


FIRST COLUMN


UNDERSTANDING ENERGY CONCERNS



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

Each social grouping has its mythology. The sense in which the phrase social groupings is being used in this text refers to human aggregations popularly clubbed as a category, such as “the rich”, “the poor”, “the professional”, “the sailor” and so on. The rich have a sub-category that is derisively referred to. This sub-category is called “the *nouveau riche*,” which is supposed to be loud in its display of recently-acquired wealth. Whether as a characteristic this is true or not has never been empirically tested, however it is believed to be true. Similarly, many professional groups such as engineers, doctors, *et al* look down upon history as a discipline. A professional historian is neither taken seriously nor referred to with the mellowness which any “serious” professional would have been. So be it!

Applying this yardstick of traits to the profession of energy specialists, the same kind of syndrome can be found. Unexplained professional myopia prevents many of them from recognising that the need for green energy is not a first energy shift that has ever touched the human civilisation. Energy shifts are as old as humanity. When the physical energy of human beings was used to break down aggregations of natural material, such as branches or boulders, the substitution of physical human energy by power of draft animal energy was a major energy revolution. For any kind of traction or movement being substituted with the use of animal energy, there was an equally big revolution.



Ostensibly human beings took a long time to recognise that they need not walk to move from one point to another but they could instead ride an animal. This too was nearly as big a revolution as any. Lions remained untameable, elephants lost on speed what they gained on bulk. The horse was the clear winner and its popularity became so much that horse power became the unit of measurement and even today the strength of an engine is explained in terms of how many horse powers it represents. The message is simple. Each source of energy was a process which had its era of dominance. The shift from one era to another was as fundamental, drastic and dramatic as the shift one talks of today for an aspirational or needed change from fossil fuel to green energy.

Be that as it may, any such shift needed a change in technology. Other collaterals followed in the process of evolution: Size of the circle (often referred to as the wheel) and the concomitant size of the case which would contain the machinery (called the equipment). This meant change in the service industry and indeed the full gamut of ancillary skills. Hence, to understand green energy and the era in which many front-edge communities are locked in today, in a module of learning, is a complicated process. In the prevailing dominant social culture of “fast food”, few have the time to pause and consider the nature of the problem.

There isn’t any serious dissertation available on how long any era lasted before it gave way to the next era of energy usage. To recognise and change this framework of reference to a more holistic one is the need of the hour. The present obsession with one form of green energy or another, be it solar, wind, hydro, oceanic or biomass is proving good almost only for talking shop and the industry. There is a clear need to get our perspective right on the significance of power, *per se*. Energy is the underpinning of human civilisation. Its characterisation determines the periods of history. Understanding the methods of transition in the past, from one energy era to another, will help us to find solutions to the current energy concerns better.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal.)

Need for affordable housing and microfinance for all

While India continues to record improvement in dealing with poverty, homelessness has elicited a poor response from our policymakers

Among the many challenges that need urgent attention, more so after the COVID-19 pandemic invaded our lives, is housing. This vital segment needs a scientific and creative intervention to make it a sustainable proposition. Lack of proper housing is one of the reasons, apart from loss of jobs, that led to the mass migration of labourers from cities to the villages, during the initial days of the countrywide lockdown. Hence, expanding access to affordable housing is essential not just for equitable development but also for social stability.

Looking at the gravity of the issue, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget speech announced the extension of the tax holiday on affordable housing projects for one more year. The Government has done this to ensure affordable housing for migrant workers. The affordable rental housing projects are part of the ‘Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban)’.

While we continue to record improvement in dealing with poverty, homelessness has elicited a poor response from our policymakers. Consequently, slums constitute 17 per cent of urban households in India and in Mumbai they make up 42 per cent of the households. These slum clusters lack necessary amenities like private toilets and potable water. A high population density and a weak public healthcare system mean more susceptibility to COVID-19 and other diseases and epidemics. Necessary precautions like social distancing to stay safe of the Coronavirus cannot be practised under such deplorable living conditions that prevail in slums and *jhuggi jhopri* clusters.

Human health and well-being depends on a range of interconnected social, economic and physical factors that impact the environment in which we live and sustain ourselves. The key to good housing is to ensure that residents have access to transportation, affordable healthcare, jobs, education as well as other essential services. A decent habitat and shelter can contribute in not just individual or societal well-being but also have the potential to catalyse overall economic growth. It is, thus, critical to recognise housing investment as a basic, fundamental building block of economic activity.

Housing is not a standalone issue and is closely intertwined with other factors and lack of sustainable housing is often the cause of a slew of health and developmental problems. Poor ventilation and the inability to maintain basic hygiene are major causes of poor health. Fragile building structures undermine safety and increase vulnerability to disaster. Lack of lighting and space limits the ability of children to study. Inadequate privacy and lack of sanitation contribute to a host of diseases, hence perpetuating poverty.

For many people in the developing world, the land on which they live is their only asset. If that property is not recognised as legally theirs, they lose out on several social benefits. Land ownership is often the bedrock of other development interventions. Owning land boosts nutrition, educational outcomes and gender equality. The converse is equally true. Where land security is absent or weak — when men and women do not have recognised legal rights to their land and can thus be easily displaced — all other development efforts



MANY LOW-INCOME VILLAGERS HAVE OWNED THEIR LAND FOR GENERATIONS BUT LACK FORMAL OWNERSHIP DOCUMENTS. HENCE, THEY DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO FORMAL FINANCIAL SERVICES. ONCE THEIR INHABITED LAND GETS FORMALLY TITLED, THEY COULD OBTAIN ACCESS TO SEVERAL PUBLIC BENEFITS, INCLUDING LOANS

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go in vain and conflict arises.

Many who live in slums have little or no control over the ownership of the property they live upon. The lack of official land titles is a major impediment to the acquisition of housing finance. People do not have documentary proof of being owners of the land on which they live and are, therefore, legally insecure.

Many low-income villagers have owned their land for generations but lack formal ownership documents. Hence, they do not have access to formal financial services. Once their inhabited land gets formally titled, they could obtain access to several public benefits, including loans.

Traditional housing finance has not been able to offer much help to people in the low-income group. But a range of financial institutions are applying good microfinance practices, thus promoting housing. The increased provision of housing microfinance has resulted in safe and healthy housing conditions for millions. Successful housing microfinance providers have married the core principles of micro-credit — peer-based borrower selection and repayment enforcement, close follow-up on repayment and so on — with the technical expertise required to investigate land ownership and other classical housing finance principles.

This model has been highly successful wherever Governments are offering long-term tenancies

and shared-ownership housing. But the sector is still in need of more sustainable business models to get legitimacy in mainstream finance.

Housing micro-finance can include a range of financial services that support improving or upgrading housing such as home repair and expansions, additional cooking space, water and sanitation services, energy efficiency upgrades, the purchase of inhabitable land or permanent structures and the construction of new housing.

The demand for housing micro-finance is high. The clients are already channelising a good portion of micro-enterprise loans for home improvement; micro-entrepreneurs also use their homes as productive assets for generating income. A home can be a place to store inventory, produce goods and run a business. A home is also a personal asset that usually appreciates in value over time. Home improvement, thus, not only enhances living conditions but is also an investment.

The Government also needs to use creative approaches for making rental housing a safe option for house owners. Its share in overall housing has been steadily declining. There is clearly a need to replace the current rent control laws with modern tenancy laws, so as to give full freedom to tenants and owners to negotiate the rent and the length of the lease.

Rules with respect to eviction also need to be reformed to restore

the balance between the rights of tenants and the owners.

We need a differently structured and more professional market rental sector. A model Rent Act is needed to promote rental housing. There should be mutual agreement between the landlord and the tenant for a stipulated lease period prior to which the tenant can’t be evicted and after the expiry of the lease period, the tenant will not be permitted to continue in the housing unit.

However, rent control laws give tenants so much security that landlords worry that they may not regain possession of their property at the end of the lease period. People often leave their properties vacant until they get a tenant they are comfortable with.

It is time the Government puts rental housing to use. Its share in overall housing has been steadily declining. There is a need for replacing current rent control laws with a modern tenancy law, which would give full freedom to tenants and owners to negotiate the rent and the length of the lease.

Policymakers, financial institutions and housing experts also need to evaluate their current policies, cultures and ways of working. With a thoughtful approach, they can be better prepared to tackle this humongous problem. The Government will have to change course and shift away from the legacy mindset before the problem gets out of hand.



MOIN QAZI

POINT COUNTERPOINT

NOT JUST DINESH TRIVEDI, WHOEVER WANTS TO DO HONEST WORK CANNOT STAY IN THE TMC. IF HE WANTS TO JOIN THE BJP, WE WILL WELCOME HIM. —BJP NATIONAL GENERAL SECRETARY KAILASH VIJAYVARGIYA



I AM VERY GRATEFUL TO THE BJP AND ITS SENIOR LEADERS. I WAS TOLD THEY HAVE SAID THAT I AM WELCOME. BUT LET ME SETTLE DOWN FIRST. —FORMER TMC MP DINESH TRIVEDI

China in a tizzy to prevent ‘feminisation’ of male adolescents

This will eventually be resolved, as these things usually are, by the magic of generational turnover. The young will outlive the old and become the majority



GWYNNE DYER

Gwynne Dyer's new book is 'Growing Pains: The Future of Democracy and Work'. The views expressed are personal.

As early as last June, Si Zefu, member of the Standing Committee of the 13th Chinese People's Political

Consultative Conference's National Committee and chairman of Harbin Electric Corporation, was warning that many of China's young males had become “weak, timid and self-abasing.” From not playing football to not wanting to be an “army hero” is a short, slippery slope.

This “feminisation”, Si harrumphed, “would inevitably endanger the survival and development of the Chinese nation unless effectively managed.” And even as he spoke, limp-wristed young men with flowers in their hair were spotted lolling about in the street outside.

Just as Oscar Wilde heralded the fall of the British empire and hippie “peace and love” caused the US to lose the Vietnam War and start its long decline, so too, young Chinese men wearing make-up....Stop! Are you sure

that the Party wants you to go down this particular rhetorical road?

Well, okay, maybe not exactly those examples. But what would the veterans of the Long March say about these effeminate young girlymen? You can't turn them into proper soldiers. China will be easy meat for the first manly country that comes along. Harrumph!

China has a very big bureaucracy, so it takes a while for an issue to come to the top of the pile but by early this year it had arrived. It's not clear if President-for-Life Xi Jinping took a personal interest in the issue but his enthusiasm for football as a symbol of national strength and manliness is well-known, so the policy-makers knew they were on a safe track.

The Education Ministry took the lead, with the pub-



lication of a policy document last week entitled, ‘Proposal to Prevent the Feminisation of Male Adolescents’. No, really, I swear I'm not making this up. Check it out online.

The document claims that China needs to hire more male teachers to serve as role models (at present four out of five teachers in urban

areas are women) and “vigorously develop” sports like football to “cultivate the students’ masculinity”.

The official Chinese news agency *Xinhua* instantly took up the cause, condemning “androgynous” young men as “slender but weak as willows”, and there was a suspiciously instant chorus of support on social media for the notion that traditional forms of masculinity are the foundation of national military strength.

It probably sounds fresh to an adult generation of Chinese who don't even know their own country's real history. To people elsewhere, it sounds like a bunch of early 20th Century Englishmen in wing collars declaring that “the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton.” (No, it wasn't. It was won when Blücher's Prussian

army joined the battle in the afternoon after a forced march.)

It sounds like a bunch of late imperial claptrap, because that's what it is. Playing football sometimes makes you better at playing football. It does not make you better at dominating foreigners or fighting wars — and why do you want to do that anyway? It's, therefore, pleasing to report that the response in Chinese official and social media was far from unanimously enthusiastic.

“Is feminisation now a derogatory term?” one Weibo user asked and received over 200,000 likes, and the *People's Daily*, no less, published an opinion piece arguing that diversity and tolerance should be encouraged among feminine and masculine men alike.

There is probably no

country on Earth where the generational divergence of opinions, especially among the male half, is greater than it is in China. From an almost entirely hierarchical society as late as the 1980s (Confucianism reinforced by the ‘democratic centralism’ of Communism) to a younger generation that is egalitarian and gender-fluid (at least in the big cities) is one hell of a leap.

It will eventually be resolved, as these things usually are, by the magic of generational turnover. The young will outlive the old and become the majority. And here is the authentic voice of the young, summed up in a single tweet: “There are 70 million more men than women in this country. No country in the world has such a deformed sex ratio. Isn't that masculine enough?”

PLAY YOUR MIND

Positive mental health helps athletes handle the pressure and boosts their performance on ground. AMRUTA KARKHANIS DESHMUKH shares how



Sports players are considered as fit individuals who showcase their strength, endurance and flexibility to flex their bodies through tough circumstances and pull through their sport performance. They train day in and out to have command over their body and techniques. Every sport has their own demands and likewise a training schedule is devised by their coaches and followed by players and their parents for optimal performance. Long ago it was identified that despite best body and technique, something was stopping the players to achieve their best. On deeper investigation it was found that mind

had a role to play in performance which was often not understood. With time, coaches, parents and players recognised this gap and started understanding the need for mental training. Despite increased awareness, the taboo of visiting a mental health professional acts as a huge barrier to adopt a positive and progressive change. Over years sport psychology (area of specialisation that uses psychological interventions in sports set up) has found its space and parents, coaches and players are reaching out to professionals for performance enhancement. Winning is still the biggest moti-

vator for everyone involved in sports. Even after having an emphasis on participation and excellence, achieving success and avoiding failures takes centre stage for one and all. Whether one is playing an individual sport or a team sport, chief coach to subordinate coaches, sport science experts along with player's parents make a crucial part of the team which together influences the course of action for long. Management of sports players involves binding the entire team

strongly and keeping them on the same page. In this competitive world, increased exposure to international competitive events, advances in support from corporate and government sectors has led to increased performance pressure. With time, sports has moved from mere joy, sense of satisfaction to pride and professionalism. The demand to perform is so strong that it comes with the tag of "Success at any cost." But do we really need success at the cost of our mental peace? Mental health when disturbed

affects one's ability to recognise the self-potential and gets bogged down by stress. Talent wasted due to lack of professional help at right time can never stand the spirit of sports. Hence, it becomes essential to learn the mind-body connection and mental toughness to become resilient in testing moments of matches. It's scientifically proven that exercise promotes positive mental health but sometimes this observation doesn't hold true. With increasing competition, competitive stress, pressure of expectations, financial crisis, logistic issues and infrastructural concerns, the challenges to perform good are not just vested in talent but in things beyond one's control too. Anxiety, depression, personality disorder, mood disorders, panic, PTSD, eating disorders as well as more serious mental health issues are coming to surface in population as young as age 10. The peak years of sport performance and the onset of multiple mental health issues coincide and thus, this fact of understanding the underlying issues which need attention are simply side-lined. While the mind of a player is most important, even the mind-set of their coaches and the parents are equally important. It is essential to create a holistic approach in bringing a change in their perspectives towards winning and success. Lack of time, resources, myths that it is only for elite players have been wiped-out; the need of the hour is mental health training for all. (The writer is a sports psychologist.)

WEBBED



BEHIND HER EYES (SEASON 1)

A single mother enters a world of twisted mind games when she begins an affair with her psychiatrist boss while secretly befriendng his mysterious wife. Starring Simona Brown, Eve Hewson and Tom Bateman, the TV drama releases on February 17 on Netflix.



I CARE A LOT (2021)

A court-appointed legal guardian defrauds her older clients and traps them under her care. But her latest mark comes with some unexpected baggage. Starring Rosamund Pike, Peter Dinklage and Eiza González, the film releases on February 19 on Netflix.



PELÉ (2021)

Against the backdrop of a turbulent era in Brazil, this documentary captures Pelé's extraordinary path from breakthrough talent to national hero. It releases on February 23 on Netflix.

Arjun Kapoor and Ranveer Singh's on-screen bromance in the film *Gunday* was a hit as audiences really loved their camaraderie. Past the seventh anniversary of the film's release, Arjun shares why *Gunday* is and will always be one of his favourite films.

What did you love about the film that made you sign it instantly?
At the time I was starting my career, I was hardly six months old in the business and Adi sir (Aditya Chopra) offered me a film which was a two-hero ensemble, big commercial set-up. When I met Ali (Abbas Zafar), I loved his energy and excitement towards treating it like a larger than life adventure. It was like a throwback and a tribute to the 70's & 80's cinema that I grew up watching. The 'Mukul Anand, Subhash Ghai space of cinema' and at the same time a film about brotherhood and gangsters. When you are a young actor starting out, these are all trappings that you love exploring and doing in mainstream cinema. You want to establish yourself at the beginning. You want to do mainstream stuff with a sense of heightened reality and that's what *Gunday* was all about. I got really excited about doing something so front footed and mainstream.

Your bromance with Ranveer in the film was an instant hit. Tell us what made the bonhomie so special.
I think it was the off-camera love and respect we had for each other because we realised we have too much in common. In fact we are born just ten days apart from each other. It was much simpler for us to bond than we realised. And when you are starting out, you are not thinking about your career and rivalry. You are just trying to make the best film possible and have the most fun. Ranveer and I also knew each other before the film so it made it a little simpler to break the ice onset. Credit to Ali for writing a film that allowed us to be best friends. He was a big factor for bringing me and Ranveer closer. It just happened, it was just the flow. It's like chalk and cheese where even



Larger than life

Past the seventh anniversary of *Gunday*, actor ARJUN KAPOOR shares his love for the role and how his on-screen bromance with RANVEER SINGH instantly became a hit

though we are poles apart, we still manage to fit together. It's like sugar and spice, they are opposites but both sound good together. We were two people who were completely different but ended up getting along and working well together. People realised this when they saw the trailer where both of us looked good together.

The film presented you in an all new avatar. What did you love the most about your character?
Costumes. To play a character in the 70's, a gangster, it's always exciting to go into. It was my first-period film at that time. The way I was styled, presented, the low angle trolleys and just being treated larger than life, running in slow motion, that introduction coming out of the train,

landing on a coal train and much more. I think the presentation was way bigger than any third film could have gotten me and it was cool, unique and exciting. You usually feel that you need to work a lot, before you get that kind of scale but here I was immediately, in the third film, within the first six/eight months of my career.

What do you think was the film's USP?
I think the camaraderie between Ranveer and me and the big star cast coming together, was special. After a long time, there was a two-hero film and the youth loved the music. I know for a fact that the music and trailer made all the difference.

Here are five common myths around organic skincare products

Today consumers have become more aware and conscious of harmful chemicals hidden in their skincare products. They are skeptical of using skincare that wear the claim of being "organic" and "all natural", often questioning if these claims are just marketing gimmicks. Dr. Jagvir Singh, Founder and President, Refresh Botanicals lists five common misconceptions about organic skincare that will make you rethink your regimen.

MYTH 1: Using DIY masks is same as using organic products
People believe that whipping up a yogurt and honey smoothie in your blender and using it as a face mask will benefit their skin as much as an organic face mask. While we're all up for a DIY face treatment once in a while, the ingredients you find in your kitchen can't really compare to the active ingredients found in organic skincare products. These special ingredients are usually extracted at the molecular level leaving behind the most active and potent part for your skin care.

MYTH 2: Organic products are ineffective
Many people are afraid of change and stick to a product that they are familiar with and have used for years. Unfortunately, many drugstore products have been diluted, watered down, and filled with an abundance of chemical preservatives to extend the lifespan. This means that while the product may offer quick results, you shouldn't hold your breath waiting to see any real long-term benefits for the health of your skin. Organic products, on the



other hand, are jam-packed with vital nutrients, antioxidants, vitamins and minerals at high concentrations that truly feeds your skin. You'll instantly get that radiant, hydrated and clear skin.

MYTH 3: Organic products need preservatives to last longer
Highly organic products often require premium packaging that are equipped with airless pumps. This prevents the highly organic plant material from oxidising, thus spoiling. When looking for organic skincare, look for airless pumps — meaning that the product is being pumped through literally being pushed out of the container.

MYTH 4: Eating healthy is enough for great skin
There is no argument with the benefits of eating clean, antioxidant-rich foods and drinking tons of water. However,

a healthy diet alone is not necessarily enough for great skin. While everything you eat does have an impact on your skin, food cannot cleanse away impurities and environmental toxins the way a good face wash can, or provide a protective barrier on the skin the way a moisturiser can. For truly beautiful skin, be sure to eat healthy, exercise regularly and practice safe, organic skincare. Organic skincare products should accompany a healthy lifestyle for a more youthful and fresher complexion.

MYTH 5: All "Natural Types" of skincare are created equal
There is a thin line between organic and natural products. Note that we use the word natural here, and not organic. While many products may claim to be "all-natural" on their labels, it doesn't mean that their ingredients are in fact "organic." Natural products often contain natural

ingredients but may contain pesticides and other harmful chemicals. For a skin care brand to be able to wear the claim of "organic," ingredient suppliers have to undergo a rigorous process where they are monitored for many years to ensure that their farming methods are free of pesticides, herbicides and chemicals. Additionally, skin care brands must ensure that their manufacturers follow stringent practices to ensure there is no cross contamination of organic and inorganic materials. In today's time awareness about chemical-laden products is gaining momentum, which is highlighting the importance of natural organic skincare products. This increased awareness is making more people to switch to organic products. While more people are making the transition, more become mindful about the use of chemicals in regular everyday products and are adapting to the natural organic skincare regime.

TRENDBLAZER



AJAY BEGINS SHOOT FOR MAIDAN

AJAY DEVGN began shooting for the final schedule of his forthcoming sports film *Maidan* on Valentine's Day in Mumbai. The film is slated for a Dussehra release this year. The film is inspired by the true story of Indian football coach Syed Abdul Rahim, who coached and managed the Indian national team from 1950 till his death in 1963, and is considered by many as the man who changed the face of modern Indian football. Major portions of the film, helmed by Amit Ravindernath Sharma, have been shot across Lucknow, Kolkata and Mumbai.



fairtalk
TANVI AZMI

'At home, I tend to create a lot of drama. So, my daughter says that I am dramatic about everything. I tell her that is because of my profession. I feel as an actor, you play various characters. You leave a part of yourself in every character, and a bit of every character stays back in you. So you are really not the person that you are claiming to be.'



dailytalk
GULSHAN DEVAIAH

'Every time there has been an adversity, my life seems to fall in place rather than fall apart. From failing exams, getting fired to heartbreaks, major sickness and serious injuries, my life has only fallen in place after every such event. I'm not exactly a super positive about everything kind of person but if it can happen to me, it can happen to you too.'

JANNEY PRAISES HER CO-STARS

Actress ALLISON JANNEY enjoyed working with Mila Kunis, Regina Hall and Awkwafina in the film *Breaking News In Yuba County*, and has praises to shower on each of them. "The script really grabbed me from the start. It was incredibly exciting, dark, funny, and violent — a great mix," said Janney.



