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77TH INDEPENDENCE DAY EDITION

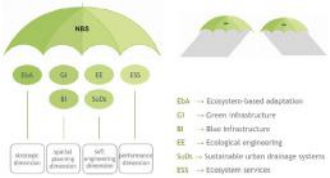
Nation First. People First. Always.

Contents

People, Planet and Prosperity First: The DA Perspective 03

As India marks its 77th Independence Day, Dr Ashok Khosla in the editorial discusses the aspirations of the country's citizens and what "a better life for all" encompasses. He argues that it can be achieved, provided relationships among the different social sectors, structures, and systems become less vertical and more horizontal. Dr Khosla believes that when people are put in charge of their lives, when the last is put first and when the long term is put above all, we can create the India Mahatma had fought for.

Paving the Path to Resilient and Sustainable Cities in India with Blue and Green Infrastructure 04



Increasing urbanisation and climate change are making cities vulnerable, which points to the pressing need for systemic change in urban infrastructure. In her article, Anoushka Das argues that by adapting nature-based solutions, cities can embark on a transformative journey towards resilience and sustainability in the face of an evolving climate crisis.

Natural Dyed Handloom Cluster: Paving the Path to Sustainable Development through Responsible Production 06

As the impact of fashion on carbon emissions increases, the need for sustainable fashion is becoming imperative. Joining this effort, the Natural Dyed Handloom Cluster, based in Shivamogga, has embraced a sustainable business model with responsible production practices. Deena Hari Krishna P and Shubham Singh tell us about the practices the cluster has adopted so that, the social and economic development can go hand in hand with environmental responsibility.

A G20 Presidency Perspective on Sustainable Management and Efficient Use of Natural Resources 08

Surprising as it may sound, the entire food system is responsible for one-fourth of the total greenhouse gas emissions. Saundharaya Khanna and Vaishali Kanojia, in this article, discuss how India can respond to poverty and hunger, climate change, and natural resource depletion through sustainable natural resource management, including initiatives like Lifestyle for Environment.

Empowering Local Communities through Bundelkhand Radio: Harnessing Nature-Based Solutions for Sustainable Development 10

Over the years, Radio Bundelkhand has been inspiring and motivating communities to adopt sustainable approaches and learn from each other's experiences. Vaishali Kanojia and Kirandeep Kaur, through this article, throw light on the tenets of Radio Bundelkhand and the impact it has made on the local population. We also come to know about Parvati Vanshkar and her son's efforts to make their lives sustainable with the help of the transformative influence of Radio Bundelkhand.

The views expressed in the articles in this newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily those of Development Alternatives.

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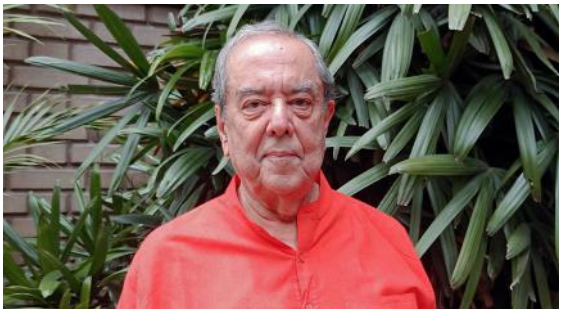
People, Planet and Prosperity First: The DA Perspective

In the Indian context, the concept of "Independence" generally continues to evoke a positive, eudemonic feeling of achievement from gaining political freedom from colonial rule. After seven decades of political self-rule, however, one could be forgiven for hoping for more. National pride, expressed through respect for the institutions of governance – the Constitution, the making and maintaining of laws, the delivery of public goods, and national unity expressed through adoption of the symbols of unique identity such as the Flag, the Anthem, the Emblems, and designated fauna and flora are important manifestations of our collective commitment to create a better future.

But the citizens of India deserve much more: we aspire to true freedom and liberation that can enable each one of us to be the driver of fundamental, universal progress, the basis of creating a better life for all. This will need different arrangements for national self-governance from the top-down ones that we adopted with little change from our former colonial rulers, to a political system in which decision-making powers and responsibility for action flow from bottom upwards. This needs much greater emphasis on evolving a public that is better educated and informed, capable of creative thinking and initiative, and holding its leaders to account on a continuing basis, not just at the time of the next election. Today, new pedagogical methods and communication technologies make such a regime eminently possible.

The work of Development Alternatives over the past forty years shows that this possibility can easily be made a reality, provided the relationships among the different social sectors (government, business and civic institutions), between the different social structures (family and community, and national) and among the different functions of social systems (consumption, production and education) become less vertical (hierarchical) and more horizontal (equal and balanced) than they are today. This Independence Day edition of the DA Newsletter describes a few projects and initiatives that try to demonstrate the changes needed for such a participative and self-organising world. Many more can be seen on our website and newsletter archive.

From the vantage point of the inception philosophy of Development Alternatives, confirmed by the results of our four decades of work on the ground, these are the three sets of relationship that must change fundamentally to create the independent India wanted by the great majority of our citizens. In the context of the current Indian Presidency of the G20, it may be pertinent to showcase these to other member countries having similar thoughts about their development objectives.



Dr Ashok Khosla, Chairman, Development Alternatives (DA)

First, put people in charge of their lives. This will need a totally different configuration of the systems of governance. In particular, it will need a much stronger civil society than one that exists or is envisaged today, capable of generating, nurturing and supporting individual creativity, responsibility and action. And to act as a mechanism for ensuring integrity, rights, transparency, foresight and generating institutions and instruments for facilitating universal wellbeing.

Second, put the last first. No nation can be proud of its independence if any of its citizens is deprived of the basic human needs. From the country-level to the community-level, all efforts must be devoted not just to prosperity of the rich or average person but to full justice and economic fairness as well. Neither grandiose, pretentious monuments or events, nor superficial, palliative projects can be substitutes for carefully thought-through systemic, self-sustaining, long-lasting initiatives. The future of India lies in the small and local: mini-institutions for governance, enterprise, education.

Third, put the long-term above all. The enormous value of the heritage our ancestors left us in the form of a productive natural resource base, a rich culture, a knowledge system and a society and economy capable of supporting the world's largest population imposes on us an obligation to be equally good ancestors to future generations. The benefits of doing so, of course, will also accrue to current generations. Caring for the Earth, our biodiversity, our climate, our soils and forests, our rivers and waters must be absolutely fundamental in any "development" decision we make.

Perhaps not coincidentally, these lessons, relearned by civil society organisations over the last few years, are of course, the inexorable outcomes of what had already been recognised and expounded a hundred years ago by the Mahatma, who fought for and achieved our country's independence. ❐

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Paving the Path to Resilient and Sustainable Cities in India with Blue and Green Infrastructure

Urbanisation and Climate Change

The current climate change events are a result of unchecked changes in land use and land cover (Krishnan et al., 2020)[1]. Unfettered urbanisation has brought about a host of challenges, threatening an increase in climate risks and other natural and anthropogenic disasters. Even though cities make up less than 2% of the Earth's surface, they play a significant role in driving climate change. They consume a staggering 78% of the world's energy and are responsible for generating more than 60% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (United Nations, n.d.)[2]

In recent times, Indian cities have been seeing unprecedented changes in the urban fabric. Owing to unplanned urban growth, the built area has been consuming whatever remains of the land's natural blue and green features. Natural catchment areas and underground drainage have been buried to create more space for urban growth. Impervious surfaces dominate the cityscape, hampering the infiltration of rain and eventually leading to flood risk during rainfall events (Opperman, 2022)[3]. Urban areas produce five times as much surface runoff for the same rainfall event compared to rural or peri-urban areas. As a result, every monsoon season and during off-season showers, Indian cities have been suffering from recurrent waterlogging and urban flooding, causing disruptions in day-to-day life.

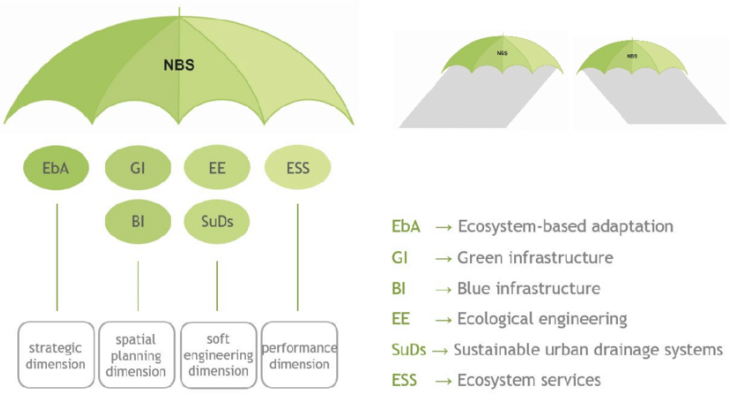

Figure 1: Nature-based solutions in relation to existing key concepts
Source: ILPO (in NbS Technical Handbook, 2019)[6]

In order to counter urban flooding, traditional water and flood management called 'grey infrastructure' have populated cities across the world. Reduced pipeline capacity, limitations in flood storage, issues with the operation of pumping stations, and a general lack of maintenance (Banerjee and Patel, 2022)[4] have led to many of these systems becoming overwhelmed during heavy downpours. India is estimated to have suffered losses of about USD 87 billion from extreme weather conditions, with urban flooding accounting for USD 3.2 billion (World Meteorological Organisation, 2021)[5].

Nature-based Solutions

Thus, the colossal socio–economic and environmental impacts of climate change point to the pressing need for systemic change in urban infrastructure, supported by necessary policy and investment response. This can be facilitated by applying adaptation measures through nature-based Solutions (NbS). 'Nature-based solutions' is an umbrella concept that is an amalgamation of existing concepts and classified into various dimensions, as shown in Figure 1. It includes strategic, spatial planning, soft engineering and performance dimensions. It includes ecosystem-based adaptation, blue-green infrastructure, ecological engineering, sustainable urban drainage systems, and ecosystem services.

The World Conservation Congress and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) define NbS as 'actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits'. On adaptation measures, the IPCC AR6 report has stated that developing nations will need USD 127 billion annually by 2030 and USD 295 billion annually by 2050 to adapt to climate change (Boehm & Schumer, 2023)[7].

As mentioned above, the physical landscape and catchment areas have been

encroached upon by urbanisation in most cities, restricting natural drainage and eventually rendering the historical water management system nearly redundant. To mitigate the problems of urban flooding and heat stress, a combination of blue-green infrastructure and sustainable urban drainage systems would be ideal. Many ancient cities had a system of urban waterworks that used indigenous knowledge to manage stormwater. Delhi is one such city whose urban waterworks were developed in the early 13th century. The components of this system took the form of *hauzes* (water tanks), *baolis* (step wells), and *bunds* (embankments). These were created in alignment with Delhi's natural features of the Ridge and the Yamuna floodplains. They helped capture runoff from the ridge, store the surplus monsoon runoff, and recharge groundwater (Gupta, 2020)[8]. Over time, many of these structures have been lost to time and the changing urban morphology. However, there is scope for innovative nature-based solutions by applying new technology while borrowing from indigenous local knowledge.

Leveraging Existing and New Knowledge

Various NbS interventions can be employed in city infrastructure to enhance water infiltration, slow down and store surface runoff, and mitigate flood risk. These could include vegetated or green roofs, retention ponds, bioswales, and wetlands, all of which can be seamlessly integrated with urban green spaces, including parks, city forests, and more. These interventions will also promote opportunities for carbon sequestration. Networks can be created between the vernacular urban networks and the new green features.

For the successful implementation of any policy or programme, robust frameworks, guidelines, and incentives are crucial. They also need to be supported by laws and regulations at multiple levels and involve the active participation of the public. By leveraging existing and new knowledge and prioritising disaster risk reduction, and mitigation, cities in India can embark on a transformative journey towards resilience and sustainability in the face of an evolving climate crisis. ❐

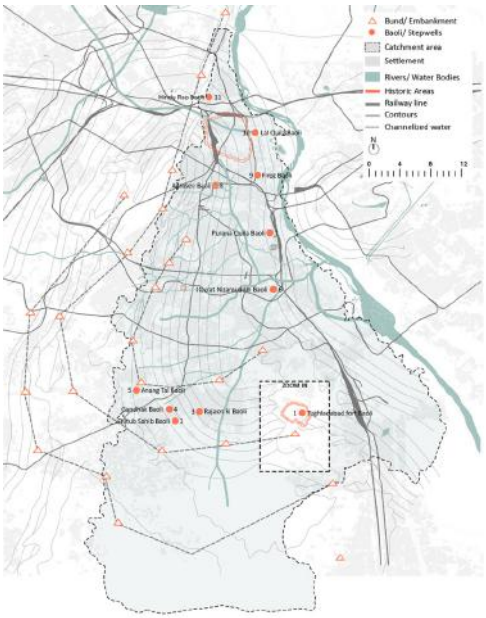

Figure 2 : Delhi Sultanate Water Works – Bund Network along Delhi Ridge
Source: Gupta, 2020

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Natural Dyed Handloom Cluster: Paving the Path to Sustainable Development through Responsible Production

Members tailoring the final cloth product at one of the multiple individual tailoring units in Shivamogga

Natural Dyed Handloom Cluster in Shivamogga

Clothing is an intrinsic part of human civilisation, woven intricately with cultural significance. Recognising the profound impact of fashion and textiles on our world, the Natural Dyed Handloom Cluster in the picturesque district of Shivamogga, Karnataka, has embraced a sustainable business model with responsible production practices. Today, sustainable development goes beyond mere environmental consciousness; it also encompasses social empowerment and economic prosperity. The Shivamogga Cluster embodies this holistic approach to sustainability, ensuring that the needs of future generations are not hindered but rather supported. The vision is no longer about viewing environmental responsibility as a trade-off that can hinder social and economic development prospects. Instead, it has embraced the idea of these three pillars as complementing forces and created a harmonious path towards development and self-reliance. The cluster uses natural dyes derived from locally sourced organic materials, such as areca nut fruits. This has helped support local farmers, conserve biodiversity and reduce the textile industry's environmental impact. By revitalising traditional industries and promoting sustainable practices, the Shivamogga Cluster has emerged as a supportive ecosystem where traditional industries thrive, communities prosper, and the fabric of our shared heritage is woven with resilience and prosperity.

Environmental Impact

The Shivamogga Cluster's commitment to a sustainable business model bears a positive impact on the environment. The cluster has reduced its carbon footprint and minimised chemical pollution by

Water Treatment Area in the Naturally Dyed Handloom Cluster at Shivamogga, Karnataka

utilising locally sourced organic cotton and naturally derived dyes. It has also rejuvenated a nearby pond as a water source for dyeing processes and subsequently treats the wastewater for irrigation. This exemplifies its circular economy approach, effectively minimising water wastage and pollution. Through the preservation of traditional practices and eco-friendly materials, the cluster stands as an example of responsible production and its harmonious coexistence with economic growth, contributing to the preservation of India's rich ecological heritage.

Social Impact

The Shivamogga Cluster's inclusive and equitable approach has uplifted local communities and promoted social cohesion and empowerment. It has successfully fostered collaboration and skill development among artisans and created a sense of ownership and self-reliance among the weavers. Also, the

Board Meeting of Members in the Natural Dyed Handloom Cluster at Shivamogga, Karnataka

emphasis on female participation, which comprises 95% of the cooperative society, has paved the way for women's economic empowerment and social inclusion. Through Swaraj-inspired principles of self-governance and self-reliance, the cluster has enabled local communities to take charge of their economic destinies while preserving their cultural heritage and traditional weaving practices.

Economic Impact

The Shivamogga Cluster follows a sustainable business model that demonstrates economic viability while respecting traditional practices. It uses locally sourced materials and embraces eco-friendly production methods. This model has helped support local farmers

Warehouse unit at the Charaka Campus

and promote sustainable livelihoods. The artisans operate decentralised units within their homes, which ensures a better balance between work and household responsibilities, particularly for women workers. Increased earnings and access to markets through the SFURTI initiative have further enhanced the economic well-being of local artisans, reducing dependency on agriculture, and creating diverse income streams. As a result, the cluster has become an embodiment of Swaraj, where economic prosperity thrives hand in hand with environmental preservation and cultural heritage. ❐

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A G20 Presidency Perspective on Sustainable Management and Efficient Use of Natural Resources

An organic farm at Latpura Khas in the Bundelkhand region (2022)

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an unprecedented global commitment towards action for people, the planet, and prosperity[1]. Among its priorities is the call for ending poverty and hunger*, addressing climate change, and protecting and restoring the planet's environment, thus, recognising the need to look at food, livelihoods and management of natural resources together. This is important, especially considering that the unsustainability of the food system and, within it, agriculture, is one of the significant contributors to the world crossing the planetary boundaries of a safe operating space for humanity (Figure 1). Consider this: the entire food system (production and consumption, including agriculturally driven change in land use) is responsible for one-fourth of the total greenhouse gas emissions; agriculture drives 80% of the total global deforestation; about 84% of the extracted freshwater is used for agriculture, rising to 90% for very arid regions; and agriculture's total anthropogenic nitrogen and phosphorus consumption is 86% and 90%, respectively.

The same pattern reflects in India. As per the Third Biennial Update Report submitted by the Government of India in early 2021 to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), agriculture contributes 14% to the total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the country[2] A vast proportion of forest is cleared to make space for cropland,** and 91% of India's total freshwater consumption is driven by agricultural purposes[3]. The sector is further responsible for anthropogenic nitrogen and phosphorus consumption of up to 59.2% and 22.1%, respectively[4].

* Hunger is defined as deficiencies in calories needed to lead a healthy life. This policy paper addresses hunger in terms of both lack of nutrition and food insecurity.

**Forests in India are being increasingly cleared to make space for agricultural land. Between 1880 and 2010, the country lost as much as 26 million hectares of forest land while increasing the cropland by 56% in the same duration [3].

It highlights the importance of sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources, especially in the food systems.

A G20 Presidency Perspective

India formally assumed the G20 Presidency*** from Indonesia on 1 December 2022 for one year. As a member and current host of the G20 Presidency, all eyes are on the country as it positions its stand on the global challenges of poverty and hunger, climate change, and natural resource depletion through sustainable and efficient natural resource management. India has responded to these challenges by gearing towards initiatives including but not limited to Lifestyle for Environment or LiFE. Initially launched at COP26 in Glasgow on 01 November 2021, LiFE promotes the idea of "mindful and deliberate utilisation" towards sustainable resource production and consumption[6]. It is a global effort to encourage basic climate-friendly actions in everyday lives by embracing an environmentally conscious lifestyle.

Operationalising LiFE can significantly increase our chances in the fight against climate change and biodiversity loss. While the Government of India is undertaking numerous efforts to encourage the adoption of LiFE principles, what can support this initiative on an intrinsic level and increase the momentum manifold is embodying the two fundamental principles: ***efficiency in production*** systems (as the primary means of reducing the pressure on natural resources, particularly by reducing wastes, recycling, and other circular economy measures) and ***sufficiency in consumption*** (that ensures that all citizens have access to enough resources for a decent life without transgressing the various planetary boundaries and nature's limits, now and for future generations).

In everyday life, and especially in the case of agriculture or food systems, this could translate to some low-key strategies such as practicing regenerative agriculture by adopting techniques of no-till farming, crop diversification and mixed crop rotation, composting, avoidance of synthetic chemicals, etc., towards enhancing soil fertility, water quality and retention and carbon sequestration[7]. Another important strategy would be of minimising post-harvest produce losses with proper storage and food handling techniques, adopting responsible consumer behaviour by *getting only as much as you can eat*, avoiding food disposal, and segregating the food waste properly even if the disposal is not nil. ❐

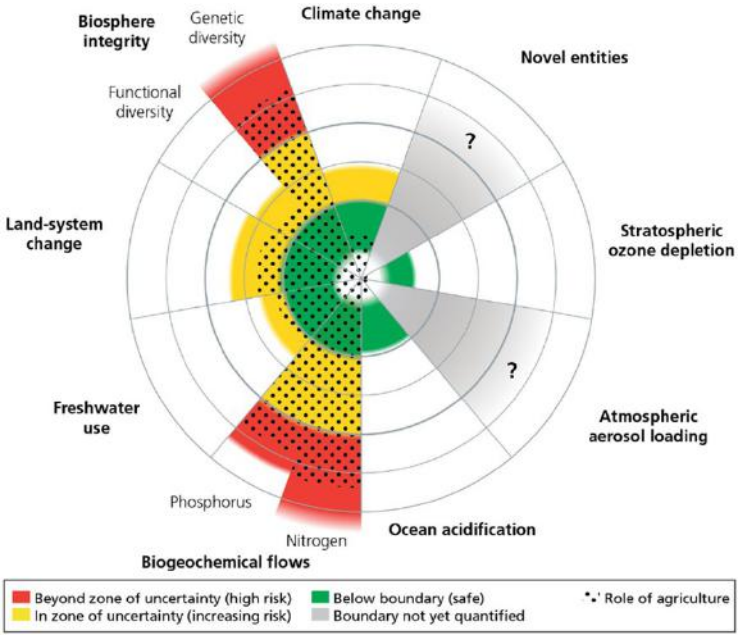

Figure 1: Status of nine planetary boundaries viz role of agriculture
Source: CGIAR 2018 [5]

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***The G20, or Group of 20, is an intergovernmental forum consisting of 19 of the world's largest economies, including both developed and developing nations and the European Union (EU).

Empowering Local Communities through Bundelkhand Radio: Harnessing Nature-Based Solutions for Sustainable Development

The The Bundelkhand region in India faces several ecosystem-based challenges due to geographical, climatic, and human factors. These challenges include water scarcity, land degradation, deforestation, biodiversity loss, and climate change impacts. The region is susceptible to climate change, including increased temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, frequent droughts and heat waves. These impacts further exacerbate water scarcity, agricultural challenges, and livelihood vulnerabilities. Community radio, such as Radio Bundelkhand, can serve as a valuable tool to address these ecosystem-based challenges.

Organic farming in Bundelkhand

Impact of Radio Bundelkhand on Local People

Radio Bundelkhand has been inspiring and motivating communities to adopt sustainable approaches and learn from each other's experiences by highlighting local success stories, innovative practices, and traditional knowledge. Through its programmes, Radio Bundelkhand has been **raising awareness and disseminating knowledge** to communities. Broadcasting programmes about ecosystem challenges, causes, and impact on local communities has provided information on sustainable land and water management practices, conservation strategies, and climate change adaptation techniques to its listeners. Over the years, Radio Bundelkhand has empowered communities to make informed decisions and take appropriate actions by disseminating such knowledge. The flagship 'Shubh Kal programme' has helped communities adopt climate-resilient practices and change their behaviours for a sustainable future. Shubh Kal has become a changemaker as farmers in the region have moved from fertiliser-based farming practice to organic farming.

Radio Bundelkhand actively **engages with local communities** by involving them in the radio programmes. It acts as a platform to bridge the communication gap between the communities and other stakeholders. This includes featuring local voices, hosting discussions, and encouraging community participation through call-in shows, interviews, and community-led content creation. Every day live phone programmes are broadcasted on the radio station, giving vulnerable communities an opportunity to put forth their problems specific to their agricultural practices. This practice also acts as a two-way communication where first-hand solutions are provided to the community. One such programme is '*Baatein Humari Tumahri*', a live programme broadcast every day from 11:00 am to 12:00 pm on Radio Bundelkhand's app and online player.

During extreme weather events, the radio station provides regular **weather updates, disseminates early warning information,** and shares tips on preparedness. This helps

the communities cope with climate change impacts, improve disaster preparedness, and reduce risks to life and property.

Story from the Ground

Parvati Vanshkar, a resident of Pajanpura village in the Niwari district of Madhya Pradesh, exemplifies the positive impact of Radio Bundelkhand. Parvati's eight-member family, who rely solely on farming for income, has been listening to Radio Bundelkhand since its establishment in 2008. Initially, it was Parvati's partially blinded son who developed a fascination for the radio station. He then encouraged the other family members to tune in, and soon enough, the entire household became regular listeners of Radio Bundelkhand. Now Parvati and her family gather in their home daily to listen to Radio Bundelkhand.

Parvati has a delightful kitchen garden where she cultivates tomatoes, chillies, mint, basil, and other low-maintenance plants. Apart from enhancing the beauty of her house, the kitchen garden also provides the family with a source of small-scale, 100% organic produce. During an interview with Radio Bundelkhand's reporter RJ Varsha Raikwar, Parvati reminisced when she did not have any inkling towards the valuable information the radio station was disseminating. She said, 'Before listening to Radio Bundelkhand, we didn't even know how to wash our hands properly. My family has gained valuable knowledge about sanitation, personal hygiene, climate-resilient practices, and various aspects of Bundeli culture we were unaware of.' Parvati joyfully added that her family has altered their behaviours as their contribution to combating climate change. They have adopted simple practices like carrying cloth bags to the market instead of plastic ones, using organic soil in their fields instead of chemical fertilisers, and maintaining a kitchen garden—all made possible by the influence of Radio Bundelkhand. Parvati's favourite programme on the radio station is *Bairon Bhauji*, a radio drama that explores Bundelkhand's cultural heritage. They are grateful to Radio Bundelkhand for the valuable information they have gained through listening to the radio.

Parvati Vanshkar, listener of Radio Bundelkhand

The story of Parvati and her family exemplifies the transformative influence of Radio Bundelkhand, showcasing how knowledge and awareness can lead to tangible actions that contribute to combating climate change and building a better future.

Undoubtedly, Radio Bundelkhand is a beacon of hope and knowledge in addressing the ecosystem-based challenges the Bundelkhand region is facing. The radio station has been successful in empowering individuals like Parvati to make positive changes and contribute to sustainable development by raising awareness, engaging communities, providing weather updates, and sharing best practices. Through the transformative power of community radio, Radio Bundelkhand is paving the way for a resilient and thriving Bundelkhand region. As the sun sets over the Bundelkhand region, Radio Bundelkhand continues to shine a light on the path towards a sustainable and resilient ecosystem. ❐

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