

NAYAKRISHI ANDOLON

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Keywords: nayakrishi, community seed, community knowledge

Nayakrishi Andolon or the New Agriculture Movement led by farmers involving more than 300,000 diverse household ecological units in Bangladesh, is strategically focusing on 'seed' in its innovative farming practice. The objective is to demonstrate the *shohoj* way to joyful living, ensuring biodiverse ecological regeneration of nature to receive food, fibre, fuel wood, medicine, clean water, and many different bio-material and spiritual needs of the community. The word *shohoj* is grounded in the powerful spiritual tradition of Bengal, generally meaning an intuitively simple but transparent way of being in the universe. Philosophically, it implies learning to relate with internal and external realities with all our human faculties in a unity, allowing no hierarchy between our sensuous, intellectual or imaginative faculties. So, *shohoj*, in practice, explores the bio-spiritual potential of human communities in the real material world to transcend an oppressive, painful, and dehumanized existence.

The movement uses 'seed' as a powerful metaphor of continuity and history, and identifies regenerative space as the site where the invisible manifests as the visible, and potential is realized as reality. Agriculture is defined as the management of both cultivated and uncultivated space and not a 'factory' producing consumer products or commodities. As a practice, *Nayakrishi* celebrates the moments where we are sensuously engaged with nature as well as with our labouring bodies to understand and transcend the limit of abstract intellectualism. *Nayakrishi* is grounded in the powerful spiritual traditions of Bengal where Islam has met creatively with indigenous religious traditions and practices to give rise to *bhakti* movements such as that preached by Chaitanya (1486–1534), and at its apex has produced great saints such as Fakir Lalon Shah (1772–1890) (Sharif 1999: 241–73).

Since 1997, farmers are following ten simple rules to maintain and regenerate living and fertile soil, as also diverse life forms and eco-systemic variability, and develop the capacity of the indigenous knowledge system to engage and appropriate the latest advances in biological sciences. To be a *Nayakrishi* farmer, one must follow all ten rules. Rules 1 to 5 which include clauses such as 'absolutely no use of pesticide or any chemicals' and 'learning the art of producing soil through natural biological processes'

are considered entry level practices to be a member. Rules 6 to 10 relate to surface- and aquifer-level water conservation, cultivating diverse fish species in ponds, and raising animals and poultry with farm-produced organic feed, as integrated and advanced practice. Developing integrated and complex ecological systems maximizes systemic yield and contributes to innovating interesting ecological designs, proving immense economic potential of biodiversity-based ecological farming as a successful practical resistance against globalization. Economy is considered as the site where social exchange takes place between life-affirming activities of diverse communities. *Nayakrishi* is a growing and expanding movement. Its success and consolidation pre-supposes the following:

1. Availability of a farmer-seed system is the key to the farmer-led innovation that has historically contributed to agro-ecological evolution and generation of agricultural knowledge.
2. Access and availability of community knowledge functioning through oral communication, community memory and conservation of the popular wisdom through stories and narratives.
3. Existence of a fairly functional system of culture related particularly to food and nutrition, which links agricultural consumption to production within specific agro-ecological systems. *Nayakrishi* is keen to transform hierarchical relations of class, caste, and patriarchy; consequently women and marginal farmers are natural leaders of *Nayakrishi*.
4. An informal or formal system of social exchange of farm-generated inputs, labour and knowledge capable to operate outside the capitalist market, including community management of common resources such as water, forests, and biomass.
5. An operative notion of common property taking into account the cultivated and uncultivated sources for food and livelihood, and commonly held moral values that ensure the right of the community members to use natural wealth.

An institutional innovation is the development of farmers' collective action called *Nayakrishi* Seed Network (NSN) with specific responsibility of ensuring in-situ and ex-situ conservation of biodiversity, with the farming household as the focal point. The NSN has three levels. First, *Nayakrishi* Seed Huts (NSH) are established by the independent initiative of one or two households in the village, belonging to the *Nayakrishi* Andolon, willing to take responsibility to ensure that all common species and varieties are replanted, regenerated, and conserved by the farmers.

Second, the Specialised Women Seed Network (SWSN) consists of

women who specialize in certain species or certain varieties. Their task is to collect local varieties from different parts of Bangladesh. They also monitor and document introduction of a variety in a village or locality, and keep up-to-date information about the variability of species for which they are assigned.

Third, Community Seed Wealth (CSW) is the institutional set-up that articulates the relation between farmers within a village and between villages, in other districts and also with national institutions, for sharing and exchange of seeds. The CSW also maintains a well-developed nursery. The construction of CSWs is based on two principles: (a) they must be built from locally available construction materials and (b) the maintenance should mirror the household seed conservation practices. Any member of the *Nayakrishi* Andolon can collect seed from CSW with the promise that they will deposit double the quantity they received after the harvest. In the CSWs, there is a collection of over 3,000 rice varieties, and 538 varieties of vegetables, oil, lentil, and spices.

Nayakrishi encourages the growth of various plants including herbs that are uncultivated but are good as food sources for humans and other animals. The more environments are made free from chemicals, the more the uncultivated foods are found in the surroundings. Such assessment is done through cultural practices of celebrating *Chaitra Sangkranti*, last day of the Bengali calendar year when it is a custom to eat a meal that has at least fourteen different kinds of leafy greens or *shak*, mostly from uncultivated sources. This is a natural auditing that ensures renewable food sources for future. Resource-poor farmers are able to collect nearly 40 percent of their food and nutritional needs from uncultivated sources.

Nayakrishi Andolon represents peasant's resistance against the corporate takeover of the global food chain, an assertion that it is the farming community that feeds us. *Nayakrishi*s regenerating the future by defending farming as a way of life, affirming agrarian activities and charting *shohoj* ways to *ananda*, that is, the joy of being in the world.

Further Resource

Sharif, A. (1999), '*Islam o Gaudiya Vaishanava Motobad*', in Abonty Kumar Sanyal and Ashoke Bhattacharya (eds), *Chaitanyadev*. Kolkata: P.M. Bagchi & Company Ltd.

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NEGENTROPIC PRODUCTION

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Keywords: ecological productivity, environmental rationality, entropy, sustainability

Negentropic production is a concept that synthesizes the scope of an alternative theory and practice to inhabit the planet; it aims at rethinking sustainability from the ecological and cultural conditions of people's territories.¹ Negentropy or negative entropy can be conceived as the overall process that continually creates, maintains, and complexifies life on the planet, based on the transformation of radiant solar energy into biomass by photosynthesis, the source of all life. Negentropic production is thus a response to the fact that economic growth transforms all matter and energy consumed in the process of production into degraded energy, ultimately as unrecyclable matter and irreversible heat.

Negentropic production is meant to counteract the dominant economic paradigm, based on a mechanistic view of productivity, labour, and technology that has negated the ecological and cultural conditions for sustainability, resulting in the planet's environmental crisis. Objectified nature, fed to the mega-machine of the global economy, is transformed following the entropy law into commodities, pollution, and heat. This degradation process manifests itself in deforestation, desertification, biodiversity erosion, and climate change that is producing the entropic death of the planet.

Humans are the major force transforming the biological basis of the planet's life-support system. Economic production is the means by which humans transform matter and energy from nature. The mode of production is the way by which humanity establishes the material conditions of its existence, deeply affecting the complex thermodynamics of the biosphere. Environmentalism questions the ineluctable 'entropic degradation of nature