

From 'Alterity' towards 'Reciprocity': Sumak Kawsay-the Andean Wisdom Decolonizing 'Development & Progress' and Re-claiming the Roots

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Abstract : The 'good living' enshrined in the Andean concept of *Sumak Kawsay* i.e. *Buen Vivir* is an indigenous attempt to decolonize the epistemological traditions of South from the dominance of the Global North. It presents an alternative to the western notion of 'development and progress' by making the customs, traditions, languages and culture of the native; which have been looked down upon as an alterity- 'inferior', 'barbaric', 'uncivilized' and 'uncultured' by the western 'civilization', the basis of the National Constitution and Planning of Ecuador and Bolivia. The decolonizing concept of *Buen Vivir* seeks complementarity, reciprocity and solidarity between Human beings-Nature (*Pachamamism*) and Man-Woman (*Chacha-Warmi*) to build an egalitarian society with greater participation of all its citizens unlike the consumerist capitalistic individualistic model- the *raison d'être* for othering. *Buen Vivir* plan has an enormously participatory nature basis devolving the administration of local activities in accordance with local customs in the framework of autonomous processes through the citizens. In Ecuador, nearly 8200 people took part in over 100 public events and virtual meetings to construct the new National Plan for Good Living including, workshops, thematic and focal groups, radio marathons and virtual meetings, and meetings with delegates from national social organizations, sectorial councils and local assemblies etc.

For India, it can serve as the shift from 'looking outwards' policy to 'looking inwards' strengthening the pillars of south-south cooperation between India and Latin America where she can take participatory democracy lessons from this *Swadesi* concoction of balancing nature and its dependents. Therefore, this paper intends to study the Ecuadorian model emphasizing on how India can revisit its own abundant and rich ancient knowledge in order to create a concept of its own integrative development making her even more inclusive participatory and democratic in nature.

Index Terms- *Buen Vivir, Knowledge, Development, Reciprocity*¹.

"We the sovereign people of Ecuador... Acknowledging our age-old roots, forged by women and men of distinct peoples... Celebrating nature, the Pacha Mama, of which we are part and which is vital to our existence... have decided to build... a new form of citizen cohabitation, in diversity and harmony with nature, to achieve bien vivir, Sumak Kawsay."

Constitution of Ecuador, 2008

"...ethical-moral principles of a plural society ...the suma qamaña (Buen Vivir), ñandereko (harmonious life), teko kavi (good life), ivi maraei (land without evil) and the qhapaj ñan (noble path of life)"

Constitution of Bolivia, 2009

"For us in CONAMAQ¹, we are the promoters and creators of Buen Vivir. ...We have set it out in accordance with the wisdom of our achachilas, our forefathers. Since they lived in harmony with nature, they did not need wealth, minerals, or technology; now, this does not mean that we should not use technology if we have it. For us in CONAMAQ, technology and ancestral wisdom has to be combined in connection with respect for mother earth. Buen Vivir relates to self- government, this is the great struggle of the original indigenous peoples. We want to achieve autonomy, for us to be able to determine what to do with our resources"*

Benito, GMT and Curasavi, AMT, interview with M Lanza 2010

Colonization has deeply affected the celebration of the colonial subjects for generations and therefore many a time our thought processes as well as actions are deeply influenced by the unequal power relations which in turn destabilize an equal, efficient and effective participation of all the citizens hindering good governance in a country. Therefore, to promote and encourage equal participation of citizens in order to carry out an effective governance and sustainable development we need to constantly persevere to achieve harmony and an equilibrium of power among all human beings and above all, between human beings and nature. In the modern world, the gigantic wave of commercialization and materialist profit centred chronic capitalist development has nurtured consumerist individualistic minds and ego-centric selves with a tendency to dominate, subjugate and at times humiliate looking down upon the 'other' with a blindfolded ambition for a 'better living'. Therefore, to ensure effective participation of all the

citizens in a democracy we need to decolonize and redefine our notions of 'life', 'living', 'development' and 'progress' by deconstructing our power structures and incorporating these ancient wisdoms, newly derived concepts and redefinitions in our National Planning and policy making as well as implementation to give equal say to everyone in the process of decision making for attaining the goal of an inclusive collective integrative development; as participatory democracy models are based on the belief "that the very act of involvement is beneficial in that it permits all citizens, and not merely elites, to acquire a democratic political culture" (Deegan, 2002, p. 45). The development of a democratic nation can neither be measured by the uniform parameters of the traditional constructions given by the Northern countries nor the global south can continue to act as the passive recipient of the way of life in the North precisely because development can mean different things for different communities and regions and hence can have completely different connotations. In recent years, Latin America has made a crucial philosophical and ethical-political contribution instituting in two new constitutions of the Andean world, Bolivia and Ecuador, a new decolonizing doctrinal concept going beyond the classic rights and guarantees established in the framework of liberal constitutionalism. This is the concept of *Sumak Kawsay*, conventionally translated as "*Buen Vivir*" or "*Vivir Bien*" in Spanish and "Living Well" or "Good Life" in English. It is a principle which means life in harmony and equilibrium- the harmony between men and women, different communities and above all between mankind and environment of which it is an integral part. It means eliminating all sorts of prejudices and exploitations between people as well as respecting nature and preserving its equilibrium.

The seeds of colonial thinking of Sepulveda or Tomas de Aquino of the 15th-16th century grounded on the principle of superiority of white men and western 'civilization' over the 'barbaric' Latin American indigenous people led to the debate of 'civilization' and 'barbarism' in the 19th century; the struggle against which continues even today in forms of social movements of indigenous people striving for their rights in Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Nicaragua and other countries in the region. The indigenous culture, customs, and traditions were considered 'barbaric', 'inferior', 'uncultured' and antagonistic to 'civilization' leading to their marginalization in the society as an alterity. Moreover, the native woman suffered double oppression due to the colonial/neocolonial patriarchal tendencies prevalent in the society; being an indigenous and a female at the same time- 'the other' of the 'other' or 'the alterity' in the 'alterity':

Before the arrival of the Jesuit Missions of the Chiquitos in the 17th and 18th century "... among my Guaraní people, there was no division of man vs. woman like in modern societies. [But after colonization], the indigenous man no longer sees the woman as an equal, but [he] is being trained by Catholicism to see her as an object of exploitation" (Hurtado) (Lanza 2012).

In the 21st century, the *pachasofia* of *Buen Vivir* the five principles of relatedness, complementarity, correspondence, reciprocity and cyclicity between all forms of matter can be seen as a revolution of decolonization of the knowledge, a non-violent transition not causing any uproar or tremble, however it is going to have a huge impact like the thawing of an icecap, forming a creek that grows as it descends mountains turning into a perennial mighty river- it is a 'silent revolution²' becoming the liberating force for the other- not only making it the stakeholder ensuring its participation but also gradually moving in the direction of annihilating the entire process of othering itself. One of the fundamental aspects of *Buen Vivir* is the proposition of an egalitarian relationship between society, individual and environment that is completely distinct from — it can be even called antagonistic to — the one manifested with the advent of modernity and the occidental notion of 'development'. Although, on the contrary the Salazarian theory believes in "emancipatory modernity" that is a proposal for an alternative society which cannot be constructed without drawing from the emancipatory elements developed in the modern society. Therefore, according to him not all of modernity can be reduced to the exploitation of capital; rather, modernity must be nuanced and its various pieces laid bare—some of which can be taken up to create another form of a society which *Sumak Kawsay (Buen Vivir)* aspires to witnessing an amalgamation of both traditional practices and ecologically sustainable modern technological innovations. It is now formulated in the constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia where the environment is presented as Mother Earth including a catalogue of questions relative to the identity and culture of the natives as well as other issues relating to water, global warming, food crisis, energy paradigms, agro-fuels, industrialization, development, consumerism, woman empowerment and popular sovereignty.

The trajectory of the native concept of the Quechuan *Sumak Kawsay (suma qamaña* in Aymara, and *ñandereco* in Guaraní) to the National Plan of *Buen Vivir* (Good Living) in Ecuador, Bolivia and Colombia-where a native philosophy becomes the backbone of the national constitution challenging the prevalent dominant western notion of 'development and progress' travels to the rest of the countries of Latin America can be seen as the nineteenth century vision of Pan Latin Americanism of Jose Martí gradually taking shape. Martí's article "*Nuestra América*" published in 1891 in New York as a direct response to the First Pan - American Conference in 1890 was a clarion call for unity and common identity based on the indigenous native knowledge for Latin Americans warning them against the looming danger of neo-colonialism and imperialistic tendencies of the United States. Martí expounded that no foreign power or concept can completely define or comprehend the culture and way of life of a remote land nor their laws can teach the esoteric elements of native culture, therefore, the only possible way of effective governance in Latin America is by deriving and joining diverse original ideas from the native concepts of the subcontinent itself. He expounded that the colonial thinking has been transmitted to the Latin American minds pointing at the ironical stark reality that '*the young go out into the world wearing the Yankee or French spectacles*' instead of those of the country they are attempting to govern. All throughout his life through his revolutionary writings Martí persevered to create a Pan - Latin American identity in order to liberate Latin America from the clutches of its powerful exploitative neighbour North America and the former colonizer Europe. His prime concern was the construction of an ideal Latin American community constituting of friendly neighbours having cordial interactive relations amongst them build on the basis of a common identity and a shared history liberating the continent from both European and North American interventions and influences. Martí proposed a cosmivision that was rooted in the cultures of the ethnic groups and decolonization of knowledge of the South American continent where progress was not measured in terms of

materialistic escalation rather mutual harmonious co-existence between the human being and his surrounding environment was the prime parameter for development.

“A lo que es, allí donde se gobierna, hay que atender para gobernar bien; y el buen gobernante en América no es el que sabe cómo se gobierna el alemán o el francés, sino el que sabe con qué elementos está hecho su país, y cómo puede ir guiándolos en junto, para llegar, por métodos e instituciones nacidas del país mismo, a aquel estado apetecible donde cada hombre se conoce y ejerce, y disfrutan todos de la abundancia que la Naturaleza puso para todos en el pueblo que fecundan con su trabajo y defienden con sus vidas.....Injértese en nuestras Repúblicas el mundo; pero el tronco ha de ser el de nuestras Repúblicas.....Ni el libro europeo, ni el libro yanqui, daban la clave del enigma hispanoamericano.....Cuando aparece en Cojimar un problema, no van a buscar la solución a Danzig.....Leen para aplicar, pero no para copiar.” (Marti 1891)

To govern well, one must attend closely to the reality of the place that is governed. In America, the good ruler does not need to know how the German or Frenchman is governed, but what elements his own country is composed of and how he can marshal them so as to reach, by means and institutions born from the country itself, the desirable state in which every man knows himself and is active, and all men enjoy the abundance that Nature, for the good of all, has bestowed on the country they make fruitful by their labour and defend with their lives..... Let the world be grafted onto our republics, but we must be the trunk..... No Yankee or European book could furnish the key to the Hispanoamerican enigma..... When a problem arises in Cojimar they no longer seek the solution in Danzig..... they read in order to apply what they read, not copy it.” (Our translation)

Sumak Kawsay, as a concept under construction, aims to shift the mindset of production and consumption against growth-based occidental development. It is a conceptual elaboration of an indigenous-centered project which is gradually being brought into practice through policy making in response to years of colonial and neocolonial rule based on the exploitation of natural resources in detriment of the planet and the indigenous communities living in regions rich in oil, gas, minerals, and biodiversity. Sociologist María Eugenia Choque has been analyzing the concept of *Buen Vivir* since the 1980s in the Taller de Historia Oral Andina (THOA, Andean Oral History Workshop) and within the Julián Apaza University Movement from the perspective of Indianist³ ideology—and she understands *Buen Vivir* as part of “a framework to reconstruct indigenous authorities through research based on oral history. What we did was work the issue of *Buen Vivir* as a process of political, economic, social and cultural well being, from an approach of recovering self-esteem and identity” (Lanza 2012). *Buen Vivir* is rooted in communitarian thinking and its key principles are:

- a. A criticism of consumerism: capitalist and individualistic society.
- b. A proposal for ecological awareness that emphasizes the necessity to build a harmonious relationship with nature.

Buen Vivir is also the reconstruction of indigenous or native identity, recovering their values or the “return to our own path” nevertheless at the same time it does not divorce itself completely from the modern technological and scientific advancements.

“...we have to salvage our customs, the culture of our forebears; only this way will we stop being a colony, only this way will we decolonize, only by salvaging the culture from before, in order to get back to what was before. But we also need to look at what is new [the products of modernity that we associate with western society] such as advances in technology and new laws” (Huanto and Mamani) (Lanza 2012)

In this context, a document from the Ministry of Foreign Relations of the Plurinational State of Bolivia explains the relationship between *Sumak Kawsay* & ‘development’ (Lanza 2012):

“...for the construction of Buen Vivir, talking about development is not useful as the latter is related to living better; we need to create the material and spiritual conditions to construct and maintain Buen Vivir, in the sense of a harmonious life under ongoing construction. ...The introduction of development slowly annihilates Buen Vivir, because it fragments the communal and cultural life of our communities by doing away with the basis for subsistence as well as our capabilities and knowledge to be able to satisfy our own needs as well as those of Mother Nature” (Plurinational State of Bolivia, Ministry of Foreign Relations 190). According to the Bartolina Sisa National Confederation of Campesino, Indigenous, and Native Women of Bolivia, Buen Vivir embraces not only the collective view but also relations between men and women. “The development proposals arise out of respect for our Mother Earth, Pachamama, and respecting ourselves as the owners of these territories. As women, our emancipation is part of the construction of Buen Vivir in the exercise of and participation with gender equity in all political, union, social, public spaces...” (Strategic Plan 2008-2013).

From Extractivism to Pachamamism

Latin American continent has been an object of foreign gaze ever since after it’s encounter with the ‘new world’ being an abode of natural resources indispensable to fuel the train of industrialization, modernization and development; it has been trapped in a perverse state of affairs known as “the paradox of plenty” or “the resource curse” and the region’s history tells us that this extractivist economic model that is dependent on the large-scale removal (or “extraction”) and exportation of natural resources has led to widespread poverty, caused recurrent economic crises, inequalities and consolidated “rent-seeking” mentalities in the region. Therefore, to achieve *Sumak Kawsay* and stop exploitation of natural resources in the region the Ecuadorian government took an extraordinary decision- a commitment from the very outset to defend the people’s right to live in a healthy environment and respect

the rights of the Nature which made Ecuador a benchmark being the first country on Earth to recognize Nature's rights in its national constitution. Later, Bolivia also enforced the Law of Mother Nature in 2010. A central element of the approach is the belief to overcome the anthropocentric or Newtonian world view in order to understand that all human beings are inseparable components of a larger community that is Mother Earth- the *Pachamama*, in which everything is alive. Therefore, the foremost concern of *Buen Vivir* is to revive the experience of the ancient people, restore and reclaim the 'Culture of Life' and the spirit of inter-dependence inculcating respect for the *Pachamama*, where all living beings are *uywas*- the children of the mother nature and the cosmos.

In words of Josef Estermann (2012) "*Suma qamaña* or *allin kawsay* reflects a non-anthropocentric or biologicistic conception of life, but instead, one that is a cosmocentric and holistic. This means that, for indigenous worldviews and philosophies, there is no separation or dichotomy between what is alive ("living beings") and what (according to West) is not ("inert bodies"). The cosmos or *Pacha* is like a living organism whose "parts" are intimately interrelated and interdependent so that life or "liveliness" is defined by the degree of balance or harmony between them. Therefore, this differs fundamentally from the Western paradigm of individualism or atomism that departs from the self-sufficiency of a particular "substance" and affirms – in capitalist economic theory – a conflictive and competitive anthropology."

Hence, *Buen Vivir* planning endeavours to shift from current extractivism to *pachamamism* by promoting new non-polluting industries and diversifying exports based on bio-products and ecological services which will significantly relieve pressure on the environment in the long-term. It also aims to build "eco-cities" implementing principles of environmental justice and incorporating the minimum criteria for resource use and conservation in both production activities and consumption patterns. By 2030, Ecuador also intends to have a germplasm bank or management program which will include all the species.

Dismantling patriarchy for women' participation

In the *Buen Vivir* model, the concept of *Chacha-Warmi* offers women a space for struggle against gender inequality and a fight for equal participation, since it seeks complementarity, reciprocity and inter-dependence between men and women, appealing to the reconstitution of balance and harmony which are believed to have existed in gender relations before colonization. Thus, *Chacha-Warmi* is posited as the pathway to rebuild what was destroyed by colonization and imperialism, specifically social relations in wider context and gender relations in particular. Here, we refer to the cosmological concept of dual essence in all elements of nature combining the feminine and the masculine in a harmonious fashion very similar to the concept of *ardhanareeshwar* in India, here women is not considered inferior to men rather both are equal and essential components and complete each other. It talks about reconstituting the indigenous woman's strength of bringing forth life. Choquehuanca (2010) states: "The role of the native indigenous woman is becoming more and more crucial. When no longer treated as victims, dependents, minors, the wisdom of women and their strength to give life and create life constitutes an invaluable alternative for future generations" (2010 b). Here, 'give life' or 'create life' does not only mean playing instrumental role in perpetuation of human species rather it also refers to work activities like animal husbandry, livestock, farming, traditional medicines, etc. all other fields of natural science in which women play a pivotal role.

This concept is well articulated in the proposal for the Bolivian Economic and Social Development Plan for 2010–2015. It explicitly sets out the task of dismantling patriarchy defining it as the task of "...transforming the system of domination, subordination, and of oppression based on the unequal distribution of power between men and women, where men control the most important aspects of society (the economy, politics, public affairs, and work, etc.). It also demonstrates how essential is to initiate "creating institutionalism founded on equality, decolonization and the dismantling of patriarchy in the State and in society" (Ministerio de Planificación 2010 Propuesta de Plan de Desarrollo p16). The Plurinational State objective is "...to attain an egalitarian democracy with gender equity through decolonization and the dismantling of patriarchy to construct a just and harmonious society, without discrimination or exclusion, and with greater participation" (Ministerio de Planificación 2010 Propuesta de Plan de Desarrollo p16).

The Government of Bolivia in order to accomplish this objective and to facilitate an egalitarian participation of women in all walks of life created the Unit for the Dismantling of Patriarchy as a part of the Vice Ministry of Decolonization: The aim of this unit is to "complement the decolonization processes begun by the Plurinational State." with special attention towards " (a) making visible the social relations of domination that respond to the patriarchal order; (b) Destabilize and put this patriarchal domination order in crisis mode; and (c) Transform the social relations of domination in order to constitute a just and harmonious society. Therefore, it not only addresses or solves the matters concerning woman but also works for changing the mentality of the society.

Magdalena León (2012) elaborates on how indigenous women have been systematically referred to in negative terms and on the assumption of deficiencies and submission, both from a perspective of denouncement as from implicit capitalist values and principles whereas the *Sumak Kawsay* approach emphasizes on their contributions transforming this notion by adding visibility and acknowledgment and revaluing indigenous women.

Deficiency approach Indigenous women are:	Contribution and potentialities approach Indigenous women are:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the poorest • the most exploited • the most discriminated against • the most socially excluded • the most illiterate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preservers of expertise and ancient practices for <i>Buen Vivir</i> • Agents of economies for life

Fig. 1- Revaluing Indigenous women for ‘Buen Vivir’ (Leon 2012: pp25)

In broader terms, work or labour is the key field for economic acknowledgment, visibility and revaluation. In the light of *Buen Vivir*, the Ecuadorian Constitution the product of citizen’s revolution was approved in 2008 and the subsequent public policies such as the 2009- 2013 National Plan for *Buen Vivir* have included substantial redefinitions that represent a historical milestone on the matter. The very concept of work and its reach has been revised recovering it as the axis of the economy giving visibility to its various existing forms whether in a dependency or autonomous relation building room for self-subsistence and human care activities. It is an essential aspect for a country with a diverse employment and labour structure requiring new mechanisms to strengthen the sectors and initiatives that have been overlooked, marginalized or even stigmatized such as peasantry, independent freelance or daily wage works in general (formerly considered informal) and family unpaid work. The acknowledgment and reinterpretation of such a reality can be translated into public policy measures at different levels. For instance, a change was introduced not only in the magnitude but also in the definition of the Human Development Bonus —a conditioned allowance for the people living in extreme poverty (mothers and elderly) that has been distributed approximately since a decade. Presently, in the case of mothers it is no longer been given as a subsidy rather as a partial retribution to unpaid domestic work. The new Constitution of Ecuador significantly contributes in reversing gender inequality, which is one of the biggest social issues faced by the nation. It differentiates between productive work from domestic and reproductive work. The Constitution also recognizes unpaid work for self-employed workers or care-givers as well as guarantees progressive social security for people performing unsalaried labour of which a large majority is of women. Although, the regulatory frameworks must be reorganized still as they not only fail to encourage but often even impede the collective organization of work.

How Ecuador encourages a participatory citizenry through *Sumak Kawsay*?⁴

In Ecuador, the sectorial policy agendas focus on national planning on each area of the Government; the new government which is an outcome of the Citizen’s Revolution which combined proposals by the Andean and Amazonian people making the concept of *Sumak Kawsay* the defining purpose of public policy. The first Government Program was presented in 2006, PAIS Alliance Movement in which began the discussion on *Buen Vivir*. In 2007, for the first time in an official Ecuadorian government document, Senplades used the concept of *Buen Vivir* as the basis for the National Development Plan of 2007-2010. The creation of the new Constitution of the Republic in 2007-08 took the concept to its next height. Enriched by the enormous social debate generated in Montecristi, the concept became the backbone of the Constitution which was approved in a referendum by majority vote of the Ecuadorian citizens. The foremost responsibility of each member in the society laid by the new Constitution is to *promote the common good and place general interest before individual interest*; it was made a prime concern to make the Ecuadorian population realize the primacy of collective values over individual values (Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, 2008: Article 83).

The National Plan for Good Living has an enormously participatory basis. First, it was created in part under a government program that was constructed collectively. Nearly five thousand people contributed their ideas, which were distilled in to the form of a document. At the second stage, nearly 8200 people took part in over 100 public events and virtual meetings to construct the new National Plan.

Plan for Good Living.

- Dialogues for Good Living (5160 participants).
- Workshops, thematic and focal groups (1071 participants).
- Oversight mechanisms and observatories (605 participants).
- Participatory forecasting workshops at the zonal level (240 participants).
- Meetings with delegates from national social organizations, sectorial councils and local assemblies (276 participants).
- International seminar (780 participants).
- Radio marathons and virtual meetings (100 participants).

The Constitution of Ecuador links planning directly to the building of citizens’ rights. The National Decentralized Participatory Planning System (SNDPP) was created in the 2008 Constitution (Article 279)

The National Decentralized Participatory Planning System (SNDPP) comprises the National Planning Council, its technical secretariat (Senplades), the sectorial public policy councils of the executive branch, national equality councils, planning councils of decentralized autonomous governments, citizens' sectorial councils and other mechanisms for participation. The basic units for participation in the system are communities, communes, hamlets, neighborhoods and urban parishes (Article 248). The system is governed by the 2008 Constitution, the General Public Planning and Finance Code (COPFP - 2010), the General Law on Citizen Participation (2010) and the General Code on Territorial Organization, Autonomies and Decentralization (COOTAD - 2010). (Good Living National Plan 2013-17. Pg-16)

In addition to the National Plan for Good Living, the SNDPP provides subsidiary planning instruments for the implementation of the Plan which are coordinated in three different ways:

(a) *Substantively*: as planning and finance instruments that orient public institutions in their mandatory compliance with guarantees and rights.

(b) *Vertically*: establishing the hierarchical ranking of the different levels of government; and (c) *Horizontally*: establishing processes for public entities at each level of government.

The planning instruments now have included a map of the population with the greatest needs in the country: the Atlas of Inequalities (Senplades, 2013b) which reflects Ecuador's progress regarding economic and social rights. The Atlas answers the following questions: Who has been left out or left behind in exercising their rights? Where are they located within our national territory? What are the structural causes of the gaps encountered? It is a tool for a multidimensional analysis of poverty, education, health and nutrition, employment, housing, social security, productive assets, land tenure, gender-based violence and time usage. The Atlas of Inequalities is a watch dog to monitor these inequalities. It is an instrument to generate warning flags so that the public administration can take the necessary actions. In addition to the national planning agency, whose primary tool is the National Plan for Good Living, there are three other planning instances that guarantee coordination and coherence: a. Territorial coordination, b. Inter-sectorial coordination, and c. Institutional coordination.

On the other hand, Ecuador has transformed its budget allocation pursuant to constitutional mandates where social investment is a higher priority than servicing the foreign debt. This social idea of solidarity and redistribution is different from the Aristotelian ideal of the Good Life as it is not a new development paradigm but a social liberating alternative where Economic growth is desirable in a society but its distributive and redistributive patterns are of utmost importance.

Conclusion

The global South is living through a decisive period in the history of mankind. More than mere stakeholders we are now witnesses of the northern countries' crisis and we now instead of imitating them aspire to see ourselves in a mirror, exactly as we are. The *Buen Vivir* Plan based on the native wisdom of *Sumak Kawsay* is a melting pot of an unfolding cultural, agrarian and knowledge revolution which has already kick started a transforming transition in Ecuador. During the first term of the Citizens' Revolution, income was redistributed and poverty was reduced- one million fifty thousand Ecuadorians ceased to be poor in terms of income between December 2006 and December 2012. According to the report "Social Panorama of Latin America 2012" published by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2012a), Ecuador becomes the country with the greatest reductions in inequalities in Latin America between 2007 and 2011 (by eight percent). The reduction of income differentials is a significant achievement for a region that has the planet's greatest social inequalities (UNDP, 2013). They have achieved it by nearly tripling tax collection without increasing taxes, but by simply collecting from the wealthiest. Amidst pressures for greater fiscal prudence, when the demands of the people unmet for so long are being satisfied institutionally it enhances citizen's trust in the public sector ensuring greater participation in public policy. Ecuador has become an exemplary model in front of the entire world showing how power liberated from the oligarchic shackles becomes the instrument of the people's service by acknowledging not only the rights of the people but also the rights of the Mother Earth. It has also demonstrated that building a proactive society with participatory citizenry with shared responsibility on the basis of ancient native philosophy is not about returning to some idealized past, but rather facing the problems of contemporary societies based on learning from our roots.

The itinerary of *Sumak Kawsay* to *Buen Vivir* can become a major source of learning for India, especially the present Government which is toiling intensively with the aim of decolonizing her modern epistemology and developmental approach in order to revive and reclaim her rich traditional heritage and philosophy incorporating it in National planning and policy making to make herself even more inclusive, sustainable and participatory. As, Madhav Gadgil and Romila Thapar (1990) rightly remark that India needs to focus her attention to her traditional relationship with nature: "*India obviously needs a new strategy of resource use and a new common belief system to hold the society together and put this strategy into operation.*" (Nair S.M.)

The earth in Atharvaveda has various denominations to describe its various attributes such as *Vasudha* (containing all wealth), *Jagato Niveshani* (abode of the entire world-She is not the property of only human beings but home for all the biotic and abiotic elements) and is considered sacred just like in Bolivia⁵ and Ecuador. She is respected as *mata bhoomi/prithvi mata* (Mother Earth): "माताभूमिः पुत्रोऽहंपृथिव्या" ("Mata bhoomi putro aham prithivya"-The earth is my mother and I am her son.) (*Prithvisukta*: Atharvaveda)

In ancient Vedic traditions, the human society is not seen as an organisation- it is an organism or a growing living system and the entire world is a family *Vasudev Kutumbhikam*. The goal of human life was to work for *Sarva Bhuta Hita* (Good/well being of all

the matter) where the common good takes precedence over personal benefits including the protection of the environment, the support of the poor and the needy, the oppressed, women and children and even those yet to be born. The elements of complementarity, reciprocity and solidarity are inert in the concepts like *atmavat sarvbhuteshu* i.e. all matter is the reflection of 'the self' which means that there is no room for alterity as all other elements are the reflection or manifestation of the 'self' and should be treated as treating oneself with the main objective of *sarve bhavantu sukhinah* i.e. (may all be happy). For India, *Buen Vivir* can serve as the shift from 'looking outwards' policy to 'looking inwards' for preparing a *Swadesi* concoction of balancing nature and its dependents for redefining or may be recreating her own 'developmental' and 'modernity' parameters. On 20th March 2017, one such progressive move came in the form of Uttarakhand High court verdict which regarded Ganga and Yamuna rivers as 'living human entity'. However, on Uttarakhand Government's plea the decision was put on stay by the Supreme Court on the pretext of many legal and administrative complexities⁶.

In fact, the majority of tribal communities like Santhals, Gonds, Todas, Kotas, Irulas, Apatanis, Jamatis, Khasis, Meiteis, Angami, Chakesang, Konyak, etc. have rich traditional wisdom and age-old practices of managing natural resources. The term *adivasi* for tribal in India is not only for human beings but also forests, rivers, winds and water that have existed since *adikaal* (oldest times). For instance, in the worldview of the Santhali tribe found mainly in the states of Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Tripura and Orissa in India, the nature holds a highly esteemed position as human beings are regarded as offspring of the *Chalapachho* (Mother Earth) and *Singhbonga* (Sun God). Since, they follow animistic religion *Sarna*-the religion of holy woods, their "bongas" (gods) do not reside in temples and their moral precepts do not come from *dharmagrantha* (written scriptures). Their cultural legacy is not confined to building temples but the nature as a whole has a sacred place in their culture, for example, their most revered and sacred plant for Santali tribe is the *Karam* plant. Their rich cultural legacies are not restricted to books but it is evident in every aspect of their lives, such as folk songs, dance, paintings etc. *Buen Vivir* lays a perfect example for not only giving the tribal rights a place in the Constitution but also involving their local philosophies, traditions and customs in making policies and plans for them using their indigenous language, concepts and terminologies in order to encourage their active participation in the process of governance. A proper representation in decision making process of the country will empower the tribal communities strengthening ethos of Indian democracy ensuring reciprocity grounded on the relationship of interdependence and equity between individual, his/her culture and natural surroundings leaving no room for any type of alterity characterized by indigenous parameters of 'development and progress'.

In India, the majority of campaigns regarding woman empowerment and environment conservation have primarily revolved around the words like 'save', 'protect', 'safeguard', 'secure', etc. Such usage signifies that colonial thinking of superiority- the dichotomy of powerful we/us and weak they/them is deeply embedded in our minds and we do not even realize it. This actor-recipient relationship devoid of any sense of equity and complementarity between man-woman and Human beings-nature creates the imbalance leading to the process of othering consciously or unconsciously. Similarly, the discrimination between productive-domestic, salaried- unsalaried, permanent-temporary works and unequal wages for men and women also lead to alterity. Therefore, *Buen Vivir* demonstrates that the government policy should not only aim at addressing woman or environment related issues but also targets at changing the way people think i.e. in order to decolonize our citizens for fostering an egalitarian participation we need to first decolonize our national planning and policies just like Ecuador and Bolivia, both in words and action, cautiously, to become a participatory democracy in its true sense.

The spirituality and mutual co-existence are a common theme in India among various aboriginal religious traditions like *Sanatan Dharm*, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and religions which came to India like Zoroastrianism, Islam and Christianity. India has sheltered religious refugees from all over the world on the lines of age-old Vedic traditions what Vivekanand called universal acceptance and Pt. Deendayal Upadhyaya denominated as the spirit of *ekatma manavdarshan* (seeing the reflection of the 'self' in each human). Therefore, the spirit of harmonious religious and cultural co-existence in India is beyond or something more than the scope of 'secularism'⁷ and cannot be completely defined by it as the term singularly talks about separation of 'state' from 'religion' maintaining silence on the other side of the story- a cordial colourful pluricultural relationship between State and 'co-existing religions'. In countries like India where each and every public employ can openly practice his belief on his office desk unlike France which completely bans any use of religious symbols by government employees in office hours, both are a completely two contradictory models of secularism. Nevertheless, the unplanned way in which the Government of India initiated the debate over dropping the term 'secularism' from the Indian constitution was problematic as the alternative concept introduced *Panthnirpekshta* (Changing the translation of Secularism from *dharmnirpekshta* to *panthnirpekshta* highlighting the difference between religion and dharm, as many Indic thinkers strongly believe that *panth* not *dharm* can be the direct translation of religion in Hindi and Sanskrit) was neither extensively discussed nor very well percolated the different sections of society before initiating the debate on replacing the term secularism which resulted in a sense of insecurity in a large section of religious minorities. It also gave its opposition an undue opportunity of generating a 'fear of marginalization' unleashing a systematized propaganda campaign that the minority is being considered as the 'other' in its own country. The argument presented by the responsibility holders in the Government was the inability of the concept to express the Idea of India but neither they introduced a native terminology nor redefined the term, thus leaving a void and consequently more room for confusion and miscommunication. In this context, the participatory planning process of the Ecuadorian National Plan for *Buen Vivir* can be an example for our Government in how to deconstruct, redefine or reclaim concepts and cultural tradition for creating conducive environment in the country for the introduction, discussion and acceptance of new concepts, redefinitions or terminologies in order to emancipate our epistemology from the dominance of North-centric concepts and western notions through intricate planning and greater public participation at each level.

The policy of *Buen Vivir* has demonstrated to the entire world that an intrinsic participatory planning is the prime requirement for accomplishing the goals and visions of any Government legislature, plan or policy. Another important 'moolmantra' or the success

of a policy is patience as the revolution to decolonize knowledge structures and the thought processes of the citizens is also a step towards reciprocity, complementarity and solidarity for facilitating an egalitarian participation of all the citizens in a democracy. Therefore, it is a herculean task and cannot be achieved with the blink of an eye; it is not an overnight transformation rather a project under construction in which Latin America and India can always learn lessons from each other revisiting each other's abundant and rich ancient knowledge fostering an inclusive integrative development of its citizens and their environment through a participatory democratic process.

End notes:

1. The National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyu is a Bolivian indigenous organization. Its organizational form corresponds to the ancestral communitary structure of the ayllus (grass roots communities) and markas (groups of ayllus). The strength and mobilization capacity of this organization has made it one of the cornerstones of the current process of transformation in Bolivia.
2. "silent revolution" is a term coined by US researcher Ronald Inglehart in 1977.
3. Indianist ideology is an ideology that values indigenous cultures over and against the values of Western culture. This ideology believes that human society should go back to the indigenous ways of economy, organization, health, etc. as a way to live in harmony with nature.
4. This entire section is based on the information from the Ecuadorian Government's document National Plan for Good Living 2013-2017. (Summarized version)
5. In 2010 Bolivia created the constitutional Law of Mother Earth which holds the land as sacred living system with rights to be protected. See <http://www.dailygood.org/story/1337/bolivia-s-law-of-mother-earth-ryan-hewlett/>
<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/sc-stays-uttarakhand-hc-order-on-ganga-yamuna-living-entity-status-4740884/>
6. <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/sc-stays-uttarakhand-hc-order-on-ganga-yamuna-living-entity-status-4740884/>
7. According to the Oxford dictionary and Google secularism means 'not connected with religious or spiritual matters/ (of clergy) not subject to or bound by religious rule; not belonging to or living in a monastic or other order' and 'the principle of separation of the state from religious institutions.'

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3. Ministerio de Planificación 2010 Propuesta de Plan de Desarrollo Económico y Social para el Vivir Bien 2010-2015
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