

Swarajya Bazaar

An agency to ensure fair and just exchange, with the aim of ensuring sustainable livelihoods and a dignified life for all members of Lokavidya Samaj

B Krishnarajulu (10 Dec 2022)

Preamble

The Capitalist Market System that pervades the Globe today, greatly influences ALL human activity and relationships. The dominant and all-pervading principle underlying ALL operations and arrangements in this Global Market System is “maximization of profit”. Such an ‘operating principle’ has led to a stage where the very survival of the ‘indigenous’ communities (especially in the Third World) whose lives and livelihoods are based on ‘local community knowledge’ and whose local interactions including marketing/exchange etc are based on local, shared communitarian values; at risk. Such communities have not been able to withstand the onslaught of the capitalist-market worldview, based on modern ‘scientific’ knowledge; with the result that most ‘traditional’ livelihoods have all but ceased to support the lives of these communities. The survival of these communities and the sustenance of their livelihoods and ‘ways of life’, rests on the development and inculcation of ‘*Swaraj Chetana*’, based on the principles of *Nyaya, Tyaga* and *Bhaichara* as opposed to the (paramount) Profit-only principle of the Capitalist Market System.

This note sets out the Concept of *Swarajya Bazaar*, an agency whose prime and sole task is to assist in the sustenance of the lives and livelihoods of *Lokavidya Samaj*; while countering the rapacious dehumanisation of the Capitalist Market System.

Overview

1. The equality of all human beings is inherent in and is an integral part of *Swaraj Chetana*

The concept of *dharma* has NO equivalent in non *Lokavidya*-based societies and it has, therefore, all along been subject to 'silencing' by commentators and analysts trained in other knowledge traditions. *Swaraj Chetana* incorporates *Nyaya, Tyaga* and *Bhaichara* as axiomatic principles of living. Gandhiji's reference to *Sanatana Dharma* seems to indicate, among other things, his desire to bring such principles of 'correct living' to the fore. Public discourse should be in the vocabulary of *vidya* and *dharma*; their meaning is commonly understood by ordinary people albeit in different ways; such understanding strives to ensure the protection of the fundamental right to life and livelihood of individuals and communities.

2. All inequality, social and economic, has its basis in knowledge hierarchy.

While analysing the dynamics of "knowledge-evolution" in the Indian context, Dharampalji in his *Bharatiya Chitta, Manas and Kala*, has stated the following:

"Differentiation between what is called the *para vidya* (knowledge of the sacred) and *apara vidya* (knowledge of the mundane) is one aspect of the Indian ways of organising physical and social reality. When this division, between *para* and *apara* knowledge, occurred in the Indian tradition cannot be said with any certainty...this sharp division may have arisen sometime during the end of *Treta (yuga)* and the beginning of *Dvapara*, with a variety of skills and crafts appearing on the earth to help man live with the increasing complexity of the universe..

It is commonly believed that the four *Vedas* along with their various branches and connected *Brahmanas, Upanishadas*, etc form the repository of *para vidya* ..and the *Puranas, Ithihasas* etc as also the various canonical texts of different sciences and crafts like *Ayurveda, Jyotisha* etc deal with the *apara vidya*.

In spite of the presence of both streams of knowledge together in almost all canonical texts, the dividing line between *para vidya* and *apara vidya* seems to be etched rather deeply in the minds of the Indian people..... It seems that the Indian mind has somehow come to believe that all that is connected with *apara vidya* is rather low, and that knowledge of the *para* alone is true knowledge. ...What the Indians realised was the imperative need to keep the

awareness of the *para*, of ultimate reality, intact while going through the complex routine of daily life.

With the passage of time, this emphasis on regulating *apara vidya* through our understanding of the *para vidya* turned into a contempt for the *apara*... this imbalance has affected our thinking on numerous subjects and issues, for instance, take our understanding of the *varna vyavastha*. In interpreting this *vyavastha*, we have somehow assumed that the *varnas* connected with textual practices and rituals of the *para vidya* are higher, and those involved in the *apara* are lower. Closeness of association with what are defined to be *para* practices becomes the criterion for determining the status of a *varna* and evolving a hierarchy between them. Thus the *Brahmanas* associated with the recitation and study of the *Vedas* become the highest, and the *Sudras* engaged in the practice of the arts and crafts of ordinary living become the lowest.

The issue of the hierarchy of the *varnas* is not, however, a closed question in the Indian tradition. During the last two thousand years, there have occurred numerous debates on this question. (*Maharishi*) *Vyasa*... composed the (*Vishnu*) *Purana*..where he proclaims the *Kali yuga* to be the *yuga* of the women and the *Sudras*. Perhaps in the *Kali yuga*, everyone turns into a *Sudra*...in this *yuga* of the ascendance of the *apara vidya*, the role of women and *Sudras*, the major practitioners of the *apara vidya*, of practical arts and crafts of sustaining life, becomes the most valuable. In our own times, Mahatma Gandhi expressed the same thought...that in this *yuga* everyone must become a *Sudra*".

3. The march towards the establishment of an egalitarian order, based on social and economic equality, begins, in this 'knowledge era', with the re-legitimization of *Lokavidya* and ensuring the Right of individuals and communities, to live by *Lokavidya*.
4. Within *Lokavidya Samaj* too, equality will be re-established/achieved only when the hierarchy of knowledge, the basis of the hierarchy in the *varna/jati* system, is removed; concomitantly with the acceptance of the inherent equality of knowledge and livelihood practices of the various *jatis* and *varnas*.

5. One of the important means of actualizing the 'ideal of equality' enshrined in *Swaraj Chetana*, would be the establishment of a *Swarajya Bazaar*, because the *Bazaar* is the place (both conceptually and physically) where there is continuous and purposeful inter-dependent interaction between the various constituents of the *Samaj*.
6. *Swarajya Bazaar* is the process of supporting and sustaining *Lokavidya*-based livelihoods and establishing concepts of 'value' and norms of exchange, which will aid and assist such sustenance.
7. This should lead to a new political unity within *Lokavidya Samaj*, which is essential for building a new socio-political order.

Swarajya Bazaar : The concept

The Market place is where commodities are exchanged between, broadly speaking, producers and consumers. It is also the place where secondary accumulation of wealth takes place by the nature of the exchange-activity i.e commodities are traded(bought and sold); while the primary accumulation takes place at the production site(of raw materials and/or products of consumption and service). The *Market* is, primarily, intended to facilitate this form of exchange-activity.

Swarajya Bazaar, on the other hand, is primarily intended to make available products and services to the local community(of producers and consumers) and facilitate exchange ,of such commodities and services, to help sustain and perpetuate lives (and livelihoods) with a level of equality and dignity for members of the community. This is the underlying *dharma* of *Swarajya Bazaar*. This is also the cardinal difference bewteen the Market and *Swarajya Bazaar*.

The inequality inherent in the exchange-activity, in a capitalist dominated market system, leads to economic and social inequality and exploitation. In sharp contrast, *Swarajya Bazaar*, will be charcterised as a humane exchange-activity process that is dominated by a constant zeal to promote welfare, dignity and equality of the members of the community it serves. There are no over-riding motives save that of upholding and promoting its *dharma*.

Swarajya Bazaar is therefore a collective activity and effort at sustaining *Nyaya, Tyaga* and *Bhaichara* among the various participant communities. Its *dharma*, through practice, pervades the philosophical, social and economic space of *Lokavidya*; each enriching the other across space and time.

The aspect of inequality arising from the exchange-activity process has to be addressed by redefining the concept of value (of a commodity) by incorporating the idea of knowledge-based and community-accepted value. In a knowledge paradigm, that recognises the fundamental equality between all knowledge and knowledge-based activity, the sustenance of a concept of knowledge-based value and the social and economic equality that it engenders, will not prove beyond the new political imagination that governs society.

The physical location of the *Swarajya Bazaar* will be in the locality (village, panchayat area, cluster) that *Swarajya Bazaar* serves. This will be similar to the weekly markets (*shandies*) that are still prevalent in most parts of the country. Many services may be available (marketed) at doorsteps such as milk delivery, dhobi services, etc. There will also be scope for online marketing with door-delivery facility for many products and services.

Economics pertinent to *Swarajya Bazaar*

Value

- The value of goods and services are determined, in the main, by three factors
 - Cost/value of 'raw materials' required to produce utilitarian goods/products
 - Knowledge/skill input in the production of the goods or rendering of service
 - Labour power input- this is measurable in terms of socially necessary/accepted time required for production/rendering (this would also apply to naturally derived inputs/raw materials)
- The equality between all forms of knowledge/skill input is inherent in *Lokavidya dharma*
- The value of Labour power is dynamic and determined by constituents of the local *Lokavidya Samaj* in proportion to the time necessary for

production/rendering of service (including that of women in all household activities) AND precludes 'forward trading' in goods/commodities/services.

- The exchange value is dynamic and determined by constituents of the local *Lokavidya Samaj* in proportion to the extant supply/demand situation and would never adversely effect the equality of knowledge or labour-power inputs or the sustenance of any *Lokavidya*-based livelihood/activity.

[The value of a commodity (we use this term to denote ALL goods and services which are produced by and through human labour for self-consumption and/or exchange) is neither pre-determinable nor pre-assignable i.e. there is no *intrinsic* value to any commodity. A value accrues to a commodity as a result of it being essential to life and/or during the process of social exchange and is by nature a dynamic quantity].

There are broadly two 'types' of value that accrue to a commodity; use-value and exchange-value. Both these 'types' of value are determined, in the main, by the knowledge-content and the labour-content (in relative proportions which could change with time and place) of their production and/or availability. Supply and demand factors would only temporarily 'modify' the value and, in *Swaraj*, would *never* assume commanding heights in value determination. While knowledge-content is a local, collective and community-dependent entity, labour-content is a continuously evolving entity and, as can easily be seen, would depend on the extent of technology infusion in productive and service activities of society. Knowledge-content derives from *Lokavidya* and, as *Lokavidya* evolves and strengthens with infusion of new ideas, data and creativity; knowledge-content also changes accordingly. So, the value that accrues to a commodity is neither static nor market-determined; it progresses with *Lokavidya* and is continuously assessed by the (local) *Lokavidya Samaj* and mediates all transactions of *Swarajya Bazaar*.

Instances of Knowledge incorporation in value

Until about 200 years ago almost all production (of food, goods and commodities) and service activities were carried out locally i.e within the village or panchayat area. Every community(*jati* and *upajati*) was engaged in this production and service activity . It served as the basis of their livelihood and was in turn based on specialised knowledge of the production

processes or service activities. Such production and service activities were, by and large, year-long activities with nature-induced breaks for rest, recreation, pilgrimages, festivals, social celebrations etc. 'Payment' for contribution/involvement in any and all such activity was normally made at the time of harvest, with each section of society receiving its payment in terms of (food)grains. Everyone got a 'pay' commensurate with the (largely locally determined) yearly minimum-requirement for living a dignified life and sustaining livelihoods. There was an inbuilt equality in the knowledge-content of value of commodities/services. Bonuses/Inams were distributed on special occasions for special services from different sections of society. Value was not obviously measured merely (or only) in terms of labour-content i.e. socially necessary time for production/rendering. There must have been a socially/culturally mediated method of value-accretion based on equality of the knowledge-content of the input. Quantification of this knowledge-content in terms of measurable space-time variables is probably not possible; and also indeterminable outside a local socio-cultural context. *Lokavidya Samaj* determined this knowledge-content of value, it was part of its *dharma*.

Instances of 'value' incorporating *Lokavidya dharma*

For the modern *Swarajya Bazaar*, it is necessary (maybe imperative) to clearly define/quantify 'value' such that it incorporates the essential equality of *Lokavidya*-based knowledge and skill(labour) inputs. We give a few instances from the past which set out the principles of value determination and incorporation.

1. Quotations from Gandhiji's "*Autobiography*" summarising Ruskin's "*Unto This Last*":

“A lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's, as all have the right of earning their livelihood from their work”

“ A life of labour i.e the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living”

“ The right system respecting all labour is, that it should be paid at a fixed rate; but the good workman employed, and the bad workman unemployed”

“The equality of wages, then, being the first object towards which we have to discover the road, the second is that of maintaining constant numbers of workmen in employment, whatever may be the accidental demand for the article they produce”

2. Quotations from Dharampalji's “Essays on Tradition, Recovery and Freedom” summarising the Chengalpattu data:

“An elaborately worked out system of sharing of the produce of the region also seems to ensured fairly equal distribution of economic and cultural prosperity among the various communities and occupational groups that inhabited the region”(Pg 116,Other India Press edition,2000)

The average agricultural produce allocated to individuals comprising different workers, artisans, service-providers etc in Chengalpattu, extracted from Table 3 on Page 142 (*ibid*)

Group	Allocation
Artificers (carpenters Ironsmiths)	20
Potters	7
Barbers	10
Washermen	7
Shroffs (Banking)	22
Kanakkupillais (Account Keeping / Registry)	19
Panisevans	10
Palayakars (Militia)	31

Wage and Cost/price

The cost of a goods/commodity/service to (or the price payable by) a consumer is related to its value

The minimum wage/pay/compensation accruing to the producer of goods/commodity/service is related to the cost (as above) and would, at all times, be consistent with the inherent equality of the knowledge/skill input in the production of the goods or rendering of service and the socially determined minimum required to live a dignified life.

The cost of labour-power(wage) is measured in terms of socially necessary time required to carry out a productive/service task. However, using merely a time-measure can result in several 'inequalities' . For example, the relative preparation time and execution time may differ vastly from activity to activity(growing a crop requires a month of preparation followed by 2-3 months of actual production; whereas preparation of a meal or a piece of cloth would involve relatively much less preparation time and less execution time; while both activities are known to be equally important, necessary and valuable.

If in 'socially necessary time' we also incorporate 'preparation' and 'waiting' time, during which the pertinent knowledge process continues(sustenance of labour-power), and hence incorporate the cost of maintaining a life of dignity during these relatively activity-lean times, then we put, for example, the cost of artisanal labour or home labour(by women) in a *dharmic* relationship with that of agricultural labour; resulting in a more equal method of costing and price determination.

Management and Control of the *Bazaar*

The Panchayat

The local *Panchayat*, comprised of elected experts representing different areas of knowledge/skill of producers and service-providers of the local area; will be the apex body in deciding policy issues and resolving contentious issues related to the *Bazaar*.

The Local Management Committee

The Local Management Committee(LMC) will be in direct and full control over all the day-to-day activities of the *Bazaar* and comprise of elected members of the local area representing all types of producers and service-providers relevant to the *Bazaar*, a majority of whom may preferably be women. Every member will have equal rights.

The structure of the LMC will be determined by local conditions and there will be no over-representation or under-representation of any section of producers/service-providers.

This Committee will be in charge of administering the *Bazaar*, including long and short-term planning and management. It will decide(dynamically) on the 'terms of trade' among the various participating constituents of the *Bazaar*.

Capital inputs into the *Bazaar* will be planned and regulated by the LMC through a *Gram Kosh and Vastu Bandar* (treasury/warehouse/seed bank). All transactions within and without the *Bazaar* will be in Lokamudra (appropriately designed and engineered digital technology, such as “tokens” created on Ethereum) which, by its very nature will be largely “cashless” . It will also transact in terms of seeds, fertilizers, pesticide and other locally-required inputs.

The LMC will decide the extent of short-term and long-term financial holding in Lokamudra that would be required as well as plan and execute short-term and long-term capital mobilization; for the effective conduct of the *Bazaar*. The 'terms of trade' of this *Gram Kosh and Vastu Bandar* would also be set out by the LMC and would act primarily to offset over-production or shortfall in necessary inputs while helping sustain livelihoods.

Capital

Lokamudra

The Lokamudra pool of each local *Lokavidya Samaj* shall be regulated by the Finance committee of the local *Panchayat* without detriment to the operations of the LMC which would regulate , through appropriate financial measures, the amount of money supply in the *Bazaar* so that the equilibrium of its operations is not adversely affected. A minimum of 10% to 20% of the *Lokamudra* generated , in the respective *Panchayat* region over a year, shall be added to the Reserve fund allowing for the volume of funds to grow thus enabling higher investments for capital and revenue expenditure.

There will be two levels of operation in Lokamudra.

1. Capitalisation:

- i. The modes and methods of capital infusion will be though a Toll/Collection scheme or as otherwise decided. Additionally, there could be direct “stock purchase” or contributions by members of

Lokavidya Samaj. Every member of the local *Lokavidya Samaj* will be allotted a certain number of *Lokamudra* as determined by the local *Panchayat*.

2. Transactions:

- i. All transactions within *Swarajya Bazaar* shall be in terms of *Lokamudra*. Transactions with the ‘external’ markets would at an appropriate ‘exchange’ rate.
- ii. All value-assignments of *Lokavidya* products/services shall be in terms of *Lokamudra* and overseen by the local *Panchayat* which would ensure that the basic principle of sustaining *Lokavidya*-based livelihoods is upheld at all times. (This is much like the RBI intervening to control exchange and interest rates to the advantage of the Market)
- iii. Trade/transactions in *Swarajya Bazaar* with entities outside of the *Samaj*, shall be in terms of *Lokamudra* so that there is never a “uncontrolled” flow of capital outside the *Swarajya Bazaar*. (All wealth created locally remains in the local area and capital investments in infrastructure or other developmental activities is always determined and overseen by the *Panchayats*)
- iv. Over a period of time it is expected that the *Lokamudra* “ holding” of each member of the *Samaj* will grow (after due deduction for value of goods and services supplied to the member through the *Bazaar*). Such “surpluses” can be used for enhancing productivity of the livelihood activity of the member , for investment in *Lokamudra* and/or for other consumptive expenses.
- v. Interest free (or very low interest)loans can also be given to members by the LMC while the bulk of the accumulated “wealth” will go to development of infrastructural facilities for the local *Samaj* (housing, sanitation, water supply, schooling, healthcare, energy utilities, roads etc) as decided by the local *Panchayat*.

External-marketing

Marketing of local produce and services, in non-local areas, will best be served by using the potential of Internet-based marketing. This will be a key component of an additional marketing methodology and the knowledge backing (of trends, possibilities, potentials, forecasting, disaster management etc) will also be based on inputs derived from the Internet.

An agency to manage this 'facility' will be set up at each local market area, manned by local youth who have achieved some training/competence in using and managing web resources.

How may we re-establish *Swarajya Bazaar*?

The farmers, who constitute the largest section of Lokavidya Samaj and are producers of food, can take the lead in establishing local *Swarajya Bazaars* and orienting other sections of the Samaj to actively take part in supporting, conducting and extending the scope of the *Bazaar*.

This may be initiated through a campaign using the following slogans/messages:

1. Buy locally produced goods and commodities and avail of locally available services provided by local artisans, skilled workers, service providers.
2. When goods and commodities produced locally are bought or local services and skills are availed of then , it provides gainful “employment” to and support for the lives and livelihoods of your brothers and sisters of the Samaj.
3. All goods, commodities and services required for ordinary life are being made locally and available in the *Swarajya Bazaar*. The producers of such goods and commodities are mostly self-employed.
4. When you buy such goods you support their lives and livelihoods. That is the *dharma* of
5. *Swarajya Bazaar*. Adopt this *dharma* and practise it.
6. Notice the large price difference between goods and commodities produced outside the local area or by industrial establishments and similar items produced locally. Why do you want to pay so much? And why do you want your hard earned money to go outside unnecessarily?
7. The path to a dignified life is one which is paved with the support of the local community of producers and consumers. Let us build, nurture and sustain such paths.
8. If we do this, our children need not beg for employment or welfare.

