

Towards inclusive growth: 'The Gospel of Dirty Hand'



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KM Munshi, a well-known writer and former food and agriculture minister while addressing the Indian Council of Agricultural Research in 1952 elaborated his concept of The Gospel of Dirty Hand. He felt that when we extend the ideas, services and inputs to farmers or other people at community level, we ought to understand the way those who work with their hands work. He was conscious that when extension workers get alienated from the ground, they may think and do things in a way which might cause alienation.

He also visualised a connection between soil and soul, between village institutions, hydrological and nutrient cycles. He had formed the first unit of Land Army comprising the students of Delhi University and mandated to clean the Chatarpur drain. He knew that a society in which drains were not clean the mind of the people might also not be clean. The muddy water, he felt might gather in front of poor people and they



KM Munshi

might have to bear with it, sometimes helplessly. He was a visionary and few people at that time were thinking that far. The discourse on environment and sustainability had not even become fashionable in the world. He forewarned that those cultures which get overawed by nature remain undeveloped and those which overpower nature get destroyed.

Today when we are celebrating the golden jubilee of Gujarat, the most important issue is to find ways of making growth inclusive, ensuring that a tribal in Dangs or an industrial worker in slums or an artisan or a weak student no matter of which community feels cared for.

Let me share some thoughts about making our growth process

in agriculture and industry more inclusive and sustainable: drawing upon Munshi's warning, we should put the environment at the heart of every step we take for growth. Just as every industry must consciously prevent pollution and treat the effluents with the best possible technology in the world, the farmers must also not degrade the soil by excessive water, heavy machinery or chemical inputs. Should we not remember that soil health, crop health and human health are related? We have to thus map the critical issues in soil health and restore the same in the next five years.

Same care should be taken for water. No new house should be allowed to be built if it does not harvest roof top water and recycle waste water. Old buildings should also be obliged to do so in a time bound manner. Every minister and official including district collector should set an example in this regard. Every academic institute must display prominently annual improvement brought about in water and energy budget. Whole society should have a right to this information and it should be displayed outside the premises. More ideas next week and I invite readers also to contribute specific suggestions for making growth more inclusive and sustainable. We don't want to have growth of sick soil, air and water and people alongside the infrastructure.

**MINDS ON
THE MARGIN**