Tongue-in-cheek

We often tend to take ourselves too seriously, so sometimes it is good to have a hearty laugh at ourselves. **Sainath** helps us along with this *collage* of buzz words and pretentious processes.

If this piece touches some remote corners within those of us who take our work, our communication and programmes seriously, it would be an appropriate moment of self-deprecation – and enable us to reflect on where we often get out of touch with reality.

If this piece touches a chord in the hearts of some of those who suspect our bona fides, and chortle in delight at the obvious pompousness of our rhetoric, these would then deride our actions and programmes. To those of who do so, it would be a good moment to reflect that while this is probably true for some of us, and possibly more than a few of us, it is not the whole truth. It is this kind of snideness and sneering that keeps the 'good' from getting along, from being able to converge and create a synergy in our efforts to make 'another world possible'.

So in good spirit let us have a laugh at ourselves to see how ridiculous we can sometimes seem.

Thank goodness this is a superficial understanding of our worth!

The Tower of Gabble

P Sainath makes the case for sustainable rhetoric

I have reflected in recent times on all the useful words that Development has taught me. It seems to me this is something Civil Society needs to ponder, right from the Grassroots to Emerging Leaders. At some point, a Knowledge-Based Society needs to learn something. What this might be, I do not yet know, but hopefully it is something that demarcates us from all those ignorance-based societies of these past millennia. Perhaps we need to have a Consultation of NGOs, Action Groups, CSOs and all other Stakeholders to work out the Best Practices in this regard.

These groups could then work towards a Summit , bringing together the best talent from amongst whom we create a Task Force which will then seek to Empower the Target Groups in each sector. The Summit itself will work out an overall Declaration to be translated into concrete Action Plans by Focus Groups. The Exploratory Sessions will be based on Interactive Communication, while ensuring complete Gender Equity.

Since by this time we might be running low on Sustainable Resources, we could initiate a number of Private-Public Partnerships to ensure that some share of the *Moloch* goes to at least a few Beneficiaries. The Livelihood Issues of the leaders of Non-Profits, for instance, are not unimportant. A few Micro-Credit Strategies could further be supplemented through Budgetary Allocations by other Facilitators (sometimes called governments). They could be roped in via a Plenary Session on Good Governance, Accountability and the importance of Networking.

Given the need to create an Alternative Dialogue with an Innovative Conceptual Framework, we could enlist the Traditional Knowledge of Development Consultants who would call Workshops to decide on how

to Mainstream Development Issues in the Media. We must, after all, examine Paradigm Shifts in the Development Debate while strengthening Conscientisation, Advocacy Outreach and Institution-Building.

It is best to begin with a Preparatory Meeting (at an Eco-Friendly locale) which can formulate a Mission Statement on how best to further the goals of Human Development and Natural Resource Management to build a better Common Future. Realisation of our Millennium Goals would undoubtedly require serious Capacity Building . Any number of Ideas on how to ensure Food Security for the participants in the Pre-Summit Brainstorming are welcome. Undoubtedly, in this era of the Information Society, the first session will be on ICTs and Poverty Alleviation.

There will be, of course, a Focus Session on Resource Mobilisation; (our friends in Self-Help Groups are asked to show a little restraint at this point). Deliberations resume after a quick Participatory Research Lunch. Germane to the Fund-Raising focus will be the Study of Issue-Based development of Institutional Linkages to the right Donors. The whole area throws up several Challenges/Opportunities that call for Strategic Planning aimed at ensuring Control/Access over Resources.

The next session can be devoted to looking at Integrated Strategies that adopt a Holistic Approach in ensuring Local Participation and Community Control. Case studies of Successful Interventions amongst Marginalised Communities will be presented by Subaltern Voices from the grassroots. A Core Group will do Environmental Impact Assessments of the radical new rhetoric. Our Documentation & Research Centre will preserve all relevant material in Gender-Sensitive Databases. All irrelevant material goes into the Final Report of the Conference.

About the Author : P Sainath is one of the two recipients of the A H Boerma Award, 2001, for his contributions to changing the nature of the development debate on food, hunger and rural development in the Indian media producers.