal), which led Indian authorities to open the flood gates of the Gajoldoba barrage, located in the Indian side. A report from the Daily Star notes, "According to local sources, the water reached the Teesta Barrage at Dalia by the evening of Wednesday, though the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) officials did not wake up to the information and the situation till Thursday morning, when they too decided to open the gates of the Teesta Barrage. However, by that time, the water accumulated at the head of this barrage had burst out of the river confines and flooded the area. The volume of the water was so huge that even opening the gates and the flood bypass—so the river water could spill over into the downstream reaches (from Teesta Barrage) of the river too—was not enough. The entire region of greater Rangpur was affected<sup>18</sup>."

Once the incident caused great loss to life and property, many reports flooded the public domain in terms of the international, bilateral, regional, national and local ramifications this held for water management and water diplomacy practices. However, what was missing from these debates was a debate on more relational approaches to water management and diplomacy than rational approaches, which essentially focus on volumetric allocation of water. In other words relational approaches would take the entire eco-system into account. The relational approach has also found voice through scholars, communities and international, national and local organisations working on the political ecology of water, who have taken conversations further by focusing on nature based solutions.<sup>19</sup>

In the relational approach scholars have brought the hydrological focus centre-stage, and the emphasis is on how understanding connections in Basin, through both human and non-human entities can give meaning to cooperation. One can say for the relationists the focus on anthropocene delta<sup>20</sup> and basin becomes an important vantage point of analysis, where integrated development of the Basin's biophysical and socio-economic challenges are highlighted and emphasised. The multiple ways of integrated development have been suggested through the linking of rivers with a cross country barrage complex which can give meaningful direction to a multi-lateral/bilateral approach between basin countries and address issues related to water augmentation and water supply.<sup>21</sup> This, as argued could enhance holistic development, and help synergizing national interests, people's well-being, and regional prosperity, ensuring water, food, energy security in the region<sup>22</sup>. However, an aspect missing from this discourse are limitations to take the non-human into account. The relational ways of seeing and understanding connections between 'things' can help in offering solutions to the contemporary wicked problems in International Relations. However, how we understand the International and theorise the international is central to this endeavour.

#### End Notes

- 1 <https://asia.oxfam.org/get-involved/calendar/dr-medha-bisht-mayfereen-lyngdoh-rymtathiang-pallab-chakma-sarita-sundari-rout>
- 2 <https://time.com/6158383/ukraine-environmental-health-risks-russia>, <https://www.top1000funds.com/2022/02/kotkin-warns-of-ukraine-break-up-as-key-geopolitical-risk>, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/threats-to-the-environment-in-the-indo-pacific>.
- 3 Blaney, David L. and Arlene B. Tickner (2017). "Worlding, Ontological Politics and the Possibility of a Decolonial IR", *Millennium*, Vol. 43, No. 3.
- 4 Latour, B. (1993). *We have never been modern*. Harvard University Press; Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the social: An introduction to actor network theory*. Oxford University Press.
- 5 Kurki, Milja. (2020). *International Relations and Relational Cosmology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 6 Kurki, Milja. (2020). *International Relations and Relational Cosmology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 3.
- 7 Bisht, Medha (2020). *Kautilya's Arthashastra*, Routledge: London and Newyork.
- 8 Metatheory has been defined as theory of theories thus raising important questions which help differentiating between methodology and method. See, Jackson, Patrick Thaddeus (2011). *Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations: Philosophy of Science and Its Implications for the Study of World Politics*, New York, NY: Routledge.
- 9 Braj Sinha, *Arthashastra Categories in the Mahabharata: From Dandaniti to Raj Dharma*, in Arvind Sharma (Ed), *Essays on the Mahabharata*, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2011.
- 10 Kangle, R.P. (1992), *The Kautilya Arthashastra*, Vol. II, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, *The Kautilya Arthashastra* 1.2.10:6).
- 11 Christian Godin, (2000) : "The Notion of Totality in Indian Thought" , *Diogenes*, 189,48.
- 12 Cited in Godin, "The Notion of Totality in Indian Thought", *Diogenes*, 189,
- 13 Kangle, R.P. (1992), *The Kautilya Arthashastra*, Vol. II, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, *The Kautilya Arthashastra* 1.2.10:6.
- 4 Medha Bisht (2020), *Kautilya's Arthashastra*, Routledge: London and New York.
- 5 Haraway, D. (1988). *Situated knowledges: The science question in Feminism and the privilege of partial perspective*. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), p 584.
- 6 Haraway, D. (1988). *Situated knowledges: The science question in Feminism and the privilege of partial perspective*. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3).
- 17 Haraway, D. J. (1991). *A cyborg manifesto: Science, technology, and socialist-feminism in the late twentieth century*. In Simians (Ed.), *Cyborgs and women: The reinvention of nature* , Routledge. <https://www.thedailystar.net/views/opinion/news/lessons-the-untimely-teesta-flood-2206236>
- 9 V. Sinha, et al., (2018), *Opportunities for benefit sharing in the Meghna Basin, Bangladesh and India*. Scoping study. Bangkok, Thailand: IUCN
- 20 Anthropocene delta is a term used by Tompkins et al, to emphasize how human interventions have changed the delta, a term employed to understand the relationship between humans and physical systems. This term can also be transposed to highlight similar impacts that river basins have witnessed.
- 21 Brichieri-Colombi, S and Bradnock, R. W (2003). 'Geopolitics, Water and Development in South Asia: Cooperative Development in the Ganges-Brahmaputra Delta', *The Geographical Journal*, vol. 169, no. 1, [Wiley, Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers)], pp. 43–64.
- 22 Rasul, G. (2015). 'Water for growth and development in the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna basins: an economic perspective', *International Journal of River Basin Management* 13(3), 387–400.



Dr Howard Richards

Dr Howard Richards (born June 10, 1938) is a philosopher of Social Science who has worked with the concepts of basic cultural structures and constitutive rules. He holds the title of Research Professor of Philosophy at Earlham College, a liberal arts college in Richmond, Indiana, USA, the Quaker School where he taught for thirty years. He officially retired from Earlham College, together with his wife Caroline Higgins in 2007, but retained the title of Research Professor of Philosophy. A member of the Yale class of 1960, he holds a PhD in Philosophy from the University of California, Santa Barbara, a Juris Doctor (J.D.) from the Stanford Law School, an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) from Oxford University (UK) and a PhD in Educational Planning, with a specialization in applied psychology and moral education from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto, Canada. Dr Richards is a Catholic, a member of Holy Trinity (Santisima Trinidad) parish in Limache, Chile, and a member of the third order of St. Francis, S.F.O [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

## DR HOWARD RICHARDS WHO IS GABRIEL BORIC?

He is the recently elected 35-year-old President of Chile.

What is the question to which Gabriel Boric might have the answer?

It is: *“How can the tide be turned so that social democracy, which is now at best beating an orderly retreat, makes a comeback, and becomes again, as it was in the heyday of the Swedish Model, a credible vision of humanity’s future?”*

What is Gabriel Boric’s answer? I translate selected typical phrases from a flyer widely distributed by his campaign:

“I am Gabriel Boric, born and raised in Punta Arenas, a member of parliament, and a candidate for President. I want to invite you [using the familiar *te*, not the formal *usted*] to participate, because the country we dream [*soñamos*] we will build all together [*con todas y todos*, all women and all men]

“Add yourself to the builders of the country we dream [in one Spanish word *Súmate*] for a green Chile

*Súmate* for a feminist Chile

*Súmate* for a just Chile where the voice of the workers is heard

*Súmate* for a Chile that takes care of us and values diversity.”

*Social Democracy Is Now Checkmated, Game Over, a Non-Starter*

Non-starter? Game Over? This is strong language. Nevertheless, I think I can make a case that it is not an exaggeration by calling just two witnesses, Joseph Schumpeter, and Jeffrey Winters.

But first a qualification: Under unusual conditions (such as those that prevailed in Europe during the *trente glorieuses*) social democracy is a viable option. Contemporary examples are Norway and Bolivia. Both are in the embarrassing position of enjoying high and stable (Norway) or growing (Bolivia) levels of social justice made possible by capturing rents from fossil fuels, during a period of history when the natural sciences and Greta Thunberg are telling us (truthfully) that fossil fuels ought not be mined, sold, and burned. Nonetheless, Norway and Bolivia are making social democracy work.

First Witness: In 1919, at the age of 36, Joseph Schumpeter became Minister of Finance in the newly founded Republic of Austria. In 1918 he had published *Die Krise des Steuerstaats* (*The Crisis of the Tax State*). He had argued, first, that prior to modern republics, rulers had many sources of income. Their greatest single source of income was rents from land ownership. Second, the modern republic was inseparable from a liberal legal framework, limited government, reliance on taxes for government income, and a market economy.

*“What matters is that the potential tax yield is limited not only by the supply of the taxable object, less the subsistence minimum of the taxable subject, but also by the nature of the driving forces of the economy.”* (p. 115 of the English translation)

This somewhat opaque sentence from 1918 predicts the tax competition among nations of 2022. Given the nature of the driving forces of the economy, persons and corporations whose permissive acts (investments) start economic activity are wined and dined and subsidized. Low taxes, access to credit; infrastructure and security provided at public expense, and guarantees that profits made in a country can freely be moved out of it, are among the standard policy tools for getting investors “excited” about investing. (Dani Rodrik, *One Economics, Many Recipes*)

Schumpeter’s tenure as Minister of Finance lasted less than eight months. In his letter of resignation, he explained that he was being asked to perform an impossible task and to deceive the public. A tax state (*Steuerstaat*) could not be a welfare state. My conclusion: A model like the classical Swedish model of social democracy could govern a high wage and full employment island (Sweden) in a low wage and high unemployment ocean (the world) under unusual circumstances. But when normality came home, illusions became homeless.

*Second Witness:* In 1996 Jeffrey Winters published *Power in Motion: Capital Mobility and the Indonesian State*. Winters:

*“And it is precisely in designing and implementing policies [of the governments hr] that meet the population’s investment and production needs [the population’s first need is good jobs], by first satisfying the core objectives [i.e. high profits, low risk] of those controlling capital that the structural dimension of investors’ political power finds expression.”* (Page 3)

It follows that governments do not govern. Markets command governments more than governments command markets. Winters further elaborates: Governments, whatever their ideology may be, in practice devote themselves to attracting investment and to discouraging disinvestment.

*“When investors choose not to invest, policymakers are powerless to force them.”* (Winters, *Ibid.*) This is not just a fact about economics. It is a fact about social structure. It is presupposed, not created, by economic models. Social structures tend to be taken for granted as natural, and to be ferociously defended as sacred. Today’s basic social structure is the allegedly God-given or Nature-given right of a person (and also of a corporation granted the rights of a person) to liberty and to property.

Basic structural rights trump needs. When investors choose not to invest, policymakers are powerless to force them because, given the basic social structure, the need for food, for dignity, for employment, the need to save the biosphere, and any need whatever, can be satisfied if and only if, *first*, property owners freely choose to invest.

**Conclusion: Checkmate.**

Winters goes on to demonstrate the existence in our times of a further extension of a logic that has been implicit in capitalism from the beginning.

We now live in the time of what Winters calls the Locational Revolution. Controllers of capital decide which laws to obey when they decide where to locate. Governments compete to please them. Legislators write laws designed to stimulate a nation's economy. Governments try make the economy go, but only controllers of capital can actually make the economy go.

**Conclusion. Game over.**

(I simplify, using the expression "the economy" as it is commonly used, while knowing that, as Hazel Henderson and others have shown, more than half the world's work is done outside "the economy" that gets so much attention and whose malfunctioning does so much damage.)

Now, in 2022, a hegemonic rule of law cements in place a locational revolution that disempowers governments that were already disempowered at the beginning of modernity by establishing tax states, assigning the bulk of money creation to private bankers, and by conditioning the legitimacy of government on obedience to the terms of a fictitious social contract that gives investors the power to decide whether the economy stops or goes. Failure to solve the employment problem leads to failure to solving many other problems.

1. Can we expect dignified employment for all who need it, when the quantity and quality of employment depends on how many people it is profitable to hire on what terms, and not on how many people need good jobs?
2. Can we expect humanity to reinvent itself to become a species compatible with physical reality when to green or not to green is too often framed as ecology vs. jobs?
3. Can we expect sexism to end while the total number of good jobs remains the same and therefore women getting more of them means men getting fewer of them?

3. Can we expect sexism to end while the total number of good jobs remains the same and therefore women getting more of them means men getting fewer of them?

4. For similar reasons, can we expect racism and prejudice against migrants to end while the basic social structure is what it is?

To expect to solve such problems by passing laws is a serious illusion, a non-starter. Worldwide, humans are called to step back from dominant assumptions, to put the rules of the economic game between parentheses, to question them, to go back to Square One and to ask. What does it mean to be human? What are we living for?

**Does Gabriel Boric Have the Answer?**

The answer to this question does not depend on Gabriel Boric. It depends on whether his invitation to *Súmate* is accepted. It depends on whether the private sector, the public sector, civil society, families, and individuals align for the common good. Chile, like the rest of the world, is not going to become sustainable because the Government, or the Constitution, decrees the maxim: act in such a way that if everyone acted as I act the biosphere would be sustainable. It is not going to become feminist because the police arrest all men who sometimes act like irresponsible macho dudes and the judges' sentence us to prison terms.

The idea of inviting *todas y todos* to participate voluntarily in building sustainability, respect for women, justice, caring, and dignity in diversity is not something Gabriel Boric thought of all by himself. He speaks for a youth culture that has been gathering strength for many decades now in Chile and around the world. He speaks for women and men of all ages, and in all income groups from the poorest to the richest, who refuse to believe that another world is impossible.



Dr Ivo Coelho

Ivo Coelho SDB earned a PhD in philosophy at the Gregorian University, Rome, for his work on “The Development of the Notion of the Universal Viewpoint in Bernard Lonergan: From *Insight to Method in Theology*” (1994). He has been principal of Divyadaan: Salesian Institute of Philosophy (1988-90), Rector (1994-2002), secretary of the Association of Christian Philosophers of India (2000-02), and provincial of the Mumbai province of the Salesians of Don Bosco (2002-08). Currently he is Councillor for Formation for the Salesians of Don Bosco. Among his publications are *Hermeneutics and Method: The ‘Universal Viewpoint’ in Bernard Lonergan* (2001), “Hermeneutics and the Inner Word: Jean Grondin’s *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*” (1999), “*Et Judaeus et Graecus e methodo: The Transcultural Mediation of Christian Meanings and Values in Lonergan*” (2000), and “*Lonergan and Indian Thought*” (2007). He has edited *Brahman and Person: Essays by Richard De Smet* (2010), and *Violence and its Victims: A Challenge to Philosophizing in the Indian Context* (ACPI vol. 11, 2010), *Understanding Śāṅkara: Essays by Richard De Smet* (2013), and *Keeping the Faith: Festschrift for Joaquim D’Souza, SDB* (Media House, 2016). His edition of Richard De Smet, *Guidelines in Indian Philosophy* has just gone to the press.

## DR IVO COELHO

### GANDHI’S CHALLENGE TO THE ECONOMY

*Gandhi and the Future of Economics* by Howard Richards and Joanna Swanger (Dignity Press, 2013) is an extraordinary little book, a fresh and compelling interpretation of that much controverted topic, Gandhian economics. Even ardent Gandhians balk at having to defend what is commonly regarded as one of the Mahatma’s idiosyncracies. *Gandhi and the Future of Economics*, instead, gently, persistently, and, I think, solidly makes a case for Gandhian economics.

The book is not meant to be a research study. It is rather that kind of felicitous publication that breathes new life into a known theme, and, in so doing, brings out its implications for praxis. Even better is the fact that it does all this in dialogue with a set of contemporary thinkers and actors from the Indian subcontinent: Jawaharlal Nehru, Jayaprakash Narayan, Tariq Ali, Vandana Shiva, Amartya Sen, Arundhati Roy, Manmohan Singh. In the process, it sometimes turns received wisdom on its head, as when it proposes that there is not as big a gap between Bapuji and Nehru as is usually imagined.

But the crowning piece, for me, is the final chapter on Manmohan Singh: with this, the past meshes securely into the present, and our authors take a stand on the much-discussed topic of the Indian economic miracle. Given that that stand emerges out of a dialogue between someone who is considered the Father of the Nation and another who enjoys the unique privilege of being not only actually at the helm of affairs but also a renowned economist, *Gandhi and the Future of Economics* is as topical as it is surprising in the thesis it defends.

This thesis is that Gandhi criticizes the very soul of modern economics and culture. He refuses, in other words, to accept its *premises*, as for example that accumulating wealth is the general motive of production, or that material progress is a value in itself. He proposes instead that production be based on roles in society, on *dharma* or duty, on serving others by meeting specific needs, and that material progress without moral progress is no progress at all.

Manmohan Singh's program of economic reforms, initiated in 1991 when India was faced with a balance of payments crisis, was based on the neoliberal diagnosis of the problem. This diagnosis was that socialism in India created poverty because of its bias against employment. The cure was, therefore, to reverse that bias by, for example, reducing the protections given to labour. Manmohan's reforms have been seen as the cause of the higher levels of income, and of India's economic miracle. This, our authors maintain, is not true. It merely proves that capital moves to sites where labour is cheap. And this will not last: capital will keep moving, and the boom will bust.

This kind of critique is not intrasystemic: it calls the system itself into question. Such is the radicality of Gandhi's critique, and it is in this sense that his thoughts must be taken.

Gandhi's famous defence of the caste system makes sense, according to our authors, along the same lines: precisely, that is, in the light of its fundamental option for duty and service, over other economic motivations such as benevolence, or the self-interest championed by Adam Smith. Adam Smith, in keeping with the modernity of which he is a part, presumes that we are all atomic individuals. Gandhi, instead, presumes that the social order is organic, and that everyone is born with a vocation, with a role to play for the good of the community. Does this undermine the autonomy of the individual? Yet there is a prior question: whether one will have any vocation at all.

"Faced with the tragic spectacle of an adharmic modern society in which babies were daily being born without having attributed to them any membership at all in a bonded community larger than a nuclear family, and with no obligation at all to serve society, Gandhi was understandably reluctant to give up the Varnashram traditions of India." Gandhi's defence of the caste system is controversial, and I, for one, could think that while 'being born to a vocation' and having a place in an organically structured society is good, one need not identify vocation with some concrete task or service. It is possible to combine a vocation to serve with the deep sense of dignity that comes from belonging to one family, which is, to my mind, the basic vision coming from Jesus. But our authors do not dispute that caste does have its limits; they merely argue that the choice to improve caste by reforming it was, for Gandhi, a more practical way of moving toward the best results than starting from scratch. Their main point is that this choice was based on a truth rather than a hypothesis. "Duty done is duty done" is a tautology: if everyone were to do their duty in a well-organized society, all needs would be met. Self-interest as the prime motivating factor is a mere hypothesis: it was not self-interest that got Adam Smith his breakfast in his infancy, for example, but probably the love of his mother.

Following Gandhi, then, Richards and Swanger advocate transformation of the basic cultural structures of the modern world rather than intrasystemic economic changes. In the final chapter on Manmohan Singh, for example, they pose three questions: (1) whether there is any feasible method for changing the basic cultural structures of the modern world; (2) whether it is desirable to change the basic structures of the modern world; and (3) whether the advice currently being given to (and sometimes imposed on) developing nations by the main international agencies is good advice.

Their answer to the third is a resounding no. Their answer to the second a clear yes. They do not, for some reason, answer the first.

In their answer to the third question, the authors consider two interpretations of the same facts, the neoliberal, and the NIDL (New International Distribution of Labor). The advice being given by international agencies is neoliberal advice: that the best path to the reduction and eradication of poverty is for each nation-state to pursue its comparative advantage within a regime of international free trade; that the basic cultural structures that allow the functioning of capitalism already provide for the elimination of poverty; and that reform and structural adjustment mean, therefore, relying more on markets and less on planning. The NIDL school instead maintains that the 'economic miracle' of India is merely a temporary reward for its pre-eminence in the global 'race to the bottom.' Richards and Swanger claim that it is this second interpretation is borne out by the facts.

Manmohan Singh's program of economic reforms, initiated in 1991 when India was faced with a balance of payments crisis, was based on the neoliberal diagnosis of the problem.

This diagnosis was that socialism in India created poverty because of its bias against employment. The cure was, therefore, to reverse that bias by, for example, reducing the protections given to labour. Manmohan's reforms have been seen as the cause of the higher levels of income, and of India's economic miracle. This, our authors maintain, is not true. It merely proves that capital moves to sites where labour is cheap. And this will not last: capital will keep moving, and the boom will bust. So the prosperity that we seem to see is merely temporary: India is merely part of the race to the bottom. Besides, there is an inherent instability in the global economic system. "The assurance given to governments around the world that a key element of the best remedy for poverty is to take decisions that will increase labour-market flexibility, on the assumption that if wage-rates fall low enough, full employment will be achieved, relies on the premise (the premise known as 'Say's Law') that full employment is the natural point of equilibrium for an economy." But this premise is merely a neoliberal assumption. Experience seems to confirm instead Keynes' theory of lower-level equilibrium.

Richards and Swanger conclude that neoliberal advice is not good advice, "for the assertion that full employment will obtain when there is no 'bias against employment' is neither theoretically valid nor borne out by the vast empirical evidence from all corners of the earth."

Howard Richards himself, perhaps, might some day bring together the ideas of Gandhi and Lonergan. In the meantime, the present piece can be counted as one little effort towards consciousness-raising.

The second question is whether it is desirable to change the basic structures of the modern world. The neoliberals do not see the need for such change. The NIDL people do see the need but doubt that it is possible. Our authors, instead, answer with a resounding yes: change is not only desirable but also necessary. The goal of the current government of India – combining prosperity with justice – can be achieved only by questioning first premises. One way to do that is to reconsider Gandhi. First premises need to be questioned because the economic dilemmas faced by India are created by cultural structures. The dilemma of 1991 was imposed by the cultural structures of the modern world, the structures that Gandhi condemned. Democratic compulsions (as opposed to pleasing international capital), guaranteeing enough food (at the risk of running up deficits because of subsidies), the possibility of simply not paying debts: none of these things were decisive. Decisive, instead, were the systemic imperatives of the cultural structures of the modern world. These structures imply that costs of production must be kept down. They imply that debts must be paid, but here a moral command becomes a physical command – borrow or suffer! They imply that profits must be made, overriding other social goals.

Here is where we find an adumbration of an answer to the unanswered first questions. From the above, it follows that a method for cultural change must be one that modifies the dominant systemic imperatives. Gandhi, for example, would hold that production costs must not be lowered at the expense of workers, and that consumers must learn to pay higher prices for goods made under fair labour conditions.

A good way ahead is consciousness-raising, educating people so that they understand that the systemic imperatives are commands imposed by institutions that have been culturally constructed. Gandhi understood this: he understood that the West's cultural institutions were imposed upon India, that another world was possible, and that such a world had once existed in India and could exist again. This is a path of self-reliance. Workers would own their own tools. Service to neighbour rather than buying and selling would have been the goal of work.

For more substantial matter on the question of method, we would have to turn to the authors themselves. Howard Richards tells me that he and Joanna Swanger have done workshops on methods for changing basic cultural structures at the University of Toronto, and also in the Diocese of Los Angeles.

More recently, he has been working with Gavin Andersson in South Africa on a methodology called 'unbounded organization.' On a philosophical level, the second volume (chapters 25-30) of his Letters from Quebec (San Francisco / London: International Scholars Press, 1995) is called Methodologies for Transforming the Structures of the Modern World. There was also a course at Earlham College called Methods of Peacemaking which was really about changing the basic cultural structures of the modern world.

For a Lonergan person like me, Gandhi as interpreted by Richards and Swanger has surprising echoes in the work of Bernard Lonergan – as, besides, Richards himself observes in his Introduction. Both, for one, were deeply dharmic persons, who believed not only that economics without ethics was impossible, but also that the moral sublates economics. Neither, on the other hand, was a professional economist, with the expected result, therefore, that the economic theories of both have been roundly neglected and relegated to the sidelines. So perhaps the dialogue between Gandhi and Lonergan might not be as strange as it first sounds. The following quote, in fact, sounds Gandhian, but is actually from Lonergan:

*Nor is it impossible that further developments in science should make small units self-sufficient on an ultramodern standard of living to eliminate commerce and industry, to transform agriculture into a super-chemistry, to clear away finance and even money, to make economic solidarity a memory, and power over nature the only difference between high civilization and primitive gardening.*

Richards himself, perhaps, might some day bring together the ideas of Gandhi and Lonergan. In the meantime, the present piece can be counted as one little effort towards consciousness-raising.

Jill Gocher, a Bali based international photographer, has spent her life exploring and enjoying Asian cultures. Her work has appeared in National Geographic, Time, International Herald Tribune, Asia Spa, Discovery, Silver Kris and many more. Her books – Asia's legendary Hotels, Periplus, Bali- Island of Light – Marshall Cavendish, Indonesia – Islands of the Imagination. Periplus, Australia – the land down under – Times Editions, Singapore, Indonesia – the last paradise – Times Editions. She has held exhibitions in Singapore, Kathmandu, and Bali. Photojournalist + Media Consultant, AmazonPage: [www.amazon.com/author/jillgocher](http://www.amazon.com/author/jillgocher) instagram [jillgocher](https://www.instagram.com/jillgocher)



## JILL GOCHER

### RETURN TO BALI

Text & Photographs

Bali, like most places has been shut down for two years. at times even the beaches were closed for some mysterious reason.

But now its open , and although it is becoming busier, there are still plenty of quiet places to be found.

Rice fields are blooming healthily, the sunsets are as spectacular as ever, the beers are cold and the local folk are very happy to see foreign visitors. For many of the Balinese , there has been the chance to return to their roots, to delight in being Balinese all over again. Suffering has been rampant but the kindnesses shown by many both in and out of Bali has been spectacular.

Now that entry restrictions have been eased, the flow into Bali is getting bigger and better every day but it is still a wonderful time to visit the island to enjoy it much as it was twenty years ago.

Jill Gocher



02 A quiet spot in Legian. while some parts if the beach are already crowded, others offer peace and serenity and a front row seat for the spectacular sunsets.

01 This little girl is already an accomplished dancer despite her tender years.



04 The fields are ploughed and flooded awaiting a fresh planting of the padi that still sustains the whole of Bali.

03 As I sat with a late afternoon coffee this old woman materialised against a backdrop of flooded padi fields reflecting the sky.



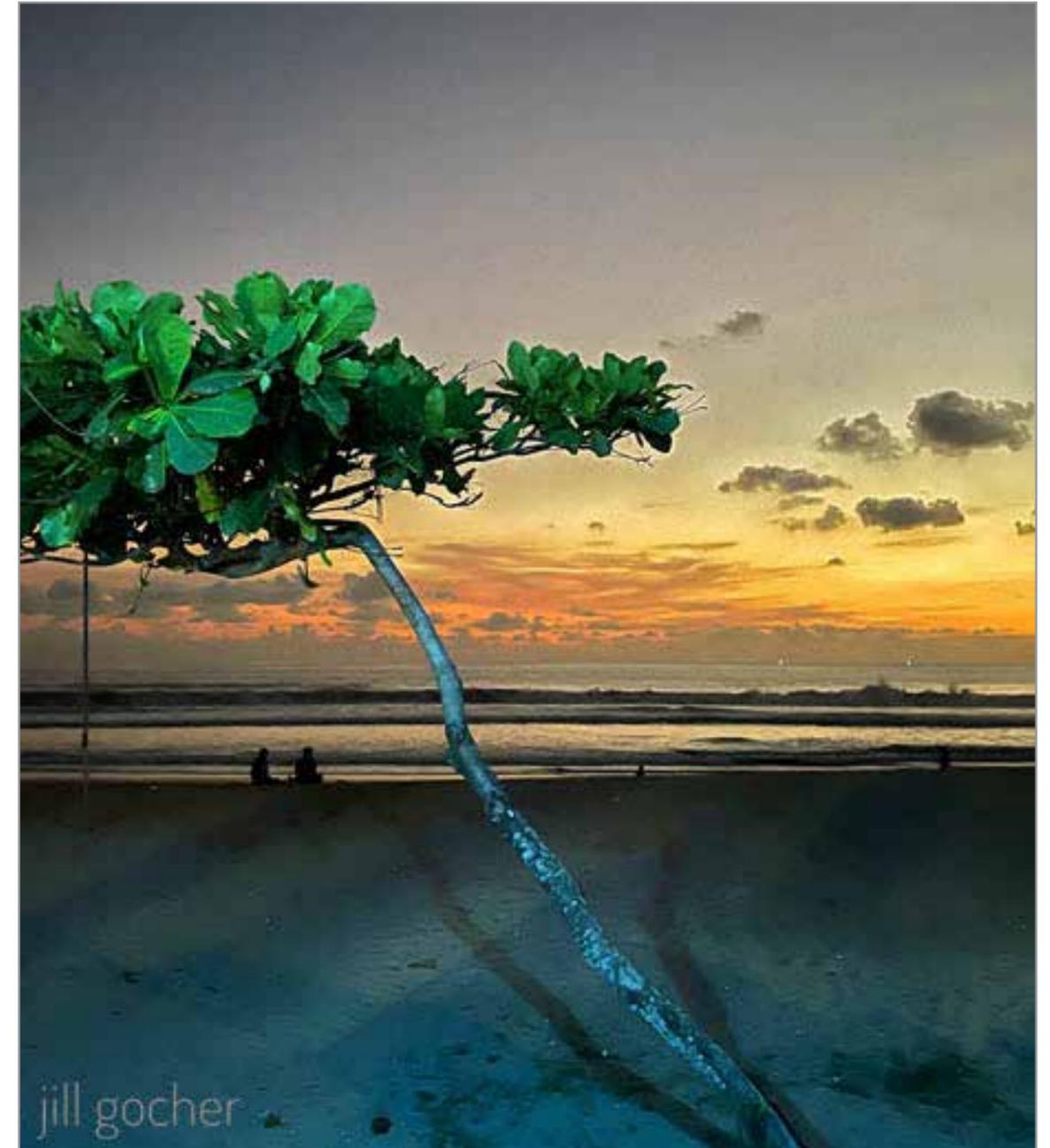
06 Bali culture is alive and thriving as this recent competition at Ubud's famous Puri Lukisan reflects. Just across the road from the iconic Casa Luna, it showcases the world of traditional Bali.

05 This little boy sits entrance as he gazes intently at the wonderful performances played before his eyes.



08 The beach at sunset can be pure poetry as the southern beach puts on its nightly spectacular light show.

07 Reflections in the padi fields.



10 A couple sit enjoying the natural beauty of the Legian sunset.

09 As the day turns into night, the lights come on bringing surreal images to the fore.



12 Walk around Ubud and you will be sure to come upon a growing padi field- a vista so beautiful that it renews your joy of living.

11 With his curved scythe in hand, an old farmer makes his way homewards on his trusty rusty archaic bicycle.

Dr. Bibhu Prasad Routray held the position of Visiting Professor and Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) chair, India Studies at Murdoch University, Perth between July-December 2017. He served as a Deputy Director in the National Security Council Secretariat, Government of India and Director of the Institute for Conflict Management (ICM)'s Database & Documentation Centre, Guwahati, Assam. He was a Visiting Fellow at the South Asia programme of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore between 2010 and 2012. Routray specialises in decision-making, governance, counter-terrorism, force modernisation, intelligence reforms, foreign policy and dissent articulation issues in South and South East Asia. His writings, based on his projects and extensive field based research in Indian conflict theatres of the Northeastern states and the left-wing extremism affected areas, have appeared in a wide range of academic as well as policy journals, websites, and magazines. This article republished by permission of [www.mantraya.org](http://www.mantraya.org)

## BIBHU PRASAD ROUTRAY

### RE-REVIVING TAPI: HARDENED OBSTACLES & CHALLENGES FOR NEW DELHI

#### Abstract

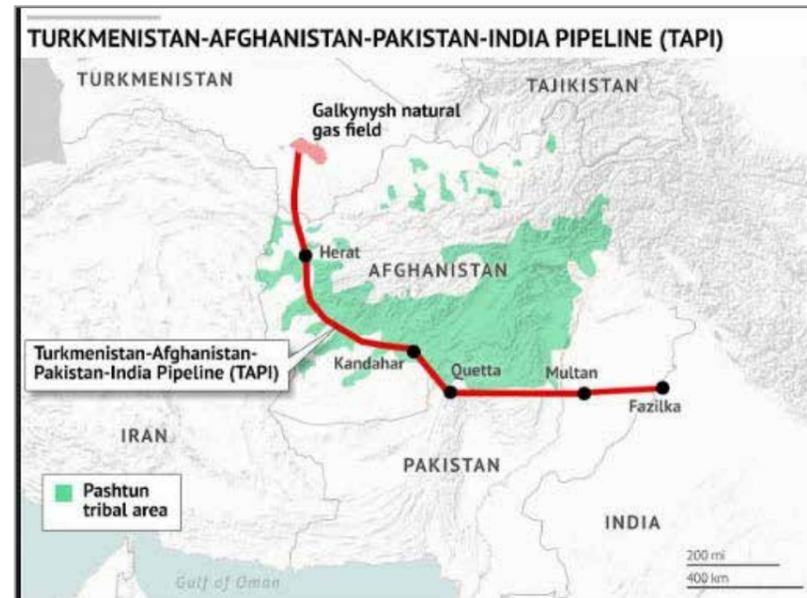
*The TAPI project is in the news, yet again. There have been fresh attempts at reviving the project by all involved parties. The long-stalled project also seems to have been boosted by a China-led initiative. However, to imagine the project being up and running because of these expressions of interest are difficult. Almost all the obstacles that have prevented the project from fruition remain. Worse still, few of them have actually hardened, posing almost an insurmountable challenge to the implementation of the project. Time, therefore, is to bring in fresh and innovative thinking.*

#### Introduction

Nearly 27 years back, a natural gas pipeline, Turkmenistan's Galkynysh gas field, between Turkmenistan and Pakistan was conceived. By 1998, Afghanistan, the transit country, and by 2008, India, an additional end receiver of gas, had joined the project, making it the Turkmenistan Afghanistan Pakistan India (TAPI) pipeline project, to be laid over 1800 kilometres. However, over the decades, progress on the project has been bogged down by several factors. Construction in Turkmenistan is reportedly complete. Apart from that, very little has progressed on this US\$9.6 billion project, which would carry 33 billion cubic metres (bcm) of gas a year. Whereas instability in Afghanistan is the primary impediment, difficulties in obtaining financing for the project and the state of relations between India and Pakistan too add to the complexity.



Dr Bibhu Prasad Routray



(TAPI Project, Image Source: Silk Road Briefing)

### Fresh lease of life?

During his four-day visit to Turkmenistan, the first-ever by an Indian head of state, on 2 April, Indian President Ram Nath Kovind suggested that issues related to the security of the TAPI pipeline and key business principles may be addressed in technical and expert-level meetings. Kovind's efforts, however, faced a reality check from India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) itself. Prior to the visit, Sanjay Verma, Secretary (West) in the MEA, had told reporters in New Delhi that "it is a difficult neighbourhood if you look at the geography. So, in that sense, this itself was a task in negotiating the pipeline". Earlier, Turkmen President, during the India-Central Asia summit in January 2022, had underlined the importance of TAPI and had called for its faster implementation.

Kovind's statement about reviving TAPI came a day after the joint statement released at the 'Third Foreign Ministers' Meeting Among the Neighbouring Countries of Afghanistan', held in Tunxi, in eastern China's Anhui province on 1 April. Foreign ministers or high-level representatives from China, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan attended the meeting. The joint statement referred to Turkmenistan's promotion of the implementation of TAPI, which will be supported by Islamabad. The move is part of China's roadmap for the neighbouring countries to help the Taliban-led Afghanistan to start an economic recovery.

### TAPC or TAPIC

The Chinese interest in TAPI dates back to August 2018. That month, a Pakistani official told Reuters that China is exploring building a spur from Pakistan's territory after the operationalization of the TAPI project. Much of Turkmenistan's natural gas already goes to China through the Central Asia-China (CAC) gas pipeline's Line A, which was commissioned in 2009. Two other pipelines, also parts of the CAC, connect China with gas fields in Uzbekistan (Line B) and Kazakhstan (Line C). The proposed spur from Pakistan through the Karakoram range could act as an alternative to Beijing's plans to build a fourth Turkmenistan to China pipeline (Line D), agreements for which had been signed with Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in September 2013. In 2017, however, the project was cancelled after construction was stalled in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. This explains Beijing's interest in TAPI. Line D was expected to raise Turkmenistan's gas export capacity to China from 55 bcm to 85 bcm per year.

There is no dearth of intent as far as driving TAPI to fruition among the involved nations. Expressions of intent alone, however, may not be sufficient. Among all the four (or five) nations involved in the project, New Delhi's concerns about the instability in Afghanistan are the highest. Not only that the security of the project in both Afghanistan and Pakistan are in question, but participation in the project may also actually mean directly dealing with, legitimizing and even indirectly funding the Taliban's Islamic Emirate, which will naturally transform into a stakeholder and beneficiary of the project. These are deterring factors for India.

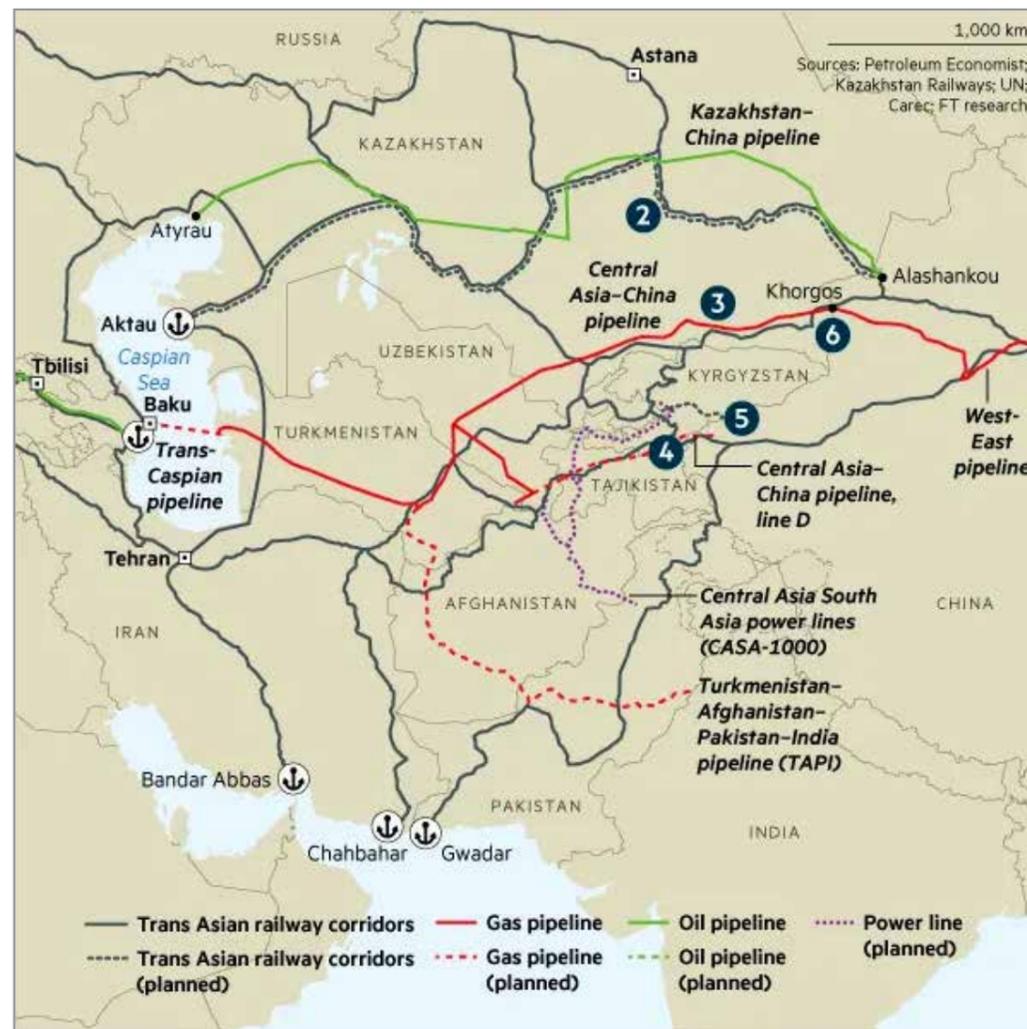
A spur from TAPI would be comparatively easier and more cost-effective than building a pipeline through several Central Asian mountain ranges. China's interest in being included in TAPI is, therefore, understandable. At one level, this can be interpreted as piggybacking or a backdoor entry strategy by Beijing to benefit from an existing project. On the other, China's involvement can possibly infuse some amount of dynamism into the project that has struggled to take off. It needs mention that the 3666 kilometres-long Turkmenistan section of the CAC was built and commissioned in 28 months. Although China may be interested in building only the 'spur', its warm relations with both Pakistan and the Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan further incentivize the possibility of moving forward with the implementation of TAPI.

Construction on the project in Turkmenistan began in December 2015, work on the Afghan section began in February 2018, and work on the Pakistani section was planned to commence in December 2018. 617-kilometres of the pipeline will pass through Afghanistan's Kandahar and Herat provinces. In November 2021, Pakistan's Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Omar Ayub Khan said that the implementation of TAPI has been on hold due to the 'situation' in Afghanistan. Khan, however, promised, "After stabilizing the situation, we will be able to return to the issue of construction." Taliban have extended their support to TAPI. In October 2021, acting foreign minister, Amir Khan Muttaki, assured, in the presence of Turkmen Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov, that work will resume. Construction work in Pakistan, where the pipeline will pass through Quetta and Multan, terminating in Fazilka, a district in Punjab (in Pakistan) located near the India-Pakistan border, is yet to be started.

### Intent and Instability Paradigm

There is no dearth of intent as far as driving TAPI to fruition among the involved nations. Expressions of intent alone, however, may not be sufficient. Among all the four (or five) nations involved in the project, New Delhi's concerns about the instability in Afghanistan are the highest. Not only that the security of the project in both Afghanistan and Pakistan are in question, but participation in the project may also actually mean directly dealing with, legitimizing and even indirectly funding the Taliban's Islamic Emirate, which will naturally transform into a stakeholder and beneficiary of the project. These are deterring factors for India.

It is difficult, therefore, to conceive the fruition of TAPI, with India included in it, until a truly inclusive and representative government is installed in Kabul. Can that lead to the project going ahead with the exclusion of India, becomes a critical question. With the potential involvement of China and Beijing drawing a substantial amount of gas from the project, the economic viability of the project may not be in doubt. Therefore, India has to tread carefully on its TAPI policy, in spite of its reservations about the Taliban.



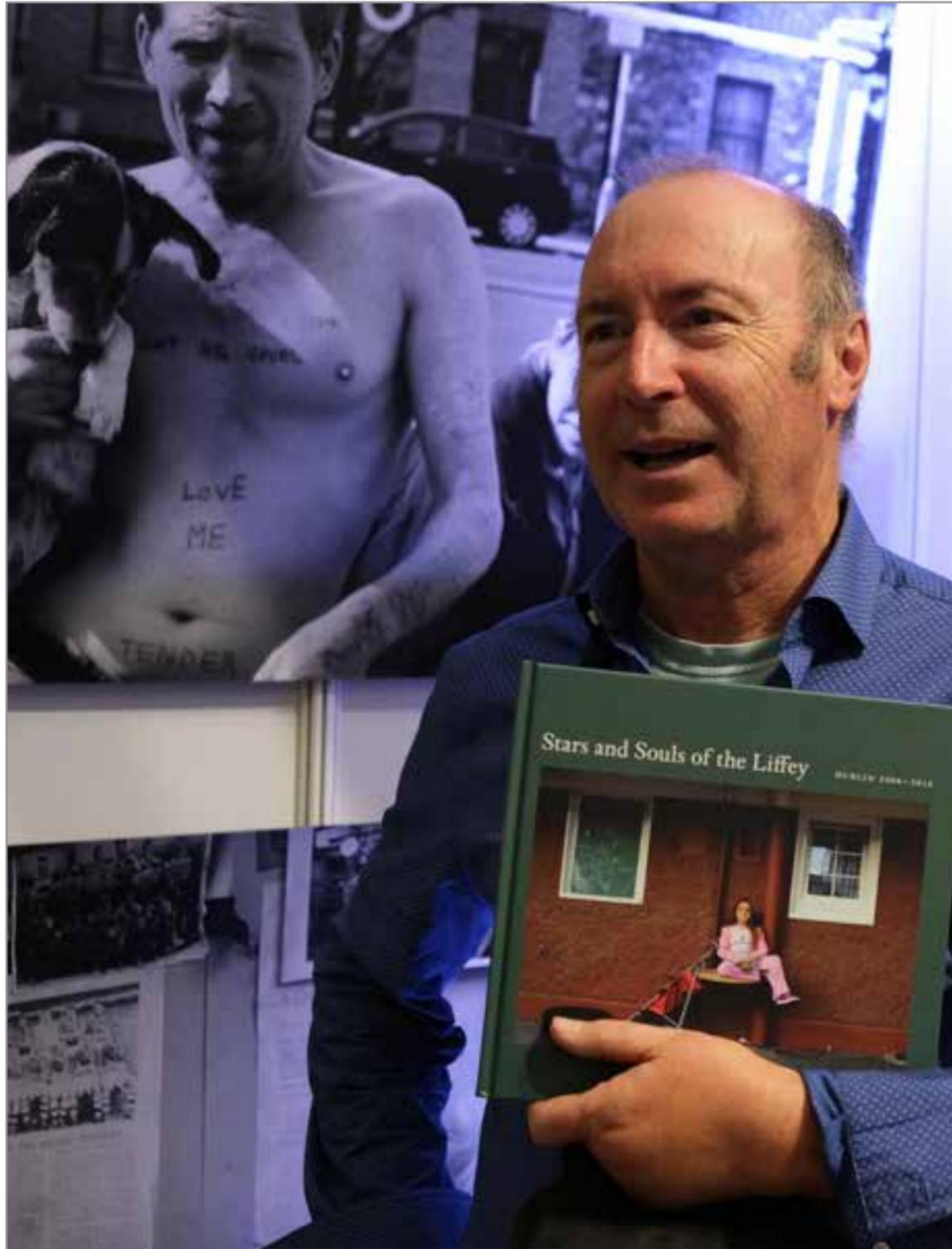
(Central Asia-China Gas Pipelines, Source: Financial Times)

Among all the three countries, India belongs to the ‘user only’ category, whereas the rest three will rake in additional revenue benefits. New Delhi’s anxieties are also rooted in its vulnerability as the gas supply may be subjected to disruption, depending upon the state of Indo-Pakistan relations. The involvement of China and the reality of the Sino-Pakistan nexus may further add to such vulnerability. Not surprisingly, President Kovind underlined the need to address the ‘issues related to the security of the pipeline and key business principles’ in ‘Technical and Expert level meetings’.

**Way Ahead**

It is difficult, therefore, to conceive the fruition of TAPI, with India included in it, until a truly inclusive and representative government is installed in Kabul. Can that lead to the project going ahead with the exclusion of India, becomes a critical question. With the potential involvement of China and Beijing drawing a substantial amount of gas from the project, the economic viability of the project may not be in doubt. Therefore, India has to tread carefully on its TAPI policy, in spite of its reservations about the Taliban. Secondly, India’s ‘user-only’ vulnerability, however, can possibly be addressed if TAPI can be extended beyond India, to Bangladesh. Dhaka, in 2012, evinced interest in joining TAPI and has done so repeatedly ever since. Dhaka’s energy demand has skyrocketed over the years, forcing it to discover new gas fields or draw additional supply from neighbouring Myanmar. New Delhi’s promotion of Dhaka as an additional partner in TAPI would not only bring in extra revenue but may boost bilateral ties. Further, it may further secure the supply through Afghanistan and Pakistan from intentional disruptions.

Barry Delaney is inspired by the colour, energy and DIY attitude of punk. He fled the grey Dublin of the early 80s, to travel the world and fell in love with film photography. Eked a living doing various manual and technical jobs. Twenty years later, Barry began taking pictures again. It started on the streets of Dublin, his home town, and moved on to other parts of Ireland and across the sea to America. In 2008, Barry won the TG4 Irish photographer of the 21st Century. Barry has had 4 solo exhibitions in Dublin. Last year he completed a retrospective of his inner city Dublin work in the historic GPO, Dublin. along with his debut *Dublin book - Stars and Souls of the Liffey* - he hopes to release his next book *Americans Anonymous* next year.



## BARRY DELANEY

### POSTCARDS FROM ENGLAND

Text & Photographs

In the summer of 1978 aged 17 I left school and headed to London with some mates to earn some money and catch the coattails of Punk. The stay didn't last long, but we caught the *Reading Festival* where the *Jam* and *Sham 69* headlined. It was like a calling to every punk and skin-head descended to the town of Reading; that Friday night etched a lasting colourful memory on my mind, clouded by the cheap English cider.

Thirty years later I returned to England to document the still thriving but now underground Punk and Skinhead movements. Each August a punk festival called *Rebellion* happens in Blackpool, where punks and skin-heads congregate to celebrate their music, style and identity/ to find their tribe, most too young to remember those summers of 1977 and 1978. But I dug deeper, going to some underground *Punk Oi* and Skin-head gig's scattered through London such as the *Boston Arms* in North London and the *100 club* on Oxford street. Sometimes it was *Oi* bands from the 70's, like *Cockney Rejects* or new generation band's like *Booze & Glory*; other times it was just a *Dub* sound system, where skinheads skanked the night away, to the rocksteady beat of Ska.

Punk left a lasting memory on me, its DIY culture defining what I do as an artist. Punk not Dead.

Barry Delaney



01.

02.



© BARRY DELANEY



© BARRY DELANEY

03.



© BARRY DELANEY

04.



05.



06.



07.

08.



© BARRY DELANEY

Mark Ulyseas has served time in advertising as copywriter and creative director selling people things they didn't need, a ghost writer for some years, columnist of a newspaper, a freelance journalist and photo-grapher. In 2009 he created *Live Encounters Magazine*, in Bali, Indonesia. It is a not for profit (adfree) free online magazine featuring leading academics, writers, poets, activists of all hues etc. from around the world. March 2016 saw the launch of its sister publication *Live Encounters Poetry*, which was relaunched as *Live Encounters Poetry & Writing* in March 2017. In February 2019 the third publication was launched, *LE Children Poetry & Writing* (now renamed *Live Encounters Young Poets & Writers*). In August 2020 the fourth publication, *Live Encounters Books*, was launched. He has edited, designed and produced all of *Live Encounters'* 242 publications (till March 2022). Mark's philosophy is that knowledge must be free and shared freely to empower all towards enlightenment. He is the author of three books: *RAINY - My friend & Philosopher*; *Seductive Avatars of Maya - Anthology of Dystopian Lives* and *In Gethsemane: Transcripts of a Journey*. <https://liveencounters.net/mark-ulyseas/>  
<https://www.amazon.com/Mark-Ulyseas/e/B01FUUQVBG>



©Mark Ulyseas

## MARK ULYSEAS

### THE INTERNATIONAL DIVISION OF HUMANITY

The rottweilers of war are on the rampage. Spin doctors are working overtime to creatively write for posterity a twisted version of their truths. The suckers on social media suckle on the free flow of these outpourings and regurgitate them across the net, complete with images claiming that these are the truths and that all other versions are fake or propaganda. And so, the chants for bloodletting rises, drowning out the outside voices pleading for sanity and comprehensive peace beginning with acts of non-violence. The prophets are gone now leaving behind the WORD with a retinue of such despicable creatures who feed and profit off the misery of others.

Why is this bloody cycle continuing regardless of so many loving hands at home constantly wringing to the tune of kumbaya.

Live duck to slaughter in a plastic bag. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

*“You spoke about Ukraine, I remember what happened less than a year ago in Afghanistan where an entire civil society was thrown under the bus by the world,”* said Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar in response to a question asked by Norway’s foreign minister, Anniken Huitfeldt at the Raisina Dialogue 2022 in New Delhi. - <https://theprint.in/diplomacy/look-beyond-ukraine-world-threw-afghanistan-under-the-bus-jaishankar-reminds-europe/931475/>

Post-World War II has witnessed continuous conflict for oil, minerals and territory, which has been led by leading democracies that have weaponised the concept of human and civil rights, democratic values (whatever this means) and elastic ethics to bludgeon targeted adversaries (competitors). Patriotism is the last refuge for scoundrels, and these scoundrels emerge from among the people, a people who vote them to power naively expecting the elected to manage the country. The ungodly bipeds frolic with flints, starting fires across the world, solely for profit – first for personal gain and then followed by national interests, though they successfully make it appear the other way around.

International organisations like the UN, ICC (The International Criminal Court) and others are held ransom to the diktats of these democracies. The latest conflict has brought out the genetic racism that is embedded in the colonial heartland. The flag waving, colour combos of the nation at war fluttering on social media and the urgency with which sanctions have been imposed on the offensive nation is not surprising. After all, this is the home of the colonials who have pillaged, raped and looted other countries for hundreds of years. There is not even the slightest effort made to disguise this. Threats to other nations have been freely flowing such that the UN and ICC, in particular, have been castrated, reduced to a new kind of political speakeasies.

The word Nazi is generously and deviously used to defame anyone or any nation that does not genuflect before the power of the colonials. And of late, by the power of a minority that seeks to control words and terminology framed in the image of wokeness. To support these actions are spineless spin doctors tirelessly working to misrepresent the fraudulent actions of both elected scoundrels and their deluded followers as originating from moral high ground.

The decades old term, Nazi, is quite misleading. The founders of Nazism are the colonials themselves who have perfected the art of theft, looting and occupation by violent means. Mr Adolf Hitler just slipped into the role handed down to him by history. Focus on his legacy has been intense so as to deflect any interest in the colonials’ bloody global historical track record and the relevance it has in present-day machinations.

Some immigrant countries have merely followed suit and in many cases outdone their ancestors by their sense of superiority and murderous means to subjugate societies and countries beyond the fringe of the known civilised world (Europe, USA, Canada, Australia, Israel and New Zealand).

The International Division of Humanity (Europe, USA, Canada, Australia, Israel and New Zealand) on one side and the rest of the world on the other has been brought into the spotlight in the ongoing conflict in Europe. The shameless utterances by spin doctors are disheartening.

*Media pundits, journalists, and political figures have been accused of double standards for using their outlets to not only commend Ukraine’s armed resistance to Russian troops, but also to underlying their horror at how such a conflict could happen to a “civilised” nation.*

*CBS News senior correspondent in Kyiv Charlie D’Agata said on Friday: “This isn’t a place, with all due respect, like Iraq or Afghanistan that has seen conflict raging for decades. This is a relatively civilised, relatively European – I have to choose those words carefully, too – city where you wouldn’t expect that, or hope that it’s going to happen.”*  
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/27/western-media-coverage-ukraine-russia-invasion-criticism>

And then we have this reportage

*Germany has displaced Afghan refugees from government accommodation to make way for Ukrainians fleeing Russia’s invasion, according to reports.*  
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/germany-displace-afghanistan-refugees-ukraine-b2065664.html>

This in a way sums it up

*“You spoke about Ukraine, I remember what happened less than a year ago in Afghanistan where an entire civil society was thrown under the bus by the world,”* said Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar in response to a question asked by Norway’s foreign minister, Anniken Huitfeldt at the Raisina Dialogue 2022 in New Delhi.  
<https://theprint.in/diplomacy/look-beyond-ukraine-world-threw-afghanistan-under-the-bus-jaishankar-reminds-europe/931475/>

For the known civilised world, it is business as usual. The demonising of the Russian people, their arts, music, sportspersons and business has reached levels where the intent appears to be to wipe them off the face of the earth by ostracising them and stealing their assets under the garb of sanctions. Sanctions that have become a lucrative business model. Why didn't we witness the known civilised world reacting in such a manner to the USA and Britain's invasion of Iraq? No sanctions. No prosecution of Bush and Blair as war criminals. No flag waving by social media folks

The millions of Arabs and others killed in Iraq, Libya, Syria and Afghanistan etc. wars by the civilised known world have been overlooked in this European conflict. The exceptionalism of European humanity outweighs that of the Arabs and others. Colonial mentality is a genetic disorder that appears to have now become intrinsic to political, social and economic attitudes. And this is all, if not in most cases, instituted by none other than a former colony, USA, that is on the other side of the Atlantic. Perhaps the hangover of the WWII is still prevalent in the European psyche for it is apparent to all but them that they are being led by the nose like cattle to slaughter.

War in any part of the world is reprehensible and must be stopped, not by supplying arms but by peaceful negotiations. But this is not happening in the Congo, Yemen, Palestine/Israel, Ukraine-Russia etc.

The basic spirit of humanity that seeks to redress conflicts through dialogue is now replaced with the supply of weapons, followed by sanctimonious sermons on that thing called democracy and the attendant civil and human rights and other sell by date colonial accoutrements. Even within such democracies racism and big brother governance is widespread.

For the known civilised world, it is business as usual. The demonising of the Russian people, their arts, music, sportspersons and business has reached levels where the intent appears to be to wipe them off the face of the earth by ostracising them and stealing their assets under the garb of sanctions. Sanctions that have become a lucrative business model.

Why didn't we witness the known civilised world reacting in such a manner to the USA and Britain's invasion of Iraq? No sanctions. No prosecution of Bush and Blair as war criminals. No flag waving by social media folks.

This behaviour only confirms that there exists an International Division of Humanity.

The horrors of war have arrived at the door of the exceptionals replete with the sights and sounds of another bloody blitzkrieg.

Could this be a replay of the terrible events that occurred in the last century?

Perhaps this may not come to pass if enlightened politicians listen to the Israeli General Moshe Dayan's sensible advice, "If you want to make peace, you don't talk to your friends. You talk to your enemies."

The problem is that countries in conflict are talking to their friends, who instead of advising them on a peaceful solution, are supplying them weapons of death, thereby revealing the virtues of the human spirit of arsonists (Europe, USA, Canada, Australia, Israel and New Zealand) that profit in mayhem, death and destruction.

This International Division of Humanity is alive, well, and thriving.

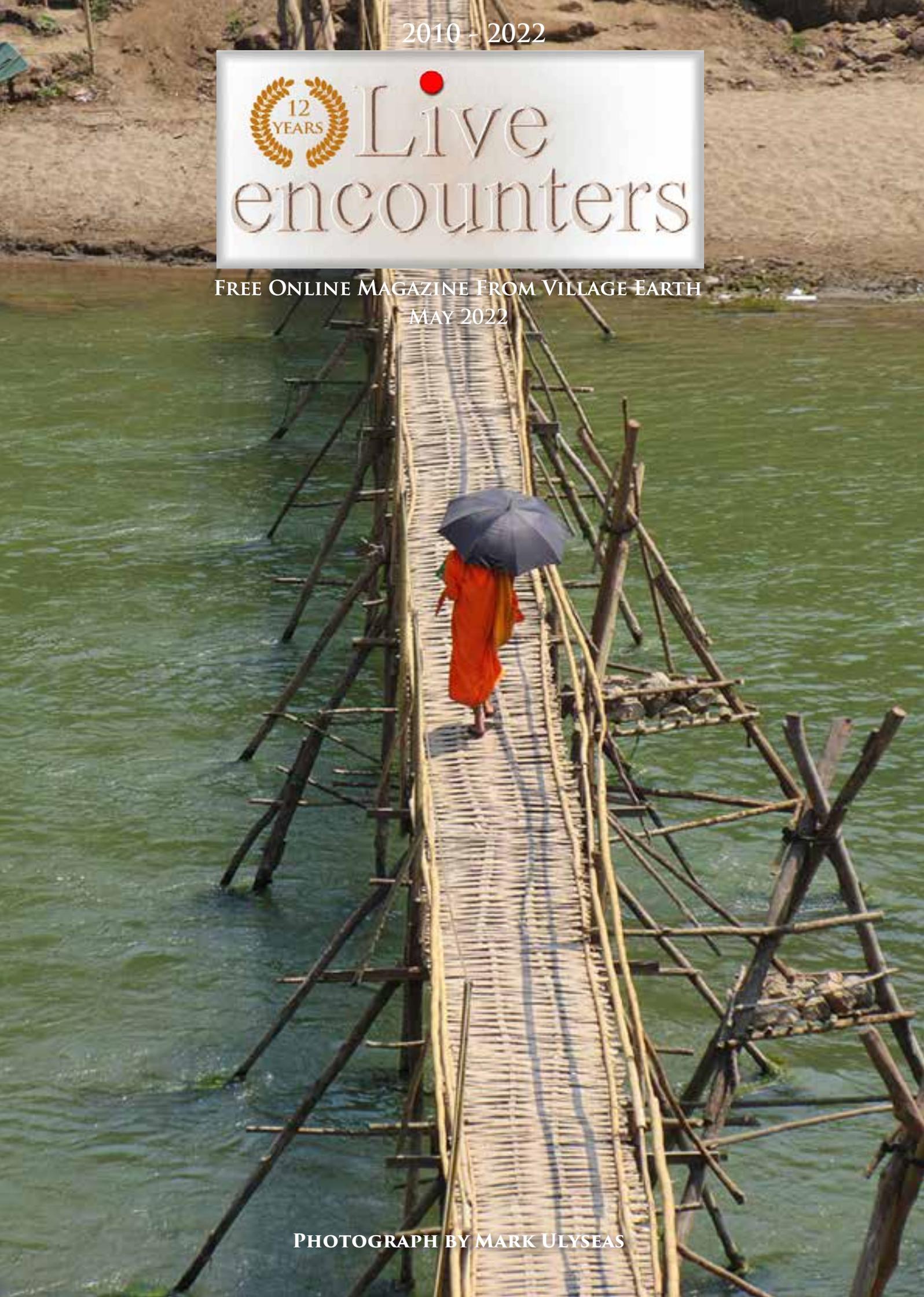
*Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om*

2010 - 2022



# Live encounters

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH  
MAY 2022



PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK ULYSEAS