Concept Note for Karunar Kheti Trust

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Abstract

In this concept note we present our trust's vision for the empowerment of rural communities of Assam based on the interconnected areas of education, healthcare, and livelihood. In doing so we will also note our core conviction and its related worldview that gave birth to this vision, and its emergent plans of action and the related resources. We will also note the models for the financial sustainability of our trust.

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Contents

1 Introduction **4**

2 The Trustees **4**
2.1 Dr. Arjun Trivedi 4
2.2 Mr. Mineswar Dutta 5

3 Our Core Conviction and Its Related Worldview of Thought-Action **6**
3.1 Indian Agrarian Crisis 7
3.2 Formation of Our Trust 8

4 Empowerment of Communities: A General Perspective **9**
4.1 Education-Healthcare-Livelihood 9
4.1.1 Education 10
4.1.2 Healthcare 11
4.1.3 Livelihood 12
4.2 Education-Healthcare-Livelihood-Listening 12
4.3 Ground-Realities-Institutions-Specialized-Knowledge-Skills 13
4.4 Education-Healthcare-Livelihood-Listening-Ground-Realities-Institutions-Specialized-Knowledge-Skills 14

5 Empowerment of the Rural Communities of Assam **14**
5.1 Education 15
5.1.1 Education: Action Plan and Current Resources 16
5.2 Healthcare 18
5.2.1 Healthcare: Action Plan and Current Resources 19
5.3 Livelihood 22
5.3.1 Livelihood: Action Plan and Current Resources 25

6 Model School and Vision of Larger Education Reform **28**
6.1 Model School 28
6.1.1 Build School with Community Participation 29
6.1.2 Emphasis on Learning How To Learn 30
6.1.3 Dynamic Learning Balance: Academic - Vocational - Life Skills 31
6.1.4 Youth Engagement Center 32
6.2 Educational Reform in Selenghat 33

7 Sustainability Models for the Trust **33**
7.1 Direct Financial Input 34
7.2 Indirect Financial Input 35

8 Summary **35**

References **37**

Appendix A Resume for Dr. Arjun Trivedi **41**

1 Introduction

Karunar Kheti Trust, which in Assamese means The Cultivation of Love and Compassion Trust, was founded on July 30, 2019 by our founders and trustees, Dr. Arjun Trivedi and Mr. Mineswar Dutta. The formation of this trust has emerged as a result of them feeling increasingly compelled to converge their friendship and resources to respond to the many challenges and opportunities faced by the rural communities of Assam and of which they are a part, and whose fabric of life they have deeply experienced. As such, this concept note has been written humbly from the depths of such personal experiences. (An introduction to Dr. Trivedi and Mr. Dutta is presented in Section 2 titled The Trustees.)

In this note we will provide a comprehensive introduction to our trust, ranging from our deepest motivation to the details of the emergent plans of action and their related set of resources. Given the depths of the experiences from which this trust is born and the related vastness of the landscape of thought-action, it is not possible to make this introduction either comprehensive or complete using just written words. Therefore, this introduction is also an invitation for a more wholesome and sustained engagement with our trust, which includes in depth conversations and direct experiences within the context of our communities, so that we can share the depths of such experiences and, together, work in the rich landscape of thought-action.

Readers that are interested purely in the details of the emergent plans of action and their related set of resources can directly skip to the relevant sections: Section 5, Empowerment of the Rural Communities of Assam, presents, within the context of the communities our trust is going to be based in, the landscape of our plan of action in the interconnected areas of education, healthcare, and livelihood. Within this section, the interested reader can directly skip to the respective action plans and resources in these areas in Sections 5.1.1, 5.2.1, and 5.3.1, respectively. Section 6, Model School and Vision of Larger Education Reform, presents our immediate stepping stone in the field of education. Finally, Section 7, Sustainability Models for the Trust, presents our models for financial sustainability.

This note begins with introducing our trustees in Section 2. Thereafter the rest of the note unfolds, beginning with Section 3 where we present our core conviction and its guiding worldview of thought-action. (The hyphen is used extensively in this note to not just merely join two or words to make a compound adjective, but, more importantly, to stress the deep synergistic relationship between the meaning of these words. Such hyphenation is a valuable tool for our writing to express the particular nature of thought-action that emerges from our worldview.)

2 The Trustees

Dr. Arjun Trivedi and Mr. Mineswar Dutta are currently the two trustees of the trust and also its founders. Dr. Trivedi also serves as the trust's president and executive director, while Mr. Dutta is its chief operating officer (COO).

2.1 Dr. Arjun Trivedi

Dr. Trivedi (BSc Electricial Engineering, PhD Physics) has worked in some of the world's leading scientific, engineering, and their related technical institutions: he has worked as an engineer for General Electric Company, USA and as a research scientist at the world's cutting-edge research

institutions in the fields of particle and nuclear physics like the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), Switzerland and Thomas Jefferson National Accelerator Facility (TJNAF), USA. (Dr. Trivedi's resume is appended as a part of this note in Appendix A).

At CERN he was a part of a large collaboration of scientists whose work of discovering the Higgs elementary particle made it possible for the Nobel Prize in Physics for the year 2013 (Reference [1]) to be awarded to Francois Englert and Peter W. Higgs. He continues to be a part of the collaboration of scientists at TJNAF in USA, working closely with a team of scientists who are analyzing the data from his research (Reference [2]) to further our understanding of the coherently dynamic structure of one of the fundamental building blocks of the material Universe, which is the subatomic particle called the proton that is responsible for 98% of the observable mass of the Universe. A comprehensive scientific publication of Dr. Trivedi's research, which may contain in it key insights to the coherently dynamic structure of the proton, is currently in preparation by him and the scientists at TJNAF, USA.

However, even as Dr. Trivedi worked deeply in the fields of science and technology, it was anything but disconnected from his experiences of growing up and living in the tea plantations of Assam. Even as a child he could see the deep socio-economic-political-environmental challenges of this industry and how it was affecting not just its people, but also the larger ecosystem of life. It is beyond the scope of this document to note the process of responding to this deep undercurrent of his life, but it led to a powerful convergence of the many rich experience-streams of his life into a unified flow of knowledge and its related conviction. This unified flow of knowledge and its many tributaries will unfold in the due course of this note as we, respectively, present our core conviction and its guiding worldview of thought-action.

2.2 Mr. Mineswar Dutta

Mr. Dutta is a man rich in experiences of working with Assam's people and its land. Coming from a family of subsistence farmers, Mr. Dutta worked as hard in his family's paddy fields as he did at school. In addition to paddy, his family grew enough vegetables and other homestead produce for themselves. However, Mr. Dutta observed the growing hardships on his family without any economic means and decided to venture out, boldly, to work in the tea industry where he has a fascinating story to tell.

He began work as an independent contractor for the established and large tea plantations of Assam doing any work that he was asked to do or saw an opportunity for: from clearing forest land for new plantations to supplying tea leaves to the tea plantations that needed it for their factories. Over a decade of doing such work, he not only gathered valuable experience, but also the goodwill of the people. As a result many tea plantation executives wanted Mr. Dutta to work for them since he provided to them reliable and valuable services.

Mr. Dutta, because of his experiences, was one of the few members at the inception of the All Assam Small Tea Growers' Association (STGA) at a time when the tea industry was mostly made up of the large and established tea plantations since the colonial times. The STGA now has grown to contributing almost 50% of the total tea production in Assam (Reference [3]). Mr. Dutta has been instrumental in the rapid growth of the many small tea growers of the Selenghat region – he shared with them his many experiences with respect to the agriculture of tea and also setting them up with market connections.

However, if one looks at the origin of Mr. Dutta's tributaries of experience, they will be seen as emerging from the unified flow of wanting to be of service to the people and land of Assam.

Together, Dr. Trivedi and Mr. Dutta strengthen a unified flow of conviction and add to the diversity and depth of its many emerging tributaries of thought-action.

3 Our Core Conviction and Its Related Worldview of Thought-Action

Much, if not all, of our trust's thought-action can be traced back to our conviction that knowledge constructed by human beings, referred to as human knowledge in this note, is a collective human enterprise given birth to by our collective existential condition. As such it contains within it knowledge that is empowering towards not just life's existential conditions, but also towards its practical realities.

The diversity of human knowledge, even at just the realm where human beings live and interact with the rest of life, let alone its entire expanse ranging from the smallest sub-atomic particles to the farthest known galaxy, is, for all practical purposes, infinite. In the perspective of our conviction of the empowering nature of human knowledge, such an overwhelming diversity is profoundly coherent. In other words, human knowledge in our perspective is coherently diverse, which we refer to as wholesome human knowledge in this note.

However, for reasons that are beyond the scope of this document to discuss, we observe that such wholesomeness of human knowledge is breaking apart: it is losing its perspective of coherence and its diversity is drifting towards divisive fragmentation. Further, as wholesome knowledge gets broken up into such fragments, it also happens that just one of these fragments becomes the dominant focus of thought-action: thus knowledge also undergoes a gross reduction from its profound whole to just one of its small and isolated parts. Such divisive fragmentation and reduction is significantly disempowering communities towards their existential and practical realities. Instead of working together as wholes to solve our problems, we are increasingly isolated and divided in our efforts, whether it be the education or agrarian crisis that India is facing or the matter of the changing climate[1] that affects our whole planet. It is our core conviction that in order to have not just sustainable solutions for our problems, but also to just live peacefully, we must think-act as undivided wholes as opposed to divided fragments.

Disempowering aspects of such divisive fragmentation and reduction will be particularly discussed in the context of areas where our trust will work – education, healthcare, and livelihood – later in this note, but for now, as an example, we will discuss the general matter of the Indian agrarian crisis in the subsequent Section 3.1, which affects most of India's people:

The farmers themselves: Out of a population of 1.35 billion people (Reference [5]), 66 percent live in rural areas (Reference [6]) and "70 percent of its rural households still depend primarily on agriculture for their livelihood, with 82 percent of farmers being small and marginal" (Reference [7]).

[1]The matter of climate change is a very complex matter and even as evidence of the negative effects of human activity on it mounts, the degree of uncertainty of such effects on the future of earth's climate, especially in a scientific sense, is still large. Our trust's stand on climate change is generally consistent with that of the American Physical Society's (APS) statement on earth's changing climate (Reference [4]) that while recognizing such increasing evidence of anthropogenic activity on the changing climate and urging us to take mitigating action, also notes that "as recognized by Working Group 1 of the IPCC, scientific challenges remain in our abilities to observe, interpret, and project climate changes" and to "better inform societal choices, the APS urges sustained research in climate science."

The larger workforce: Agriculture accounts for 44 percent employment in India (Reference [8]).

3.1 Indian Agrarian Crisis

It appears that the agrarian crisis has been reduced to the matter of farmers' debt relief, or at least it appears so in the dominant culture of news and public discussions, and even in action. Instead of uncovering the wholesome connection of the debt relief problem, there is, instead, only more fragmented obfuscation created, for example, by the related politics of farmers' debt relief, which is entangled with the politics of farmer movements in general. The crisis in this landscape of fragmentation is now getting so severe that the farmers' urgency is now emerging in disturbing and dramatic ways as noted in Reference [9]: "While India's farmer movements remain as fragmented as its farm holdings – by a moderate count, there are more than 200 farmer organisations divided across crop and regional line – yet, by end of July farmers across the country successfully put forth two of their core demands to policymakers at the Centre and the states. They did so in innovative ways like spilling milk and vegetables on highways, or appearing to consume dead rats, soil and urine at Delhi's Jantar Mantar, even filing a complaint with the government for weather forecasts gone wrong – certain that each of their moves will be picked up by television news channels and force governments to act." Such incidents, which have been happening for decades now, are leading to a degree of civilized coherency in these movements as is reflected in the recent Kisan Mukti March of November 2018 where thousands of farmers had marched to New Delhi with their demands. However, this coherency is still mostly volatile and the crisis as severe. The path towards solutions needs a brave, visionary, consistent, and determined march towards realizing the wholesomeness of these problems, from where will emerge wholesome and lasting solutions.

When our president found out that the government of Meghalaya was organizing its first-ever farmers parliament to address the wholesomeness of the crisis and its solutions, he, with a cautious optimism, attended this parliament which was held on December 4-5, 2018 in Shillong, Meghalaya. In this historic and unprecedented parliament, at least so in the context of India, conducted on the basis of the formal parliamentary democratic procedures, his worldview of wholesomeness to solve the agrarian crisis was deeply validated and his optimism was met with inspiration.

Our president wrote about this parliament session for Down To Earth (Reference [10]) to uphold the refreshing efforts of Meghalaya as a model to come together as a whole to solve the agrarian crisis. In this article, our president noted how, powerfully, "Addressing the gathering of over 500 farmer representatives from across the state, Chief Minister Conrad Sangma acknowledged the failure of his government to listen to its farmers problems. "Thus far, the policies and schemes had been formulated without knowing what the farmers truly needed. And the farmers continued to be unaware of the government's schemes and policies," he said." Further, our president noted in this article, "Agriculture production commissioner of Meghalaya, IAS officer KN Kumar, corroborated this lack of communication between the government and the farmers, saying, "This [information] space was being filled by middlemen and weak farmers associations," which only made things worse."

Our president observed as powerfully hopeful the efforts of Meghalaya to work towards a wholesome solution. The key points of these efforts are noted below:

- Beginning to engage coherently, in the large state convention center in Shillong, its community of government officials, bureaucrats, scientists, technocrats, social entrepreneurs, banking officials, and businessmen with its farmers to know of their challenges and opportunities: ranging from that in the field to those encountered on the way to and at the market.

- Encouraging its farmers to move towards ecologically sustainable agricultural practices and away from industrial practices, with required support from government for the risks involved in such a transition, including support with setting up new market spaces for their organic produce and required education and training.

- Encouraging scientists and farmers to build relationships to work closely to solve problems, which is not purely based on the superficial symptomatic treatment using synthetic chemicals, but built on a deeper understanding of soil ecology and plant physiology. The connection of just these fragments – research and practice of agriculture, which have been growing apart since the dawn of the Industrial age – is a vitally empowering way forward: Sir Albert Howard, considered to be one of founders of organic agriculture (Reference [11]) (much of which he discovered and learned from the people of India and China while working in in these regions, including in the tea industry of Assam) noted early in the 20th century that "there was a wide chasm between science in the laboratory and practice in the field" and "that unless this gap could be bridged no real progress could be made in the control of plant disease: research and practice would remain apart" (Reference [12]). Howard's "life's work was his effort to bridge this gap. The way to do it was simply to refuse to see anything in isolation." (Reference [12])

- Accepting the farmers demands including "that the state government and MPs support the two national Kisan Mukti Bills when they are tabled. These bills seek to comprehensively end the vicious cycle of farmer's debt by synergising the solutions of farmers debt relief with solutions to provide them remunerative minimum support prices as per the reports by the MS Swaminathan commission-led National Commission on Farmers."(Reference [10]). The demands of the farmers, after dialogues directly with the government officials and bureaucrats, "were consolidated as a charter of demands and resolution at the farmer parliament, which was submitted to the state Cabinet – to be discussed in a special state legislative assembly session." (Reference [10])

3.2 Formation of Our Trust

The formation of our trust is a response to such problems and crises as can be seen in the case of the Indian agrarian crisis that are now felt across the world where, in different contexts and varying degrees of severity, they simmer in fragmented landscapes of thought-action that are not conducive to sustainable solutions. Instead, they either give rise to volatile, disturbing, and dramatic events or have a lasting and irreversible impact on our lives. Increasingly, these such effects are now also alarmingly being noted in the non-human natural world, ranging from unprecedented weather and climate events to the disruption and even extinction of entire ecosystems. According to a recent report by United Nations (UN) Sustainability Development Goals (Reference [13]) "The health of ecosystems on which we and all other species depend is deteriorating more rapidly than ever. We are eroding the very foundations of our economies, livelihoods, food security, health and quality of life worldwide."

The overarching ethos of the thought-action that emerges from our conviction is that we must work hard to think-act as undivided wholes rather than divided fragments in our respective communities. Each community can be self-sufficient to respond to its problems from within, and then, on the basis of such empowerment, engage with structures of government and policy that exist at higher levels. It is only validating for us when this same UN report (Reference [13]) tells us that "it is not too late to make a difference, but only if we start now at every level from local to global"

and make coherent our fragmented landscape to engage in a, what this report calls, "transformative change", meaning "a fundamental, system-wide reorganization across technological, economic and social factors, including paradigms, goals and values."

We believe that it is time that we acknowledge that the coherent strength of our great diversity is vitally needed for our existential-practical realities like:

- Education crisis
- Agrarian crisis
- Public health problems
- Sustainability of our ecosystems and natural resources
- Disempowering and manipulative cycles of politics that sustain and nurture divisive fragmentation

In the following sections, empowerment of communities is discussed first in the context of a general rural community in Section 4. We will then in Section 5 discuss this more specifically in the context of the particular community of which our trust is a part of. Note that in the context of our perspective, a community is the profoundly interconnected fabric of life of human beings, ecosystems, and the environment at large.

4 Empowerment of Communities: A General Perspective

In this section as we discuss the empowerment of rural communities in a general sense, we will also incrementally build a wholesome model to express our vision for related thought-action.

4.1 Education-Healthcare-Livelihood

We begin by discussing how wholesome community life and its empowerment can be seen as resting on the interconnected parts of education, healthcare, and livelihood, as illustrated in Figure 1.

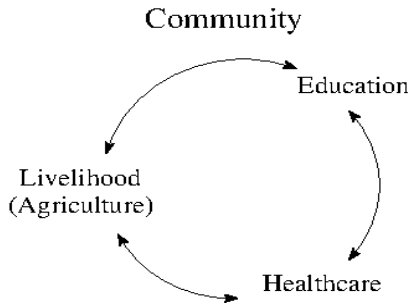

Figure 1: Education-Healthcare-Livelihood: Interconnected parts of a wholesome community life

In the context of incrementally building the model for our vision, even at this basic level we observe and experience fragmentation: The profound interconnected dynamics between these parts, purposefully noted as education-healthcare-livelihood to stress this fact, is reduced to treating each in isolation. In other words, the wholesomeness of education-healthcare-livelihood is reduced to isolated fragments of education, healthcare, and livelihood. To justify the connections between these parts needs neither sophisticated intellectual arguments nor any subtle observation. For example, we all know the severe disempowering aspects of the problem of malnourishment in rural communities, the solution to which requires a coherence between systems of healthcare and education: education for a malnourished child cannot be imparted without tending to their healthcare, and without education its difficult to engage the child and their family in not just the value of healthcare, but also, perhaps more importantly, how to access it with freedom.

Further, how can healthcare be separated from agriculture, which is the backbone of rural livelihood? Health of human beings depends on wholesome farming practices that produces wholesome food. To say that food is medicine sounds cliche, but perhaps only if contemplated purely at the intellectual level where it is just a simple sentence. Its value in action and a wholesome immersive community experience where education-healthcare-livelihood is seen as a coherent whole is anything but cliche.

Anemia, for example, is a serious problem affecting especially the women of rural India and, therefore, generations of its children. Its widespread prevalence is entangled in the vicious cycle of child-marriage, malnutrition, and lack of education. A lasting solution requires the synergy of education-healthcare-livelihood.

Even a level below this basic level of wholesomeness, where education-healthcare-livelihood exist in isolation as education, healthcare, and livelihood, we observe fragmentation as will be noted briefly in Sections 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.1.3, respectively.

4.1.1 Education

Wholesome education is drastically reduced to mostly rote-learning of isolated subjects in rectilinear rooms and this is causing disempowerment to the severest degree of our children: on the surface while it can be seen that they possess neither basic literacy, employability skills, nor life-skills, but deeply, also begin to suffer from a loss of core confidence that manifests in various forms of unrest in themselves as individuals and the larger society they are a part of.

It is only validating for us when the government of India in its new Draft National Educational Policy (NEP) 2019 (Reference [14]) minces no words in saying that there is a severe "learning crisis" and the problem "most acutely afflicts first-generation learners, and children who have not had access to pre-primary education; it hence affects large numbers of children from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds." It warns that the country could lose "10 crore or more students – the size of a large country – from the learning system". It says that "The country simply cannot allow that to happen - the cost is far too great - to crores of individuals, and to the nation. Attaining foundational literacy and numeracy for all children must become an immediate national mission". Last but not the least, it says that a a significant part of the solution is "holistic education", which again is deeply validating from the core of our conviction.

Additionally, its important to stress the value of education in the context of the demographics of India, where:

- It is second only to Nigeria for the most number of people living in extreme poverty: India has roughly 76.1 million living in extreme poverty compared to Nigeria's 99.01 million (Reference

[15]). Till only a year ago, India occupied the top position in this list.

- It has the world's youngest population: about 600 million people are less than 25 years old, which is around half the total population of India (Reference [16]).

India is still dominantly a poor country and with a young demographic: "the average age of an Indian is expected to be 29 years, while it will be 37 in China and 48 in Japan" (Reference [17]). It can be poised to take this significant demographic advantage to grow its economy, but "the country's youth will be able to do very little to push the economy upward if we fail to invest in universal quality education. School education is the most important socio-economic issue that will generate the demographic dividend needed to power India's growth story." (Reference [17])

Its important to also stress here that "pushing the economy upward" and "Indias growth story" should not get reduced to purely the matter of growing the GDP and watching the number of poor people decline, which is already happening (Reference [15]). (According to this reference, by the year 2030 the number of extreme poor will come down to less than 4 million.)

Even if so, the GDP may only stagnate because modern jobs in cities cannot cater to all the 600 million young people. The invitation to wholesome solutions, which is the main theme of this note, sooner or later must come into focus. We hope sooner than later because, for example, we are already seeing, as partly a result of rural migration, the increasing stress on our already resource-stressed urban cities and the related disempowerment of rural life. "pushing the economy upward" and the "India's growth story" must encompass empowering and growing rural economies so that people continue to live in rural areas, as most already do in India, and not give up their traditional ways of life to move to cities. "pushing the economy upward" must not get reduced to the growth of the GDP and we must look at this matter in a wholesome manner with our young demographic. A part of this process can and must begin in our systems of education. We must work towards the wholesome health of Earth, its people and larger ecosystems. India's younger demographic can show the way forward if we invest in their wholesome education.

The matter of education will be discussed in greater detail in the context of the particular community our trust is based in Section 5.1.

4.1.2 Healthcare

Wholesome healthcare practices have been reduced to prescription drugs – mostly analgesics, anit-inflammatory drugs, and antibiotics, and now increasingly also anti-depressants and anti-anxiety medications – and this is causing a severe disempowerment of human beings. The wholesome health of a human being is a coherence of their mental and physical health, which includes matters of nutrition and lifestyle, education, socio-cultural factors, and socio-economic status. It is beyond the scope of this document to discuss why, but in this fragmented worldview neither the healthcare seekers not its practitioners are able to work from this place of coherence. Instead, various symptoms that arise from a weakening of the coherent health of a human being, for example anemia, instead of being given the required wholesome attention, is, instead, directly treated with drugs as noted above. This keeps generation of people trapped in various vicious cycles that are connected to disempowerment that arise from lack of quality healthcare.

The matter of healthcare will be discussed in greater detail in the context of the particular community our trust is based in Section 5.2.

4.1.3 Livelihood

Wholesome agricultural practices have been reduced to addition of N,P,K (nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium) and other chemical fertilizers, pesticides, weedicides, and irrigation. This causes a severe disempowerment of not just the farmers, but the interconnected life of the soil, ecosystems, and the planet at large. Not only do farmers incur heavy financial debt to purchase chemical fertilizers and related heavy machinery of industrial agriculture, but they also lose the fertility of their soils and their traditional knowledge of agriculture, for example that of preserving indigenous seeds that are more suited to their local soil and ecosystems. As with education and healthcare, this disempowerment weakens them and renders them helpless against dominant forces and narratives that gain from such reduction and fragmentation. Such drastically affects the disempowerment of entire village communities.

Further, this disempowerment of farmers-soil-ecosystem, as already noted, affects not just the health of human beings, but the entire planet – even scientific studies are now increasingly showing that because of such disempowerment "agriculture is one of the biggest threats to Earth's ecosystems." (Reference [18]). The aspect of livelihood, which in the context of rural communities is agriculture based, has to be viewed from a coherent perspective and therein the farmers are not just food producers, but also custodians of our planet, and as such should be empowered for our collective well being.

The matter of livelihood will be discussed in greater detail in the context of the particular community our trust is based in Section 5.3.

4.2 Education-Healthcare-Livelihood-Listening

As we move on to the next level of incrementally building our wholesome model to express our vision, we would like to note again the profound nature of wholesomeness. Our model strives to express our vision for wholesome thought-action with and for a community in a combination of analytical and qualitative expressions, but it should be kept in mind that this serves also as an invitation for us to *engage* in wholesome thought-action and only then the profound nature of wholesomeness can be *experienced*.

As a part of this invitation for wholesome engagement with and for a community, it's vitally important for us to listen to a community, engaging the depths of our compassion, empathy, and patience. In some sense, in our vision, we lead from such a place of deep listening as we feel that it may well be the glue that can coherently bind the fragmented parts. We illustrate this in Figure 2 with the help of the Yin and Yang symbol, which for us is a powerful symbol for wholesome existence.

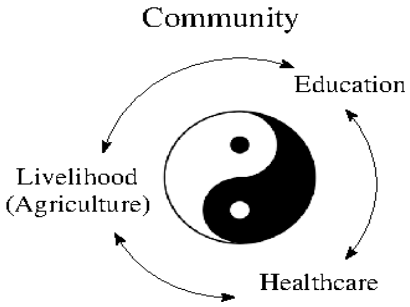

Figure 2:
Education-Healthcare-Livelihood-Listening:
Interconnected parts of a wholesome community life

The Yin and Yang symbol serves us vitally to engage wholesomely with a community and as a part of such an egagement, inspires a deeper listening to the reality as it is, empathetically, compassionately, and patiently. To continue to note our vision in a word-sense, we will add listening to education-healthcare-livelihood: education-healthcare-livelihood-listening.

4.3 Ground-Realities-Institutions-Specialized-Knowledge-Skills

In the next step of completing a model-introduction to our vision, we note how there continues to be an increasing distance from not just ground realities, but also amongst themselves, of various fields of specialized knowledge and related institutes that exist to empower communities – be it education, public health, banking, institutions of law, research & development, or government. This increasing distance is manifesting as fragmentation and therefore instead of wholesome solutions that are connected to ground realities, at best we find people working in silos on solutions that are either disconnected from reality or even if they are connected to it, there are few to no relationships amongst the institutes to implement them. One does not have to look beyond the current education and agrarian crisis to observe such fragmentation and its consequences.

In our vision, we will necessarily work towards making wholesome the fragmentation between ground realities, specialized knowledge and skills, and institutions as ground-realities-specialized-knowledge-skills-institutions. This is visualized in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Ground-Realities-Specialized-Knowledge-Skills-Institutions: Interconnected parts of wholesome community service.

4.4 Education-Healthcare-Livelihood-Listening-Ground-Realities-Institutions-Specialized-Knowledge-Skills

This brings us to conclusion of the incremental model-building for our vision, whose final form is reflected in Figure 4: all the fragmented parts of the whole must come together coherently. The power of compassionate and empathetic listening from our respective fragmented islands to the islands around us may well be the glue that binds us in the collective existential whole of humanity. It is our humbling conviction to remain aware of this whole and work from its wisdom.

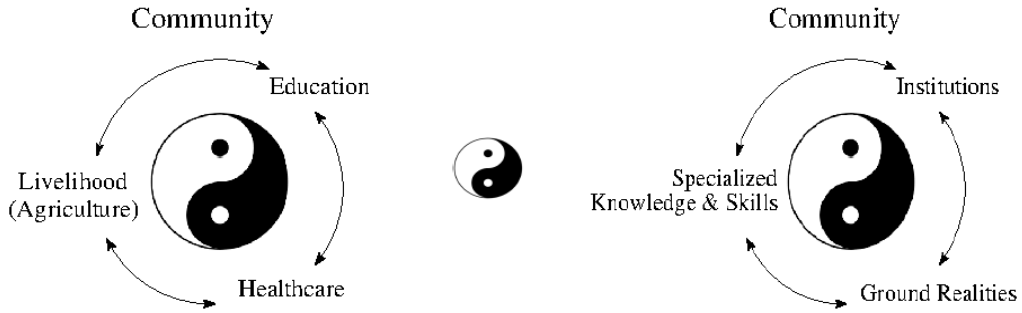

Figure 4: Education-Healthcare-Livelihood-Listening-Ground-Realities-Specialized-Knowledge-Skills-Institutions: Interconnected parts of wholesome community life-service

We write this note immersed in our conviction of wholesomeness. This is deeply humbling partly because it is not our intention to assign blame as a result of noting such fragmentation, but only to acknowledge it and the related diversity of thought-action. We believe that even acknowledging such fragmentation and our related differences is a valuable step forward towards building a wholesome togetherness. It is additionally humbling because we know that this task is anything but trivial and will require us all to work hard to continually grow and nurture our abilities to be compassionate so that we can respond from the depths of our collective human condition.

5 Empowerment of the Rural Communities of Assam

This trust will begin its work in Selenghat, which is a block in the Jorhat district of Assam. The founders of this trust are from this area and have personally experienced the particular nature of its problems that were discussed generally in the previous Section 4.

Selenghat represents one of the typical rural areas of Assam: It's livelihood is dominated by people working in its tea plantations and as small to subsistence farmers in its various villages. It has various healthcare facilities, which include each tea plantation's hospital and government run Public Health Clinics (PHC). It has a block development office and centers for offering services to its agricultural community: government run veterinary offices and Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK) (Farmer Science Centers). And for education, there is no shortage of primary, medium, and high schools in the area, mostly run by the government. Larger institutes like the Assam Agricultural University (AAU), Tea Research Association (TRA), Tea Board of India, and various tea associations like the Indian Tea Association (ITA) and the Assam Tea Planters' Association (ATPA) are located within an hours travel by road in the city of Jorhat.

In theory, this looks ideal – there is, in accordance with the ground realities, the necessary infrastructure for education, livelihood, and healthcare. However, in reality, there appears to be more of a fragmentation as compared to a coherence of such institutions towards ground realities as we already noted in Section 4.3.

In such a context, its particularly important to note the state of crisis of the largest of employer of people in the Selenghat region, which are its tea plantations. (Even on the national level the tea industry is one of the largest employers: according to Reference [19] "Tea plantation sector is the 3rd largest employer in India after Indian Railways and Armed Forces. It employs 1.5 million people directly and 4.5 million people indirectly.") This industry is now facing socio-economic-political-climate challenges at unprecedented levels with no solution in sight, causing many to speculate that the "the sector may not even survive another 15-20 years, if drastic course corrections are not taken" (Reference [20]). These drastic measures will have to stem from wholesome thought-action and will necessarily have to also be visionary, courageous, compassionate, and deeply committed to begin the process in a dominantly fragmented landscape of thought-action.

It is beyond the scope of this document to discuss this problem in detail, but its immediately worrying symptom is that the profit margins for the tea industry are getting thinner. The costs of production are increasing – particularly the costs for the social welfare of its workers, a responsibility that rests on the industry as per the Plantations Labour Act of 1951 (Reference [21]) – and the market price of tea is going down, partly due to there being an oversupply of tea in the market. The solution to this immediate symptom requires a coherently deep engagement of the entire spectrum of people involved with the industry: from a reform of policies and their related implementation at the level of central and state governments to reform in market modalities related to tea being a contentious cash crop since the colonial times, to reform of agricultural practices and socio-economic modalities at the ground level. Unfortunately, with a few localized exceptions that represent a small part of the industry, like that of Selenghat's Boisahabi Tea Estate, which has been a model for reform and progressive action even within the limits of the industry's intractable constraints (Boisahabi Tea Estate will be discussed in detail in Section 5.3), there is no traction at the level of the visionary and coherent solutions that are required. Instead, there is only fragmentation and related trivial finger-pointing that only adds to the intractability of the problems.

We will now note the particular nature of disempowerment in education-healthcare-livelihood in Selenghat area of Assam in Sections 5.1, 5.2, and 5.2, respectively. In these sections we will also discuss our plan for action and related resources that are already and potentially available to us.

5.1 Education

That there is an education crisis in India, most severely affecting its disadvantaged socio-economic rural areas where it cannot be addressed without simultaneously addressing empowerment in quality healthcare and sustainable livelihoods is a reality that the founders of this organization have deeply experienced in Selenghat. The president and his mother have taught and worked with several children of the area, ranging from preschool to college students, and have directly witnessed this crisis. Its widespread acknowledgment now in the new Draft National Educational Policy (NEP) 2019 (Reference [14]) and in general public discussions is only validating for us, especially while making our point in a note like this.

Again, because of the large number of people impacted, this crisis is has to be particularly noted in the context of the tea community. For generations, its children are not progressing in the sense of finding jobs and the related stability of a livelihood. As a result many of them continue

to live in the plantations as large extended families, dependent on the tea plantations for their welfare. This compounds the problem for an industry whose rising cost of production is directly related to the increasing cost of providing social welfare of its people, from housing to healthcare facilities. Further, and perhaps even more significantly, this adds to the available free-energy in the plantations that is tapped into for dangerous social unrest. For now, setting aside the more dangerous political and directly socio-economically disruptive manifestation of this unrest and the entrenched cycles of disempowerment it sustains, this social unrest also becomes a vicious feedback loop into the same communities where there are many parents and children working hard towards investing their resources and energy in education. It sustains the already entrenched problem of alcoholism and malnutrition – alcoholism being perhaps one of the most significant symptom of this social unrest – that affects not just the education of children, but the entire coherence of empowerment based on education-healthcare-livelihood.

Our work in education-healthcare-livelihood will begin by building a model school in the Selenghat area. This is a natural beginning point for us because on observing the intention with which our president lived in the community and, especially, the effect his methods of teaching and general interaction had on its children, many of the parents, and also many children themselves, requested him to open a quality school in the area. He accepted this request as a natural process of his engagement with the community.

5.1.1 Education: Action Plan and Current Resources

We plan to build not just a model school in the area, but also engage with many government schools in the area and build relationships to develop a program, together, for a visionary education reform of the entire local school system.

Such a model for education reform may not be unprecedented, but are far and few, and affecting only an extremely small number of children of India. Teach For India (Reference [22]), which is providing us valuable mentorship and with whom we are engaged with for building a deeper collaboration, is an example of an organiztion that engages in such visionary efforts in seven of the largest cities of India. Ayang Trust (Reference [23]), located close to us in Majuli, Assam, is another foundation that runs its own model school, Hummingbird School (Reference [24]), in a particularly socio-economically disadvantaged village of Majuli and is simultaneously engaged in a Whole School Transformation project (Reference [25]) with the local government and low-income private schools in Majuli. It was Ayang Trust's Hummingbird School in Majuli and a meeting with its founder, Bipin Dhane (Reference [26]), that gave our founder and president not just a tangible model upon which to respond to the request and dire need of his own community, but also courage. It was through Ayang Trust that we were able to meet and share our vision in the particular context of Selenghat with Teach For India, and today we are receiving valuable mentorship from both.

We recently have also begun to receive valuable mentorship from the founder and director of the Czech non-profit NGO Brontosauri v Himaljch (Reference [27]) that helps in running Spring Dales School Public School in Ladakh, which is also supported by the Dalai Lama Trust (Reference [28]). The story of this school is similar to the one that our founders and the founder of Hummingbird School are responding to, which is of a crisis in education in a rural community within its respective contextual matters of community empowerment.

We have several such resourceful and diverse collaborations developing, some which are noted below:

Jhamtse Gatsal Children's Community, Arunachal Pradesh (Reference [29]) Jhamtse Gat-

sal is a children's community located in the remote mountains of Arunachal Pradesh for the empowerment of its children, and the earliest reference for our founder and president to embark on his current journey of empowering children, leading with love and compassion. (The words Jhamtse Gatsal in Tibetan mean Garden of Love and Compassion. The name of our trust, Karunar Kheti Trust in Assamese means The Cultivation of Love and Compassion, and is inspired by our connection with Jhamtse Gatsal.) We are receiving valuable mentorship from its Managing Director, which includes the immediately relevant matter of fund-raising and its related financial and legal mechanisms.

Akshar Foundation, Assam (Reference [30]) This is another impactful foundation that runs its own model school in Guwahati while also working for a larger education transformation vision, including in its processes social innovation with its own children (Reference [31]). We are in conversation to collaborate with them, most immediately for teacher training and teaching resources, which will be discussed in detail with respect to the model school we are going to build (see Section 6.1.1.3).

Northeast Centre for Equity Action on Integrated Development (NEAID), Assam (Reference [32]) NEAID is a young, but impactful organization that amongst its other activities, also works in school transformation projects in the rural communities of Assam. At this stage they are providing us mentorship in various technical matters relating to the day to day operations of a nonprofit non-governmental organization (NGO) and in due time, we hope to collaborate on school transformation projects.

Professor Manish Jain, Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar, Gujarat (Reference [33]) Professor Manish Jain is particularly interested in hands on and experiential pedagogy, especially in the field of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). His expertise and resources will be particularly helpful as we work, in our model school and the local schools, to disentangle STEM education from the dominant rote-learning techniques and nurture an environment where children are led by a natural curiosity towards experiential learning (see Section 6.1.2.1).

Sauramandala Foundation, Karnataka (Reference [34]) Sauramandala Foundation's motto is "Demystifying challenges faced by remote communities". In other words, the members of this foundation work to understand the needs of remote communities – remote not just in the sense of distance or terrain, but along the many socio-economic-political reasons that can make an experience of a community remote – and put together required resources to meet these needs. For example, they recently completed the solar electrification of Hummingbird School in Majuli, which gives the school an empowering sense of self-reliance for their energy needs, especially when operating in a flood-prone rural area of Majuli. We recently met with its founder and technical lead and discussed a similar solar electrification for our model school. We are also receiving their valuable mentorship for fund-raising operations and for making connection with other like minded people and organizations (Sauramandala Foundation is currently under an incubation program with the Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Bangalore).

It is invaluable to have the support of experienced organizations responding to the needs of diverse communities, from the largest and central urban cities of India to its smallest and outlying rural communities.

As this our first step of action, we have developed a detailed action plan which we will discuss in its own section, which is Section 6, Model School and Vision of Larger Education Reform.

5.2 Healthcare

The disempowerment of human beings in the systems of healthcare as they mostly operate today is plain to experience and observe. This too, like education, affects the socio-economically disadvantaged parts of the society most severely. And like education, it cannot be dealt in isolation of education-healthcare-livelihood.

It is a topic of hot discussion how the excessive use of chemical fertilizers is negatively affecting the health of our soil, plants, and the ecosystem at large. However, not so actively is discussed how, similarly, the excessive and indiscriminate use chemically synthesized drugs on human beings is negatively affecting their health. As already mentioned in Section 4.1.2, a pathological condition arises from many interconnected aspects of the mental-physical-socio-economic-cultural complex of a human being, but its solution is mostly reduced to treating its most outward symptom with prescription drugs with little to no discussion between the patient and the doctor on the underlying cause, which not only can be a path towards a holistic solution, but also contribute significantly towards empowering the patient on matters of their own health. This has the most debilitating and disempowering affect on the health of a human being, especially of those from socio-economically disadvantaged sections of society, and often affects generations to come. Such a reduction is not entirely because of the healthcare practitioners, but also its seekers, and trying to find a solution exclusively at one side is futile: a wholesome public health engagement is needed.

Such a wholesome public engagement is vitally required in communities like that of Selenghat where the dominant health problems are holistic ones and arising out of the mental-physical-socio-economic-cultural complex of a human being and their community: anemia, gastrointestinal disorders, hypertension, tuberculosis, fevers, colds, coughs, body aches, general weakness of the mind-body etc.

The problem of fragmentation and related reduction very strongly comes to mind when observing such problems in Selenghat and noting how with all the strides that not just the science of medicine, but all of human knowledge has made, we are not able to respond to them. It is beyond the scope of this document to discuss this fragmentation in detail, but it involves not just the culture of medicine as it is practiced in hospitals and clinics, but also the culture of its related science and research, which, unfortunately, is increasingly driven more by parameters that have evolved in isolated-from-reality institutions of science and research, and decreasingly by listening to ground realities. And when this happen, we observe, that there tends to be a lopsided focus on reduction, which without its counterparts of work in synthesis and complex emergent phenomena, leads to fragmentation and lack of coherence.

Such deeply disempowering problems that begin to manifest in not just the field of medicine, but any form of human knowledge, when it becomes isolated from empathetic listening and learning from the ground realities is powerfully validated for us by Dr. Abhay Bang (Reference [35]) (an internationally recognized public health expert awarded the Padma Shri in 2018 by the Government of India), who after his experiences of living and working with the people of the tribal district of Gadchiroli in Maharashtra made the brave acknowledgment that "[...] if people did not need the research, why did I do it? And I realised that I was actually gratifying my own intellectual curiosity. In hindsight, I have the courage to say that we practically used people as guinea pigs. Thats when I realised that, unfortunately, researchers often do research not for the community, but for their

own peers. If you are an educated person working in places like this, even as you work with the people, your target audience – knowingly or unknowingly – is still your peers. Subconsciously, you are thinking, "What will I publish? What will I present at the conference? What would other nonprofits or doctors like to hear?"" (Reference [36]) He urges not just the medical community, but all researchers and especially those working in the social sector to "Go to the people, live among them, love them, learn from them, begin with what they know, build upon what they have" (Reference [36]).

Dr. Bang's experiences and related observations are, above all, deeply validating for our founders. It was our founder and president's own, but similar experiences, that gave birth to his unifying perspective on human knowledge and its related conviction that human knowledge must remain tethered to its coherent wholesomeness lest it continues to get broken up into fragments of isolation that have varying consequences on our existential-practical realities, which perhaps are felt most acutely in matters related to our health as Dr. Bang has so powerfully brought to our attention.

5.2.1 Healthcare: Action Plan and Current Resources

Our basis for action in the community in matters of healthcare is powerfully resonated in the vision of SEARCH (Society for Education, Action, and Research in Community Health), which is an NGO founded by Dr. Bang: "Our vision is to realize Arogya Swaraj: Peoples Health in Peoples Hands. Empowering individuals and communities to take charge of their own health, and thereby, help them achieve freedom from disease as well as dependence." (Reference [37])

While we are currently building a resource team of healthcare professionals and people working in related fields, which we will discuss subsequently in this section, we are also working on cultivating an environment where the members of our communities can become active participants in the matters of their individual and the overall community's health. This work is of fundamental importance because over years, people have mostly become passive recipients of prescriptions drugs and have lost sight of their own empowering responsibilities, ranging from matters of nutrition, lifestyle, and basic sanitation to engaging healthcare practitioners in discussion of their health.

Already, because of our vision of education-healthcare-livelihood, the model school we are building, while directly addressing the matter of education, will also give us the platform to cultivate such an environment. For example, matters of malnutrition and alcoholism will have to be addressed, directly with the children and their parents. In our conception, we imagine a public health engagement center becoming a natural off-shoot of this school, which in due time, can become a basic primary health care center.

In this public health care engagement center we envision:

- Addressing matters of malnutrition with the children, beginning by engaging them in the importance of diet and nutrition. Anemia, for example, is a condition that can be addressed powerfully through nutrition by incorporating in the diet foods rich in micronutrients, iron, and other vitamins and minerals that can be had in a wholesome diet. This work can begin by preparing such foods in the center that will have an accompanying nutrition garden where seasonal fruits and vegetables are grown using sustainable methods of agriculture with the collaboration of children. Discussions on such nutritious food, from growing it to preparing it in the kitchen, and its affect on health can begin with children, and naturally grow to include their parents. In a natural way, the process of developing communication methods to have

discussions on the value of nutrition to observing its actual effects by incorporating it in the diet, can be developed.

The connection of nutrition with health is, in our current times, for the rich and poor, fundamental for empowerment with respect to our own health. For far too long, what we ate was, and still is, disconnected from our health in the mainstream culture of medicine, its research and its practice. This has left us all disempowered. We are all trapped in a vicious cycles of bad eating habits and hospital visits where instead of in-depth treatment and education, we are prescribed drugs. This vicious cycle is draining us economically, mentally, and physically – it is becoming a general cultural problem. Attempts to fix this even in the world's richest countries is a monumental task because of its deep entrenchment and entanglement in various forces of such a culture. We believe a solution purely at the policy level that seeks to reform the systems of this culture will not work till we act from where we begin. A significant part of the the solution is simple: we should eat mindfully, treating food as medicine and learning why it is so by observing a plant's powerful ecological connections on how it prepares its nutrients for its own health, which we then consume.

- Nurturing an environment where conversations about health and healthcare systems can be had. We have observed and experienced situations where people suffering from an ailment begin on a deep disempowering back-foot. This prevents them from actively seeking solutions as empowered agents who can learn about the knowledge that is needed for their well being by having conversations amongst members of the community and with healthcare professionals.

  Experience has taught us that conversations need to be had that will lead to empowering and sustainable solutions. We need to talk about our health and our ailments with each other. Even being able to express what it is that ails us, physically or mentally, in an empathetic listening environment is already a powerful medicine and the stepping stone towards empowering solutions. We have experienced situations where such conversations have led to a relieved mind and a better understanding of even the basic symptoms and their possible causes, which a free mind can better engage with to find solutions, which includes the steps of even accessing a doctor with freedom. To engage with a doctor and to learn from the depths of what ails us, is not easy: not only is the science of medicine not trivial to understand, but it is additionally obscured by the doctors treating patients as passive, and worse, ignorant recipients, often even getting offended if a patient genuinely probes for a deeper understanding. Unfortunately, this cultural aspect of healthcare systems is a deep problem, as is evidenced by Dr. Bang's experience, who bravely acknowledges his own role in such cultural practices and says that we need a participatory health care system where the people and the doctors, together, are empowered as people. We will cultivate the environment for such empowerment.

- Providing a space for the well being of our mental health, from conducting cultural events in local, national, and international traditions to conducting classes in the practice of mindful meditation. As with our ethos, such practices will evolve, naturally and patiently, from our coherent set of experiences with such matters as compared to directly beginning to conduct mindful classes in any particular technique, for example.

- Having conversations of alcohol consumption, beginning with children, many of whom witness its disruptive effects within their own families. A priori it is not possible to write how this will proceed, but by viewing children as empowered beings and by treating them so, powerful changes can manifest.

In our vision, such a center can be cultivated as a space where people begin to feel empowered towards their health: activities that begin with children and their parents, can slowly begin to engage the larger community as a natural progression of such efforts and also by more direct efforts of inviting various government and private public health care initiatives into this space. A key to the success of this center will be the rooted and living presence of our trust in the community. Too often we see well intentioned public health care initiatives come into a community, but without a sustained and dedicated presence, which involves listening to and getting to know the community as Dr. Bang noted, the energy from it dies out with little to no impact. Such a center, with patience and a commitment to Arogya Awaraj (Peoples Health in Peoples Hands), can become a model primary health care center overseen by qualified healthcare professionals.

As we work towards our vision we have already begun raising an awareness for our vision and also reaching out to various resources, local and at national level, which we will note below:

- Our president presented his vision at Kaziranga University, Jorhat (Reference [38]) to its Vice Chancellor and deans of the departments of the school of social science, physical science, and computer science, following which the university expressed their interest of collaboration in which their students and faculty members could work with us, particularly those from the departments of social science, social work, and health sciences.

- We are also in continued contact with Dr. Deepankar Bandhopadhyay, Department of Nanotechnology, IIT Guwahati (Reference [39]) with whom our president met very early upon his return to India. Dr. Bandhopadhyay has a dedicated and committed team of young researchers who are developing low cost public health devices that can be used to great levels of empowerment in rural communities. His efforts include not just building these devices, but also the work to train resource people on the ground on its usage, which necessarily involves a larger public health engagement. Dr. Bandhopadhyay is looking for a committed team like ours, living and working with the community, to realize the value of his team's work.

- We also have as a resource person Dr. Masum Saini (Reference [40]), an Early Career Fellow of the prestigious India Alliance (Reference [41]) for research in health and biomedical sciences in India (funded by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Government of India, and the Wellcome Trust, UK) and currently a researcher at the Regional Center of Biotechnology, Faridabad (Reference [42]). Dr. Saini, even while being a skilled researcher in the field of cancer and its related genetics, has a wholesome approach to human health and is keen to collaborate with us. Dr. Saini has personally attended a talk given by Dr. Bang on the nature of his work and made connections with his team members, for example Dr. Yogeshwar Kalkonde, particularly keeping our trust in mind.

- We also have work that we can start in the not so distant future, for example with the women of the area on their personal sanitation, which can be set up as an enterprise by the women. For this, and even several other rural development projects, we are in conversation with the Art of Living Foundation's Rural Development Program (Reference [43]), whose national head and also a trustee of the organization, Mr. Deepak Sharma (examples of whose work can be founded in Reference [44] and Reference [45]) is a personal friend of the president. Mr. Sharma is from Jorhat, Assam, a city an hour away from Selenghat, and over the years has observed the pioneering efforts of the president's parents in Boisahabi Tea Estate with its community (which we will discuss in Section 5.3) and is very interested in working with us to make Boisahabi a model tea plantation.

To conclude this section, we want to affirm our commitment to cultivating an environment for empowering people for their healthcare. Such a cultivation is a wholesome task and we are engaged simultaneously in its many dimensions, particularly that of being patient and listening. We believe that a foundation of empowerment, especially after years of disempowerment, has to be built patiently – we are especially noting this because we have seen far too many development efforts being conducted with little or no ingredient of patience and listening, especially listening that is empathetic and accommodating of the various narratives of the reasons for such disempowerment, and which instead of losing traction because of the resulting difficulties, remains focused on delivering its pristine empowerment. This is hard work, but with patience, is possible. This is true for all our endeavors.

5.3 Livelihood

Our president has personally experienced the many contexts of the mostly agrarian based rural livelihood of Assam growing up in the tea plantations of Assam, and particularly so in the last year, where after returning from the USA, in order to find traction and a model for his vision, and leading by listening to the communities of Assam, he set out to observe-explore-experience-work in as many of these agrarian contexts as possible. We will begin this section by highlighting some of these experiences and the related resourceful connections that he made:

- He has observed the steady and, in particular areas, the pioneering hard work of his parents towards taking Boisahabi Tea Estate in the direction of becoming a model tea plantation by making its community as resilient and self-sufficient as it can be. The depth of this gritty and determined hard work cannot be overstated, especially under increasingly constraining circumstances, which are now, as already noted, approaching the threshold of intractability encompassing the ground realities and its entanglement with the larger dynamics of government, politics, and the market economy.

  This work has involved a response to the dangerously bubbling social unrest in Boisahabi when they first arrived here 25 years ago – the kind of social unrest that leads to gruesome incidents like the recent one of September 1st, 2019, where Dr. Deben Dutta, a senior doctor of Teok Tea Estate in Jorhat, Assam was killed by a mob tea garden workers (Reference [46]). Even our president's father and his colleagues, and several other members of staff of other tea gardens have been subject to assaults by mobs of tea garden workers, a few of which have been lethal. As our president's parents responded to such potentially serious social unrest, they also pioneered the visionary work, over two decades, of changing the industrial and chemical based agricultural practices of a 1000 acre tea plantation to ecological sustainable agricultural practices. This is unprecedented in the context of the tea industry, which continues to be one of the largest users of chemical pesticides and fertilizers. Boisahabi will soon become the largest organic tea plantation of Assam, certified by the Government of India's Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA).

  Over 25 years, the combined effect of such work has given the community much resilience against not just the many socio-economic-political volatilities of the region, but also against the increasing unpredictability of climate conditions which are increasingly and alarmingly affecting the agriculture of tea.

- He has directly observed-worked with the realities of life in Boisahabi Tea Estate. He has

- spent time working and interacting with the men and women, whether it be with the women plucking tea leaves or men in the tea factory running the industrial coal dryers, or teaching and interacting with their children;
- worked with his mother in her cow-dairy that vitally sustains the zero-budget organic and ecological sustainable agricultural practices of Boisahabi Tea Estate.
- attended meetings and workshops conducted by the Tea Research Association (TRA) on not just the regular practices of tea cultivation, but the recently emerging topics of climate change and related mitigating agricultural techniques;
- because of his father's work, understood the imminent danger posed to this industry because of its lack of coherence to respond to the volatility of and related disruptions from the larger socio-economic-political forces. He knows the overall need of urgent coherency that is required to reform a 175 year old industry on which depends the livelihood of millions of people.

Additionally, he has also experienced progressive attempts to address the challenges of other tea plantations as undertaken by a collaboration between Barefoot College in Rajasthan (Reference [47]) and Amalgamated Plantations (APPL) (Reference [48]), which is the entity that emerged from the divestment of Tata Tea in Northeast India. As a result, talk of collaborations naturally emerged between our president and the top-level leadership of the respective teams from Barefoot College and APPL. In particular, our president felt a responsibility towards sharing his knowledge and experience with organizations like Barefoot College that are new to the contexts of the tea plantations and offer his feedback into their processes, which have been appreciated by Barefoot College's leadership.

Such experiences were vital in making our president move towards founding his own organization so that he could collaborate with a diversity of resources and organizations while remaining connected to the depths of his own vision that prompts its own particular response, which he began to believe more and more in with every such experience.

- Our president has also experienced-observed-worked in the various other agricultural contexts of Assam:
  - He coordinated an entrepreneurship development training for 50 women from the villages of Majuli, Assam based on the skill of bee-keeping. This training was conducted as an associate of SNEHPAD (Reference [49]), a local NGO based in Jorhat, in collaboration with Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India's (EDII) (Reference [50]) Micro Skillpreneurs Development Project (MSDP) 2018-2019. (As a prerequisite for coordinating this program, our president also received the National Training of Trainers' Programme in Entrepreneurship Development, from EDII, Ahmedabad.) While it was valuable to directly experience the structure and processes of a typical NGO program and develop valuable relationships with the senior leaders at EDII, it was more valuable for our president to experience the contexts of the rural women of Assam, and meet and build relationships with inspiring and successful agripreneurs of this region like Mr. Papumoni Hazarkia.

    Mr. Hazarika is a successful bee-keeping agrirepreneur from the village of Bokakhat, Assam and a key resource person for the Khadi & Village Industries Commission (KVIC) Honey Mission (Reference [51]) in Assam. He was also the resource person for the

bee-keeping training for the training that our president coordinated. Thus far, he has conducted classes in bee-keeping for thousands of people from the villages of Assam. Mr. Hazarika and our president felt a mutual relationship developing, particularly in the context of empowering rural communities in matters of sustainable livelihood development, and in order to make the energy from this relationship tangible partly inspired our president to form his own organization. Our president and Mr. Hazarika continue to work towards building such a resourceful collaboration and also continue to advise the women from Majuli in their bee-keeping endeavor and visit them periodically.

– He attended the Meghalaya government's first-ever Farmers Parliament held on December 4-5, 2018, in Shillong, Meghalaya, about which he wrote for in Down To Earth – see Reference [10]. Here he observed a wholesome and hopeful movement on the basis of the formal democratic procedure of a parliament, where the demands of the farmers, after dialogues directly with the government officials and bureaucrats, "were consolidated as a charter of demands and resolution at the farmer parliament, which was submitted to the state Cabinet – to be discussed in a special state legislative assembly session." (Reference [10]) Such a parliament and its progressive agenda were on the realm of being unprecedented in the context of India's agrarian crisis and a model for the rest of the country to emulate.

  Here he met the chief and agricultural ministers of Meghalaya, Mr. Conrad Sangma and Mr. Banteidor Lyngdoh, respectively, who encouraged him to continue his work. They offered him not just their collaboration but asked for his support for their own endeavours in Meghalaya and the rest of the country in general, particularly for the education of farmers not just on their rights, but also methods of zero-budget methods of organic farming. Here he also met Mr. Lanu Ignatius, an information technology professional turned social entrepreneur, who is a member of the Technical Advisory Council for Government of Meghalaya's Farmers' Empowerment Commission, and Advisor and Cheif Strategist to the Hill Famers' Union. Mr. Ignatius has been providing our president with valuable mentorship in the field of social entrepreneurship and its related landscape of challenges and opportunities.

– He has also built a relationship with Farmer Samir Bordoloi (Reference [52]), a significantly impactful and popular national award winning social innovator and agripreneur from Assam (2015 Northeast Social Impact award, Pragati Puraskar 2016, Agripreneur of the Country 2017, Krishak Ratna 2018, and IARI Innovative Farmer Award 2019). Farmer Bordoloi's central mission is the empowerment of farmers based on indigenous resources and wisdom, which is a vital part of the solution of freeing them from the vicious disempowering cycles, for example that of the farmers debt crisis, manifested largely as a result of the entangled powerful forces of corporate and political mechanisms, and industrial methods of agriculture. Such an empowerment, as we have already noted, is deeply needed for the empowerment of not just human beings, but of the soil, ecosystems, and the general health of the planet.

  Farmer Bordoloi, who also serves on the prestigious Board of Management of Assam Agricultural University, has worked with and educated tens of thousands farmers and thousands of students in schools and colleges. He is currently the General Secretary of the NGO SPREAD NE (Society for Promotion of Rural Economy & Agricultural Development, Northeast), of which our president is an associate and a resource person.

Farmer Bordoloi and our president are already working on a few ventures, particularly that of engaging young children and youths from schools and colleges in hands-on activities related to ecologically sustainable agriculture practices, which is used as a basis for coherently thinking-acting about some of the problems of our times – the agrarian crisis to the health of our collective community of human beings and all life on this planet – and integrating such thought-action as a part of the school's curriculum. Our president, for example, is a member of the executive committee of the Green Commandos (Reference [53]) (a volunteer organization of people from all walks of life – schools, colleges, government offices, farms, IT professionals, business etc– started by Farmer Bordoloi that is engaged in empowering the rural economies of Northeast India) and is particularly in the leadership of the education aspect of the movement. As a part of such effort, the Green Commandos recently adopted Intaya Public School in Roing, Arunachal Pradesh, and together with the children built an edible food forest (Reference [54]).

5.3.1 Livelihood: Action Plan and Current Resources

As a result of the respective experiences of our founders, we have organically developed a healthy ecosystem of resources who have not only encouraged us in our journey, but have been equally encouraged by us: these relationships have begun from our respective inner cores and unbiased by our respective outward agendas, and they, therefore, have the richness of a deep trust that offers solidarity, courage, and tangible support. And, as much as we count the people of Boisahabi, Barefoot College, APPL, EDII, Mr. Hazarika, Mr. Ignatius and Farmer Bordoloi as our current and potential resources, we also count the farmers we meet in our communities, with whom we continue to build relationships, leading with a listening-patience that is unhurried to quickly organize a program and just do something or anything, but is trusting of the depth of the value that will flow in due time, of its own accord, once we establish trust worthy relationships.

The field of such listening-patience is fertile with possibilities, which we work hard to keep grounded in our central ethos, and even as we list some of these possibilities, we know from experience that their full depth can only be uncovered once we engage in action and learn from its feedback.

Before we list these possibilities, we would also like to note as a resource Member of Parliament Dr. Shashi Tharoor (Reference [55]). Our president met with him in an effort to introduce his vision to him, and even though years of ground work lies ahead, developing a connection with a resourceful politician and international civil servant who is able to discuss the problems of modern India without reducing it to fragments of divisive politics, felt not just important at a practical level, but also important for courage and validating feedback for our central conviction. In the particular context of tea plantations, our president felt that Dr. Tharoor particularly understood its current state based on a wholesome understanding of the history of pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial India, and if and when such a time came, a synergistic collaboration from the ground realities to levels of policy could be had for an effective process. Dr. Tharoor encouraged our president in his endeavor and told him that he would be willing to help with matters of policy.

Additionally, we would like to note that because of our most immediate step of building a model school in the area while simultaneously engaging in the larger educational reform in the area, livelihood activities will unfurl organically because of the interconnected education-healthcare-livelihood complex. Immediate actions that will emerge, for example, are:

- Creation of a space to discuss, listen, and share experiences, knowledge, and resources related

to all livelihood activities. It is natural for us to have conversations with people about their livelihood activities, which prompt a list of challenges that can already be addressed by sharing knowledge and resources as simple as: connecting a farmer with another, a market connection for a particular variety of crop, treatment for a particular crop/livestock disease, connection to a veterinarian, connection to the right scientist in an institute, a better technique to preserve a seed or make an organic pesticide etc. A coming together of people, to the first order, already goes a long way in solving individual and collective problems.

- A natural extension of this space will be action for empowering, by simultaneously helping and educating, rural people when it comes to dealing with many forms of civil paperwork, whether it be applying for a PAN card, opening and managing a bank account, or applying for a driver's license etc. We have observed that unlike the middle-class modern India, for people in rural India these are entirely new processes. Additionally, most systems where such work is done are largely apathetic and, to varying degrees also, incompetent and corrupt, which can cause a harrowing experience even for the average middle-class modern Indian. Such distance between modern and rural India causes numerous practical problems that significantly creates and intensifies matters of inefficiency and corruption in financial, legal, law enforcement, healthcare services, political and other affairs of public life. For example, the racket run by middlemen outside government offices is plain to see where for money, without doing a blood test or confirming it through some other valid process, they can even obtain a doctor's signature endorsing an unverified blood group on a driver's license application form.

  The ambitious Digital India campaign of the government of India, often causes more chaos in rural India, and instead of the common man, it is opportunistic middlemen who benefit: for example, cases of illiterate and ignorant people being duped financially by middle men who fill out their bank cheques or apply for their PAN card, abound.

We expect many such natural extensions to emerge for livelihood and related matters. As we build trust and our resources grow, and we understand our communities better, we will begin undertaking some of the larger tasks we have envisioned:

- Work with the farmers of Selenghat area to educate and promote zero-budget ecological sustainable agricultural practices. We imagine doing this work in dedicated workshops/programs conducted with one of our resources, for example Farmer Bordoloi, the resulting action of which we could sustain by continuing to maintain relationships with the farmers, not just for the sake of motivation and knowledge-transfer, but also for setting up vital logistics, for example sustainable market connections. In addition to the existing and conventional markets, there are up-and-coming market connections that are put in place to directly connect farmers to the market, and with whom our president already has relationships: for example Farm Connect at AAU Fresh in Guwahati, Assam (Reference [56]), which has been set up by SPREAD NE (Reference [57]) and the Green Commando network (Reference [53]). Our president, as already noted previously, is an associate of and resource person for the former, and the executive committee member for the latter.

  A relevant crop in this context is paddy: Assam's farmers are predominantly rice farmers and also its largest consumers. Growing the indigenous rice economy in all its numerous varieties of seeds and manners of processing can significantly empower the state's farmers and also preserve the state's cultural heritage that is so powerfully connected with rice. In current times, however, there is an increasing import of wheat and related products into the

state, and the local value and wisdom of the rice economy is getting lost. We would like to encourage farmers of the Selenghat area, above all by motivating them with sustainable market connections, to not just grow local varieties of rice, but also engage in its numerous traditional processing.

- Work with the interested members of the tea community to move away from industrial methods of agriculture towards sustainable ecological practices, while simultaneously also working to solve its many socio-economic problems. In our vision, we would like to develop a diverse and dedicated team to work for the coherent set of problems that the industry faces to either reform itself or prepare itself for the new future as it unfolds in the wake of the intractability of its problems. This task is just as visionary and challenging, if not more, as that of the whole-school-transformation models that seek to reform our education system. We include in the tea community the small tea growers who now account for as much as 50% of the tea production from Assam (Reference [3]). Their growing presence is significantly affecting the industry and all its stakeholders.

  Such a visionary task will take time and we imagine starting in smaller parts while being tethered to the coherent wholesomeness of the problem, including working in collaborative projects with Barefoot College (Reference [47]) and APPL (Reference [48]). For example, Barefoot College is interested in working with the casual and unemployed women of the tea plantations for generation of alternative livelihood using bee-keeping, which our president already has experience in and knows valuable resource people for teaching the skills and setting up local market connections. To do this work, Barefoot College is looking for a reliable ground partner in Assam and they at one point had asked our president to fill in this role for them. Now that we have our trust in place, we will be able to consider such opportunities to collaborate.

- Conduct trainings in development of new skills and related livelihood based on the need of the community. These could be in the realm of agricultural based livelihood, local arts and crafts, or the various skills related to the modern job market. We have as resources some of the leading agencies that support, even fully financially, such training programs, for example EDII (Reference [50]) and Art of Living Foundation's Rural Development Program (Reference [43]).

  In addition to our market connections for agricultural entrepreneurs, which we noted previously, we also have market connections for local art and crafts. For example, because of a personal family friendship, our president is connected with the senior vice president of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) Ladies Organization (FLO) (References [58] [59]), Mrs. Jahnabi Phookan, who is a prominent entrepreneur from Assam with over 20 years of experience in promoting ethnic Northeastern handicrafts. She conceptualized KONYAK (Reference [60]), a platform for artisans from Northeast India to showcase and sell their handicrafts, and generate a sustainable livelihood for themselves. We are looking forward to working with the women of Selenghat to revive the local art and crafts of the region, for example the traditional fabrics made using the handloom, and working with people like Mrs. Phookan to set up sustainable markets.

6 Model School and Vision of Larger Education Reform

In this section we will discuss the model school we are building for the children of the Selenghat area and also our larger vision for educational reform together with the many other schools of the Selenghat area.

We call our school a model school most immediately in the context of the flavor of the Indian education crisis that we observe in the rural areas of Selenghat, where despite the presence of several schools (perhaps more per kilometer than in other parts of the country) the quality of education remains dismal. Children are reduced to passive recipients of rote-learning and this gross reduction from the wholesome depths of human knowledge is disempowering the children and their communities: let alone progressing to finding jobs, most children, especially from the tea plantations, do not even make it through the school system and drop out. It is in response to such truths and also observing the effects of a wholesome education on these very children, and of course the request from them and their parents, that made our president realize that a model school that works from the depth of such wholesomeness needs to be built for the children and to demonstrate by action the deep empowering values of such an education.

And this model school will not exist in isolation but with the intention of engaging with local system to, together, work towards a larger and visionary education reform. It will be a model in the context of being the change we want to see: as we engage and learn from the existing school systems of their constraints and problems, the solutions we begin to offer, we will already have worked on in our school and be able to demonstrate in action.

6.1 Model School

We will build our model school, which we are aiming to make operational by January 2020, to offer classes in the Foundational and Preparatory phases of education as laid down in the new Draft National Education Policy (NEP) 2019 (Reference [14]), where the 5-year Foundational phase comprises three years of pre-primary education in nursery, lower kindergarten (LKG), upper kindergarten (UKG), followed by two years of grades 1 and 2, and the 3-year Preparatory phase comprises grades 3,4, and 5.

We will, however, reach our goals incrementally and in the first year will begin with the first one or two grades i.e. nursery and LKG, which will also be determined by our available financial resources after the initial fund-raising and also the needs of the community. Each year, incrementally, we will add a grade and more infrastructure and resources for the holistic development of our students. Such a model of incremental development is based on the model followed by Hummingbird School in Majuli (Reference [24]) and from whom we are receiving vital mentorship.

To proceed beyond the Preparatory stage into the stages of Middle (grades 6, 7 and 8) and Secondary education stages (grades 9, 10, 11 and 12), also according to the NEP, will be determined in the due course of the running of the school.

The school will be located in such a way to make it accessible to children from the village and tea plantation communities of Selenghat.

In the following sections we will highlight the overarching principles for our model school.

6.1.1 Build School with Community Participation

It validates us and strengthens our conviction for building the school with community participation when we note someone like Madhav Chavan, a renowned social entrepreneur in the area of education, say that "Schools generally work in isolation from the community they serve. Not making parents and the larger community partners in the child's learning process aggravates the learning crisis, at least in the early years" (Reference [61]). As also noted by Chavan, even the NEP "recommends community and volunteer participation in collaboration with schools to overcome the current crisis".

As we have already noted, the seed for this school was sown by the people of this community, in particular the women, men, and children of Boisahabi Tea Estate who requested our president to build a school. It is powerfully natural that this school must germinate and grow in the same spirit – to be built with and for the community.

As such, at each incremental step, we are looking actively within the Selenghat communities for resources to build and run this school, which includes its construction with local resources – materials and people, representation in the school committee, and teachers. Now that people are increasingly becoming aware of such a school being constructed, we are going to increase our community mobilization. Already, as the awareness spread of its own accord without active mobilization, people are coming forward offering their help and blessings for this endeavour.

6.1.1.1 Constructing the Physical and Soft Infrastructure

The next step, for which we have recently begun work, is to assemble a team of skilled construction workers from the community – professionals and volunteers – who will build our school with locally available resources, sustainably and in harmony with its natural surroundings. We are currently also working to include in this community collaboration a team of professional architects who share our ethos of working with the community in such a building project.

The school building itself we envision to be an organic and dynamic part of our lives that engages us all as a community – initially by engaging community members to work together in its construction, and then its students, teachers, and larger community to sustain and grow it harmoniously. Included in this growth, because of our wholesome education-healthcare-livelihood vision, are spaces for providing community participation for matters of healthcare and livelihood development, as we already noted in Sections 5.2.1 and 5.3.1, respectively.

6.1.1.2 The School Committee

The School Committee will be made up mostly of the members of the people from the various communities of Selenghat. It will consist of its prominent members and common members, and, since the school is for children, we will also strongly urge this committee to include in it the children of the communities.

6.1.1.3 The Teachers

We are looking forward to having teachers in this school from the communities of Selenghat. Compassionate, empathetic, and kind men and women who want to serve their community and demonstrate an ability to learn of teaching methodologies consistent with our core conviction and its resultant ethos for education (see, for example, subsequent Sections 6.1.2 and 6.1.3), will be encouraged to work with us. We will conduct orientation and training session amongst us, and as

noted already previously, work with foundations like Ayang Trust (Reference [23]), Akshar Foundation (Reference [30]) and Teach For India (Reference [22]) so that our teachers can learn from their experiences, informally and in formal training sessions they have developed for such training purposes.

6.1.2 Emphasis on Learning How To Learn

We will strive to create in our school an environment where students can nurture their ability to "learn how to learn". This, we believe, is a vitally empowering aspect of education. We believe, because of our worldview where human knowledge is given birth to by our collective human existential and practical life conditions, that children are but naturally driven to uncover the depths of this knowledge and in this process the role of a teacher is that of a facilitator who deeply respects and trusts the children. A teacher-facilitator meets the children where they begin: learning from them of their respective experiences, and encouraging them to begin, from their respective experiences, their interaction with the depths of this knowledge.

As such, this process cannot be formalized into any specialized structure and its related processes. Any attempt to do so, which unfortunately is most of our current education system, goes against the deepest wisdom of education, which we know of deeply in our intuitive beings and also in scientific research and policy documents: even the government of India's new Draft National Education Policy (NEP) 2019 stresses this point as a response to solving our educational crisis by saying that "The most current research in ECCE [Early Childhood Care and Education] shows that children under the age of 8 do not tend to follow the linear, age-based educational trajectories that are prescribed to them by policy or by any preset timelines for curriculum; as a result, a large proportion of children in pre-school and Grades 1 and 2 are not receiving developmentally appropriate education suited to their needs. It is only at about the age of 8 that children adapt to more prescripted learning" (Reference [14]).

The points made subsequently in Sections 6.1.2.1 and 6.1.3 directly emerge from this core ethos.

6.1.2.1 Allow for Curiosity-Play-Exploration Based Learning

We would like to begin this section with a quote from Albert Einstein:

"It is, in fact, nothing short of a miracle that the modern methods of instruction have not yet entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry; for this delicate little plant, aside from stimulation, stands mainly in need of freedom. Without this it goes to wrack and ruin without fail." (Reference [62])

We all feel the wisdom of such words in our hearts and have read it or heard of it in infinite flavors. Even our youngest of students are introduced to Einstein, but mostly in a way that he becomes a distant and esoteric genius, and not a companion that we can deeply relate to as we look for inspiration to follow our own curiosity, from where we begin.

A natural way for children to uncover the depths of human knowledge begins by following their natural curiosity which manifests, at least initially, as play and exploration that, as a already noted even by the NEP now, cannot be linearized. We believe that the infinite diversity of human knowledge organically and coherently emerges from such an exploration and naturally leads to developing specialized structures and processes to deepen knowledge in any one of these diverse fields. This is particularly relevant in the current disempowerment of kids where they are directly presented with this overwhelming diversity in the form of fragmented subjects that extinguishes

the innate drive of a child, and the vitality of the process of education is lost to the dreariness of rote-learning.

As teacher-facilitators, we believe in facilitating this process: In the Foundational years (nursery, LKG, UKG, grade 1 and 2), the process of curiosity-play-exploration must be allowed to lead, as also noted in the NEP, which in response to this non-linearity of the initial learning process says that : "Therefore, it is important that children of ages 3-8 have access to a flexible, multifaceted, multilevel, play-based, activity-based, and discovery-based education." (Reference [14])

We believe that as children progress in their journey, structures related to uncovering and digging deeper into particular parts of wholesome human knowledge naturally emerge, and not as fragments, but as coherent parts of the whole. This instills in the students an empowering and core confidence where they are able to continue to pursue the depths of the various fields in specialized classes, but in a way that these specializations remain tethered to the profound wholesomeness: the NEP validates our experiences strongly and by citing the times of Nalanda and Takshashila, says that "the history of higher education in India recognised the holistic aspect of all human knowledge and enquiry as fundamentally connected. The holistic nature of knowledge as imparted through a broad and interwoven education is an important factor for the preparation of students for life, work and to be an effective member of society. [...] The available assessments on such an approach that integrate the humanities and arts with Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) have showed positive learning outcomes. More explicitly, the outcomes here include, among other things, increased critical thinking abilities, higher order thinking and deeper learning, mastery of content, problem solving, team work and communication skills besides general engagement and enjoyment of learning."

Additionally, even when increasingly engaging in specialized branches of knowledge in not just the Middle (grades 6, 7 and 8) and Secondary education (grades 9, 10, 11 and 12) process, but even beyond in higher forms of education and professional lives, the core of curiosity-play-exploration remains intact. We believe that curiosity-play-exploration is a vital core of every epistemological process and fuels creativity and innovation, while keeping us tethered to the humility of our existential conditions, in which we are all together – it is increasingly becoming clear that to solve or even deal peacefully with the problems of our times, from that of education to the changing climate to the divisiveness of identity politics, we all must work from our togetherness.

6.1.3 Dynamic Learning Balance: Academic - Vocational - Life Skills

It will be a humbling challenge for us teacher-facilitators to remain wholesome in our efforts: even as we allow children freedom of expression, we must also remain in tune with parameters that connect us to the real world of jobs and related skills, especially in a country like India where let alone a person from a disadvantaged socio-economic background, but also from the middle class is deeply challenged when it comes to embarking on a strong professional career. While these real-world parameters will not be immediately relevant for the Foundational phase students (grade 2 and younger), it will be something we will still have to be aware of, even if with regards to having conversations with parents and their expectations, but in the Preparatory phase (grades 3,4, and 5), these real-world parameters will start becoming increasingly important to follow.

Remaining in tune with these real-world parameters will be a healthy challenge for our teachers – for example even as we work hard on drill problems in math and science for a student who shows inclination and an interest to pursue a future at, for example, one of the Indian Institute of Technologies and simultaneously find various opportunities for getting hands-on practical experi-

ence, we will also remain aware that several vocational opportunities are possible where we stand in realms of entrepreneurship and innovation in agriculture, matters of the environment, and problems of the human society around us. In fact, we observe that the latter must be encouraged for the empowerment of rural society and its various forms of livelihoods – traditional and emerging ones.

The fabric that stretches between the poles of academic, vocational, and life-skills education is wholesome and we look forward to being present in it with our children, with our utmost sense of responsibility and dedication for their overall well being. We are confident not just in our abilities, but also our tangible resources in this entire fabric. For example, because of our president's 18 years of academic and professional experience in the fields related to STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) (see Section 2 titled The Trustees), he not only deeply understands these fields to integrate them in the school curriculum, but also provide his students mentorship and resources, including human resources in STEM fields for professional success. (The grade-5 and younger students in the model school will not be on the threshold of entering their professional lives and therefore not as immediately in need of such levels of resources, but in our school we will also work with older students and unemployed youths of the community by offering tutoring and other relevant activities at nominal to no cost. See Section 6.1.4 for more details.)

6.1.4 Youth Engagement Center

We envision our model school also offering the space of a general youth engagement center, especially in the before- and after-school hours, and on holidays. This vision is based on experience where we find the older students and the youth of the community are naturally driven to such positive engagements that satisfy their needs ranging from help in academic tutoring to any kind of positive activity, whether it be sports or a friendly meeting of children and youths. The value of such positive community engagements, not just for the children and the youths, but the entire community cannot be overstated. Our president has engaged with all such activities with the children and youth of Boisahabi, even incorporating mindful meditation sessions during such activities, which the children and youth take to in a way that is powerful to observe.

Following is a list of activities that we envision in such a youth engagement center (this list is neither comprehensive nor complete):

- Offering serious and focused academic tutoring, especially to the older children in the community who are in grades where failure results in dropout and a severe negative impact on their self confidence. A wide range of students need to be catered to ranging from those who show exceptional brilliance and promise (such are significantly fewer) to those who may be in the 9th grade, but their level of understanding can be that of anywhere from that of a 1st to a 5th grader. This task is very challenging, but we need to respond to it and solutions will emerge.

- Nurture the responsible and able student of the community as teachers – to teach not just their peers, but the younger children of the community. This is a social innovation that our president believes has powerful potential.

- In the same vein as the above point, treat students and youths as fellow social and environmental innovators and entrepreneurs to discuss and work towards solving community problems, from garbage collection and recycling to social innovation for education and tackling the rampant alcohol problem, especially in the tea plantations.

- Engage the youth, especially the unemployed youth, in activities ranging from skill development, either through formal structures of government, NGO projects, or with help from locally skilled people, to volunteer-organization based projects considered relevant by the youth.
- Organize cultural and sport related activities and exchanges with other communities.

6.2 Educational Reform in Selenghat

As already noted, our model school will not be set up to exist in isolation, but to also work towards the larger vision of educational reform with the many schools of the area. And as we already noted, such work is not unprecedented: nearby organizations of Ayang Trust (Reference [23]) and Akshar Foundation (Reference [30]) in Majuli and Guwahati, respectively, are already doing this actively in their respective areas and are providing us with valuable mentorship, and so is Teach For India (Reference [22]) encouraging such efforts across all communities in India and they too are offering us mentorship. Teach For India, for example, has also developed a fellowship program for this purpose where they, using their extensive resources and skills, support educational entrepreneurs like our president to develop such a model of visionary educational reform in the context of their respective communities. They have strongly encouraged our president to apply for this fellowship in due time, especially once the model school is running and we begin to build relationships with the local school system.

In a nutshell, in such an education reform model, education entrepreneurs recruit passionately driven and aspiring social entrepreneurs as fellows to work in their community. These fellows are sent to local schools that are interested in engaging in such a reform. The fellows work as teachers-observers and learn about the problems in the schools they are assigned to. Such fellows are given the freedom to develop, based on their relationship with the school, either a whole-school transformation model or work in reform in one particular area, for example teacher training in basic conduct to aspects of pedagogy, diet, nutrition, and exercise in schools, etc. The parameters for such a program are open and flexible depending on the context of the particular school. The fellows are guided by the educational entrepreneur, who in turn for support and even a basic training on all aspects of such an endeavour, ranging from the various technical details to even inspiration, can rely on more experienced organizations like Teach For India, Ayang Trust, and Akshar Foundation, for example.

Our president is already working to develop relationships in the local school system keeping this larger vision in mind. He also interacts with many of its children. It is only a matter of time before such a fellowship program will emerge for the Selenghat area under the leadership of our president. Till then, we continue to grow and nurture all the required resources and collaborations, and listen to our school community.

7 Sustainability Models for the Trust

In this section we will present aspects of the financial sustainability of our trust, which to begin with will be to sustain our model school. This will include direct and indirect finances, where the former implies sources of liquid financial assets and the latter, tangible resources given to us by another agency, for example a school building or sponsorship of a child's education.

We would like to note already that the sources listed here are neither comprehensive nor complete. As a young trust, as we begin to walk the path of solving our communities' problems,

we are naturally led to several opportunities for not just obtaining initial seed funding, but also opportunities to build a strong and sustainable financial base.

7.1 Direct Financial Input

As a young NGO, because of governmental regulations, many of the traditional NGO funding opportunities, including Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and foreign contribution funds, will not be accessible to us for 3 years. Therefore our immediate funding model is based on

1. Philanthropic donations from India
2. Nominal fee from students of the school

We are working to grow and sustain a base of philanthropic donors, especially so that we can increase the facilities at our school and even offer need-based financial assistance to students.

To this we will add financial assistance from the landscape of fellowship and incubator programs (whose primary value is of providing an incubation ecosystem that leads to building a stronger wholesome base that naturally includes resources for the financial stability of the organization). We have talked to fellow social entrepreneurs who have availed such resources and are confident of getting such fellowships and incubation opportunities, especially once our proof-of-concept is on the ground. The landscape of such fellowships and incubation programmes is rich and we are constantly finding opportunities, but for now we will list only those for whom we have got a word-of-mouth reference from fellow social entrepreneurs:

- Wipro Seeding Fellowship (Reference [63])
- EduMentum (Reference [64])
- N/Core Innovation Grant (Reference [65])
- Ashoka Fellowship (Reference [66])
- NSRCEL Social incubation programme at IIM Bangalore (Reference [67])

Simultaneously, we will work to grow a sustainable revenue stream for the school through entrepreneurship ventures that can grow to include not just the school community, but also the larger community. To pursue such ventures we already are in conversation with successful agripreneurs of the Assam like Farmer Bordoloi and Mr. Hazarika, whom we already noted as our resource people in Section 5.3, and also with the local Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK). Some of these agripreneurship opportunities include:

- Mushroom cultivation can be done in a small room and can generate significant revenue, and for which we have all the key resource people: those who can teach us the relevant skills of the trade and continue to support us, and also for market connection.
- Bee-keeping is another such avenue for which we have the skill-training and market-connection resources. Our president already begun learning bee-keeping during this skill-based entrepreneurship training that he coordinated in Majuli (see Section 5.3) and practices it in his own home, with the aim of slowly growing it, with the help of the school community, towards financially sustaining the school.

- Growing of lucrative cash crops in the school compound, which can range from growing and processing Rosella flowers for medicinal tea to King Chillis, to perennial trees whose fruit and timber, for example, offer cash value.
- Production and sale of organic bio-detergents, for example those that can be made from locally available materials, like peels of citrus fruits, jaggery, and water.
- Production and sale of organic manure like vermicompost, vermiwash, and natural pesticides made from leaf-mixture extracts and those made from cow-urine, and also in other ways using other natural ingredients.

We can also add various services whose financial return goes towards sustaining our model school, and which we will advertise in such a manner that people know that they are supporting a good cause (again, as all lists in this note, this too is neither comprehensive nor complete):

- Offer training-camps for urban or any other interested people in sustainable ecological agricultural practices and other sustainable practices that we will have developed and implemented in our school or in the surrounding community.
- Offer eco-camping experiences where visitors can spend the weekend in a picturesque location and with the help of a knowledgeable and friendly guide, our founders themselves, for example, experience in a manner that is honest, the lives of the local communities, whether it be of a local tea plantation or a village.

We feel confident of being able to sustain ourselves in such diverse ways for 3 years, after which the regulations that are currently under restriction like various NGO funds, CSR funds, and foreign contributions will open up, thus giving us a greater access to funding, especially after we will have established a valuable track record. Because of foreign contributions opening up, we can open up not just our philanthropic base to foreign donors, but also have a greater resource pool of fellowships that we can apply to.

We believe so deeply in the value of our work, which we are committed to doing in the most sincere and honest manner, that opportunities for continued financial stability will grow in a manner that we are able to sustain not just our model school, but also support other organizations. This will take due time, but we are confident that it will happen.

7.2 Indirect Financial Input

We will also work with organizations that may not directly provide us finances, but will obtain for us the related tangible resources. For example Sauramandala Foundation (Reference [34]) and Brontosauri v Himaljch (Reference [27]) can help us build, or otherwise obtain, tangible resources like buildings, sponsorship of children, setting up of solar electrification, and other such material resources that we will need.

8 Summary

In this note we have presented our vision and its emergent plans of actions and related resources. Our vision is ambitious, but patient and grounded in our humbling conviction that we are all together in our existential conditions. From such a conviction emerges our worldview of wholesome

thought-action in which our differences exist coherently, and not as divided fragments. From such a conviction, we are guided to recruit our ability to be compassionate so that we can accept our differences and work together as undivided wholes to empower our communities by nurturing an environment where the freedoms of education-healthcare-livelihood are available to all.

Our immediate work is to build a model school for the children of Selenghat and simultaneously begin work for the larger education reform in the area. We have, as noted in detail in this note, developed a healthy ecosystem of resources that inspire and guide us. From this stepping stone, because of our vision of education-healthcare-livelihood, work in healthcare and livelihood will naturally unfurl.

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Appendix A Resume for Dr. Arjun Trivedi

Education

Institution	Field of Study	Degree	Graduation Year
University of South Carolina, USA	Physics	Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	2016
Florida Institute of Technology, USA	Electrical Engineering	Bachelor of Science (BSc)	2004

Training

National Training of Trainers' Programme in Entrepreneurship Development, Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII), Ahmedabad, November, 2018

Collaborations

Society for Promotion of Rural Economy & Agricultural Development Northeast (SPREAD NE), Guwahati, Assam	2019-Present
Society For North East Handmade Paper Development (SNEHPAD), Jorhat, Assam	2018-2019
CLAS Collaboration, Thomas Jefferson National Accelerator Facility (TJNAF), USA	2012-Present
ATLAS Collaboration, European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), Switzerland	2009-2011

Professional Experience

2019-Present	Founder, President and Executive Director of Karunar Kheti Trust
2018-2019	Trainer for Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India's Micro Skillpreneurs Development Project (MSDP) 2018-2019, SNEHPAD, Jorhat, Assam
2016-2018	Research Associate, Experimental Nuclear Physics, Department of Physics, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC, USA
2010-2016	Research Assistant, Experimental Nuclear Physics, Department of Physics, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC, USA
2007-2010	Research Assistant, High Energy Physics, Department of Physics, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC, USA
2006-2007	Teaching Assistant, Department of Physics, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC, USA
2004-2005	Systems Test Engineer, General Electric (GE) Transportation, Melbourne, FL, USA
2003-2004	Systems Test Engineer, Intern, General Electric (GE) Transportation, Melbourne, FL, USA

Other Activities

2019-Present	Author for Down To Earth magazine (https://www.downtoearth.org.in/author/arjun-trivedi-129440)
2019-Present	Executive Committee member of SPREAD NE's Green Commando volunteer organization
2018-2019	Observer-worker at Boisahabi Tea Estate
2018-2019	Volunteer advisor to Sundarpur Tea Estate on organic tea cultivation practices
2019	Participated in Farm Camping Program on Ecological Farming Practices at SPREAD NE Farm Learning Centre, Sonapur, Assam
2018	Attended 1st Meghalaya Farmers' Parliament, Shillong, Meghalaya
2017	Attended Tea Board organized Seminar on Impact of Climate Change on Tea and Ameliorative Measures
2016-2018	Participated in activities of Columbia Resilience, a non-profit based in Columbia, SC, USA, working to build to build resilience in all sectors of the community to withstand severe energy, climate, and economic shocks while creating a better quality of life in the process
2016	Participated in Permaculture Workshop, Columbia, SC, USA
2016	Performed in collaborative storytelling as a part of Waterlines Screening & Performance, Indie Grits Film Festival 2016, Columbia, SC, USA

Honors and Awards

JSA Junior Scientist Travel Support Award, Jefferson Science Associates, LLC	2014
Faculty Honors Award, Florida Institute of Technology	2004
Outstanding Senior in Electrical Engineering, Florida Institute of Technology	2003-2004
Outstanding Junior in Electrical Engineering, Florida Institute of Technology	2002-2003
Outstanding Sophomore in Computer Engineering, Florida Institute of Technology	2001-2002
Faculty Scholarship, Florida Institute of Technology	2000

Invited Talks

1) Department of Physics, Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati, India, March 2017: Measurement of New Observables from the $\pi^+\pi^-$ Electroproduction off the Proton
2) Department of Theoretical Physics, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai, India, April 2015: Charting the Evolution of the Strong Interaction's Degrees of Freedom

Selected Contributed Talks

1) NSTAR 2017, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina, USA, August 2017: Measurement of New Observables from the $\pi^+\pi^-$ Electroproduction off the Proton
2) XXI DAE-BRNS High Energy Physics Symposium, Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati, India, December 2014: Charting the Evolution of the Strong Interaction's Degrees of Freedom
3) 2013 Fall Meeting of the APS Division of Nuclear Physics, Newport News, Virginia, USA, October 2013: Beam spin asymmetry observables from electroproduction of $p\pi^+\pi^-$ off protons

Selected Publications (8 selected out of 165 refereed publications)

1) Measurement of New Observables from the $\pi^+\pi^-$ p Electroproduction Off the Proton, A. Trivedi, Few Body Syst. 60, (2019)
2) Measurements of $ep \to e'\pi^+\pi^- p'$ Cross Sections with CLAS at 1.40 Gev $< W <$ 2.0 GeV and 2.0 GeV^2 $< Q^2 <$ 5.0 GeV^2, E. L. Isupov *et al.* [CLAS Collaboration], Phys. Rev. C 96, 025209 (2017)
3) Charting the Evolution of the Strong Interactions Degrees of Freedom, A. Trivedi, R. Gothe and E. Phelps, Springer Proc. Phys. 174, 23 (2016)
4) First Measurement of the Polarization Observable E in the $\vec{p}(\vec{\gamma}, \pi^+)n$ Reaction up to 2.25 GeV, S. Strauch *et al.* [CLAS Collaboration], S. Strauch *et al.* [CLAS Collaboration], Phys. Lett. B 750, 53 (2015)
5) Measurements of $ep \to e'\pi^+ n$ at W = 1.6 - 2.0 GeV and extraction of nucleon resonance electrocouplings at CLAS, K. Park *et al.* [CLAS Collaboration], Phys. Rev. C 91, 045203 (2015)
6) Deep exclusive π^+ electroproduction off the proton at CLAS, K. Park *et al.* [CLAS Collaboration], Eur. Phys. J. A 49, 16 (2013)
7) Luminosity Determination in pp Collisions at $\sqrt{s} = 7$ TeV Using the ATLAS Detector at the LHC, G. Aad *et al.* [ATLAS Collaboration], Eur. Phys. J. C 71, 1630 (2011)
8) The ATLAS Simulation Infrastructure, G. Aad *et al.* [ATLAS Collaboration], Eur. Phys. J. C 70, 823 (2010)