

My Germany Diary

DESTINATION GERMANY
In Celebration of the Birth of GANGAMOON
(Received February 22, 2002)

15-16 January 2008: I am all-prepared to join the GANGAMOON Project Proposal Preparation Workshop to be conducted in Jena, Germany. Prof. Dr. Wolfgang-Albert Flugel, the Coordinator of the GANGAMOON has invited me along with selected Indian and European scientists. In addition to my professional association, I also wish to give my visit a personal touch to make it more eventful. For me, this is not just a workshop, but also an event of celebration of the birth of GANGAMOON. I wish to share my diary with all GANGAMOON friends. There is nothing official about it.

The Pantnagar-New Delhi journey by bus on the 15-16 January night was not comfortable. It kept me awoken during the whole freezing night. I reached the Indira Gandhi International Airport at around 6.00 AM. All formalities were there to accomplish: taking boarding pass, emigration clearance, security check, etc. I had enough time to stay at the airport which I utilized in reading newspapers and the matter relating to GANGAMOON project which Prof. Dr. Wolfgang-Albert Flugel was mailing me from Jena. I had all the matter pertaining to the GANGAMOON with me. I had only a large hand bag, not heavy luggage, to carry in the plane. I wanted to make my journey comfortable, more enjoyable and more creative. I wanted to save more time, for luggage collection etc. consumes lot of time. This time could be saved in creative things, reading, writing etc.

LH 763 DEL-MUC Flight was on time. I had grabbed a bunch of magazines and newspapers to read during flight. Long flight up to Munich would give opportunity to go through plenty of the reading stuff I generally not find time to due to packed schedule in the university. I had browsed virtually all magazines and newspapers, not of course alpha to omega. I continuously kept on peeping through glasses in aircraft window. The exotic lands are always exciting to every one. There was lot of snowfall on Earth. All the hills on our way were laden with snowfall. Then there was an ocean of clouds. Earth surface was not visible. Again it was visible: fields, rivers, forests, sea, and all that. It is nice countries' boundaries are not distinguishable. Aerial view is a 'worldview'!

I had started feeling headache and it was on the increase. I had not slept the whole previous night and was quite exhausted. My excitement about this trip was the best medicine to control headache. I kept all the reading material aside and covered the peeping glass and wanted to sleep to have some relief from headache.

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After a long journey of little less than 8 hours I landed in Munich, my first and the maiden destination in Germany. Outside temperature was 3.0 degrees. Munich airport, wow! Thrill of being outside Asia for the first time helped me forget about the headache.

I had just to pick up my hand bag and come out of the airport. Asking people I came near the exit point where my passport was stamped. I also got my train journey booked inside the airport. The whole environment was very friendly. First touch of Germany very friendly, very soothing! Thanks, Germany.

Glimpse of Munich – like a dreamland for me. I had opted for Munich rather than Frankfurt or Berlin. These two cities are closer to Jena than Munich which is comparatively farther from the destination. Why? Because I had this in my mind that Albert Einstein belonged to or had some connection with the city of Munich. I had read about it when I was an undergraduate student of the Meerut University. Or I may have forgotten by now and got misled due to my erased memories. Anyway, Einstein's very name fuels tremendous energy and creativity in mind. I would say Einstein belonged to and still belongs to Munich, to Germany, to the whole world. He belonged to and still belongs to you, to me, to the entire humanity. My option of Munich gave me satisfaction. I was getting ignited by the very thought of Einstein.

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On reaching the railway platform just few minutes' walk away from the exit point of the Munich airport I enquired about the train to Munich Central Station. I was enquiring from a person, then immediately another person doing cleaning work at the platform came and looked at the paper and very humbly told me the exact platform from where to catch the train. Two persons were also waiting for the same train. I confirmed from them that it was the same that would drop me at the centre of Munich. I told them that from Munich Central I would go to Jena. I also told them that I arrived from New Delhi. They asked me why I had come from long route. Berlin would have been better. Jena is quite near from there. I told them very frankly that I was under the impression that Albert Einstein belonged to this city. One of them said, "I don't think so". Immediately, the train arrived at the station and the two helpful Germans asked me to go inside first.

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Train reached the Munich Central Station in about 45 minutes. I had my next train from there to Jena-Paradies. I had my seat booked. On occupying my reserved seat, I took a tablet which I had with me to cure my headache. My excitement, however, was helping me to forget my headache. I wanted someone to tell me many things about Germany and Europe and listen to my own views too. I found myself lucky enough. A young man approached me with a glass of coffee in his hands. We got introduced with each other. He seated himself opposite the table. He was not only fluent in English but quite garrulous too. Garrulous, like me. He was talking, I was talking, we were talking a lot. I said to him, "I am feeling some headache". He said, "You need not talk all the times." We kept mum for some time.

From the next station, a pretty woman with a beautiful baby with her entered the compartment and occupied a seat on the other side. I resumed talking to the young man in front of me. Our friendship was intensifying. He was responding very sweetly. I too was not behind in showing the same gestures. Gestures often generate energy and interest for friendship between two persons even belonging to two different cultures. I wanted more elaborated introduction of my newly-found German friend. He name is Karsten Frahn. He is presently positioned in Great Britain, as the Managing Director of Katronic Technologies Ltd.

I had recovered from headache in about half an hour. I was feeling absolutely fresh and rejuvenated. I told Karsten that I was absolutely fine. I was watching that woman and her baby. The baby was not so docile. I found the woman showering her affection on the baby. She was feeding her baby something every now and then. She was beautifully managing the energies of her baby. I was analyzing this mother-child relationship. No relationship on Earth is more sacred than this. Mother is a creator. A mother obeys sanctity of life.

I had established some dialogue with the woman who was busy playing with her baby. Karsten too joined me. The woman responded very humbly, with a splash of sweetness which she seemed deriving from her baby.

I found Karsten very brilliant as well as very sensitive, very rational and holding a matured worldview. I shared many of my views with him.

The woman with her baby had dropped at some station before Jena-Paradies. We gave her our good wishes. I would have watched the things better in daylight. But it had grown dark soon after I started journey from Munich Central station. The lights, however, were imparting a sparkle to our sights.

Karsten told me many interesting things about Germany, about Europe, about the world. We shared our views on science, on ecology, on politics, on religion, on culture. He narrated the Germany's horrible train accident that occurred a few years ago. Karsten was sort of the persons I very much like. He was telling me about the speed with which our train was running. It was, I think, 190 km or so.

Minutes before the train was about to arrive at the Jena-Paradies, Karsten Frahn alerted me and suggested me to take care in the cold. I wore my coat and woolen cap, bade goodbye, did shake-hands and got down. Karsten was destined to Berlin.

Thank you so much, dear Karsten. You made my journey of the day memorable. I hope, we shall meet again sometime, somewhere. Let me dedicate this poem of mine to you, Karsten:

*North and South may be different,
Earth is one.
Countries may be different,
humanity is one.
Tongues may be different,
body language is one.
Hearts may be different,
love is one.
Cultures may be different,
their message is one.
Sorrows may be different,
pain is one.
Events of celebrations may be different,
Happiness is one.
Things of beauty may be different,
beauty is one.
Colours may be different,
rainbow is one.
Tastes may be different,
sweetness is one.
Thoughts may be different,*

*feelings are one.
Life-forms may be different,
life is one.*

On getting down from the train, I asked the railway staff boy (who had put stamp on my ticket in Munich) about the Jena and how to reach the hotel. He pointed towards a staff woman and said she would tell you about it. I reached the woman and asked her how to reach the Ibis Hotel. She showed me the right direction.

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In a few minutes I entered the Ibis Hotel. A room was already reserved for me, Room 312 on third floor. When I was still opposite the reception counter, an Indian reached there. He introduced himself as Dr. BS Choudri of TERI, Goa. We had come in the same flight. Dr. Wolfgang had informed me that my flight schedule coincided with that of Dr. Choudri. But we both met only here.

I occupied the room allotted to me, informed my wife about my safe arrival at Jena. First of all, I had a bird's eye view on the GANGAMOON-related documents and went into comfortable lap of sleep.

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17 January 2008 was the second day in Germany. I woke up early in the morning. I kept my gaze on the outside scenario of the Jena city. Running buses, cars trams, and people taking slow strides on roadsides. First thing I wanted was to get out of the hotel and get a fresh glimpse of the town. Interior of the rooms keeps the self cut off from the general climate and natural environment of the town. Meanwhile, Dr. Choudri came to my room and we both decided to roam around our hotel in the morning chill.

Beautiful and clean roads, marvellous houses and shops, and many more thing. I was not just watching everything in the surrounding but also getting a feel of Germany. A robust tower on the rear side of our hotel was teasing all other buildings. The tower was visible from all corners of the town and looked like a monument of the materialistic prosperity of Jena.

After about an hour's strolling, we return hotel. Having had a cup of tea, we reach our respective rooms. Project Proposal Preparation Workshop is scheduled at 2.00 PM (German time). I have a bird's eye view on the papers I had prepared for the Workshop. I recall many days I had endured to thoroughly grasp every aspect of the GANGAMOON project proposal Professor Wolfgang was communicating to each and every partner through e-mails.

We required something to eat. One problem I preconceive before a visit to a foreign country is planned is availability of vegetarian food. (In Nepal this is no problem). I recall days in Malaysia when I had to subsist of corn and some tropical fruits for a couple of days. A meatless (or fishless) food is not thought of to be eaten. I had to face the same thing in Thailand. I was expecting the same thing in Germany, but soon it came to be untrue. There were quite a large number of vegetarian food stuffs available in shops to the satisfaction of a vegetarian. When Dr. Choudri told me that he is also a vegetarian, I was trigger happy. I am a 100 percent vegetarian and also try to promote the same. I knew concept of vegetarianism is capturing roots in Europe as well as in the West. A big shop (I am missing its name) near our hotel was a living proof of the same. Vegetarianism in the context of Europe requires some more elaboration, but I shall attempt to cover the same under a separate subhead. First I should delve into the things relating to a mission Prof. Wolfgang had set for Europe and India.

After having some vegetarian foods purchased from a store in our rooms, Choudri and I set out to go to the venue – Wolfgang’s department of Geoinformatics, Hydrology and Modelling – of the most awaited workshop for which we were here. It was so thrilling to think of the moments! We were already e-mailed a map showing all the spots in Jena: railway station, hotel, university, department (venue of the workshop). We were also informed in advance that everything was manageable on foot.

The Friedrich-Schiller University of Jena

Establishing an acquaintance with all enchanting surroundings we reached main gate of the Friedrich Schiller University (FSU). This University is the oldest one I ever witnessed, established in 1558. Its 450th Anniversary is being celebrated in 2008. I was lucky enough to be in the precincts of this monumental university. This is not just a university, but a living monument of the history of the evolution of education in Germany (to be shared by other European countries as well as by the world). The building (perhaps the main building) bears large stones given shape and both interior and exterior views reflect marvelous architecture that was tried 450 years ago. At that time even the industrial age had not ushered in, transport and communication systems were in the pre-infancy stage, civil engineering was not being systematically taught in schools, but there was no dearth of human skills, ingenuity, inventiveness and creativity even in those times.

On both of upper corners of the main gate of the University, philosophical features are carved out. On the left hand side a philosopher is shown loving a woman. In fact, love – the physical and chemical bondage between opposite sexes manifesting into co-creation – is the potent symbol of philosophy. Those carvings are a living symbol of the people’s love for wisdom and what sprouts out first from the fertile ground of wisdom is love. Let me give it a poetic try:

*Philosophy is a ground
On which seedlings of wisdom
Grow into a tree
Tree that gives air to breath,
Water to drink,
Fruits to eat,
Shade and greenery to soothe.
Tree that rules over Nature,
Tree that keeps the Earth cool
Tree that combats entropy
Tree that balances the Cosmos.*

*Philosophy is love for wisdom
Wisdom is the fertile ground
From which sprouts out love.
Love creates life,
Love weaves life into oneness,
Love sustains life,
Love enhances life,
Love is the culture of life,
Love is an elixir of eternity.*

Indian history reveals that Nalanda was the first ever university of the world. The other one of the oldest Indian, perhaps world’s, university was Takshila. But these old (or the oldest) universities of India have no

existence today. I also have heard an Indian academician saying that an institute loses its potency as it ages. But the 450-years old this German university located in Jena is singing the songs of its glory for little less than half a millennium. It has produced numerous world renowned philosophers, poets, scientists, social architects and revolutionaries. Ever since its inception in 1558, it has diversified into several disciplines and has been spreading aesthetic aroma of its academic advances and scientific feats. The older it is growing more potent it is becoming. A glaring example, indeed!

History of the Friedrich-Schiller University of Jena has this to say in its website:

“Within only a few years of the political revolution in East Germany the small Thuringian university city of Jena has blossomed into an internationally significant centre of learning. An atmosphere of change is dominant, but despite this new beginning one looks back fondly upon the grand tradition: Goethe, Schiller, Hegel and Fichte left their mark on intellectual life, Abbe, Ziss and Scott laid the foundations for economic prosperity.”

FSU has a glorious history of its own. It has rich reminiscences of the pre-industrial medieval age, of industrial age, of post-industrial age, romanticism, classicism, of the two world wars, of downs and falls of emperors, kings, monarchs and dictators, bloodshed by Nazis, and it also has in its store the bitter and sweet memories of communism and the doom of communism followed by blossoming democracy, people’s freedom, socio-economic affluence, demolition of the Berlin Wall and – superbly – the highly celebrated unification of two Germanies and, more recently, the liberalization, privatization and globalization of the world and cultural unity of Europe.

The FSU is celebrating its 450th anniversary, which should be regarded as a unique global event. Let all the intellectuals of the world join this celebration. I wish I could contribute something towards this celebration. Long live FSU.

We entered inside the University building precincts. I was reading history of the medieval Germany on every stone of it, in the open spaces, in its roofs and in its airs. We had conversation with many students and staff members of the university but no one did direct us to the department of Geoinformatics, Hydrology and Modelling, but, to our utter surprise, no one knew about this department. What we knew was that this department was not located in that building. We were directed to go towards the backside of the building. Every one we asked to tried his or her best, but eventually had to say, “I don’t know.” There are no signboards or large-sized name plates that could help one find the destination.

We continued searching the venue, but no one was found knowing it precisely. Our search consumed about 40 minutes of ours. At last, incidentally, we saw a small plate outside a building bearing name of the department and of Prof. Dr. Wolfgang-Albert Flugel. We were trigger happy. Immediately a young Dutch woman also met us and she told she was also searching the venue for a long time. We three were together to enter the venue where workshop was about to start. The first person I introduced to was Klaus. Immediately, the most sought-after man, our host, was in front of me. “My name is Wolfgang”, he said and offered his hand to shake. Wolfgang gave the signal of starting the Workshop. My eyes were also searching Prof. Nayan Sharma. I was there thanks to Prof. Nayan Sharma, a brilliant scientist of the prestigious Indian Institute of Science based in Roorkee, Uttarakhand, who had selected me to be the part of this team. After brief introduction of all the participants, Wolfgang was in full form to begin the activities of the workshop.

Professor Wolfgang was going non-stop. His passion for this outstanding project proposal was well revealing and was enhancing enthusiasm of the partners. He had already prepared the whole project, virtually single-handedly. Now here in the partners workshop he was incorporating appropriate changes and leaving no stone unturned in his efforts to bring substantial improvement in the proposal – the

GANGAMOON. Till coffee break (In India we usually call it 'tea break'), Wolfgang completed more presentation than he had destined. Coffee break was 'breathing time' for Wolfgang. For Coffee, we went downstairs where many of the partners got few minutes to close interaction.

Wolfgang was here again with a pointer stick, explaining everything through power point presentation and putting enormous interest into every aspect of the proposal and giving room to every thought, every philosophy, every methodology, and every strategy.

During long ex-tempore speech through presentation of the proposal, Wolfgang recollected many of my mails underlining its contents. I felt encouraged at this. He gives value to hard work, to innovativeness, to quality of the things and to work philosophically.

Wolfgang not only did give a state-of-the-art presentation but also unified, consolidated and strengthened his GANGAMOON 'army'.

The second day of mine in Germany happened to be very meaningful. Purpose for which I was here was realized. I felt myself filled with enthusiasm.

Still, the next climax of the day was ahead. We the GANGAMOON team, had to be at Gasthof "Zur Noll" for a Get-together at 7.30 PM, as per schedule of the workshop.

Get Together at Gasthof "Zur Noll"

Zur Noll was not far away from the Ibis hotel we were staying at. When we asked about its location and how to reach there, our receptionist felt inability to let us know. I wrote the name of the get together venue "Zur Noll" on a paper and then she said, "oh, Zur Noll!" and she showed us the way to lead us to Zur Noll. I did not know how to pronounce Zur Noll in German. Pronunciation in tune with English confuses the German speaking people. I was told on phone by my student Neelendra Joshi in Michigan, USA that in Germany I should ask about every thing by writing on paper. He also told me that Germans are very helpful but English is not a much understood language there.

I entered, through a somewhat narrow gate, into Zur Noll with my friend BS Choudri. We joined the GANGAMOON team. Perhaps we were the last to join others. We occupied vacant chairs. Soon a smart-looking waiter girl came to take orders. We ordered the same stuff the other friends had done, beer first.

We all GANGAMOONians were having free, frank and friendly talks. Wolfgang was on different table, not face-to-face. But he seemed to be attending everyone individually. He is, after all, best in the art of coordination.

I saw a tulip flower kept on our table. "Oh! Tulip", I felt a thrill in mind, "I am seeing tulip for the first time". Marjolein, a Dutch GANGAMOON partner, asks, "you did not see it earlier?" "No, I did not", I said, "I saw tulip only in pictures, but I know that tulip is a national flower of the Netherlands and I love this flower". Marjolein said Netherlands, her country, is very rich in tulip cultivation, a fact every one knows. I fixed my gaze on tulip, touched it to feel it. I counted its petal and asked Marjolein in light vein, "OK, tulip is your national flower, tell me how many petals does it have". "Six", she replied promptly in the same vein. Tulip was spelling its beauty. Tulip is God's representative of beauty on Earth. Let me try to express beauty in verse, dedicating it to the Tulip:

*Beauty is a Divine gift
Beauty enlightens*

*Body, mind and heart
Beauty nourishes the soul.
Beauty is a divine gift
Every one has been desperate
To search beauty.
Life is but
A ceaseless search of beauty.
One searches it more and more
But one craves for it more and more.
Beauty is a divine gift
There is beauty
In every particle of nature,
In trees, in bushes, in crops, in grasses,
In the endless Dutch fields
Blossoming with tulips,
In the dew drops
Hanging on the tips of grass blades,
In summer drizzle,
In winter snows,
In twinkling stars,
In the Galaxies sparkling the skies,
In the luminous Moon,
In the sun warming the Earth.
Beauty is reigning over the whole Universe.
Beauty is a divine gift
The more intense it is
The more soothing it is.
The more it is searched
The more it is wanted
Beauty is the desire
Of the fulfilled soul,
Beauty is a command
Of our pure conscience.
Beauty is a divine gift
Evolution is transcendently enhancing it.
Universe is expanding
So is beauty.
There is boundless beauty everywhere
We need to fill it within.
We need to fill it within
Because that brings joy for ever,
That makes our world ever more inhabitable,
That makes us love all life forms on Earth,
That inspires us to save our Earth,
That inspires us to preserve
The beauty of our Universe.*

Wolfgang had changed his seat and was face-to-face now. I said with a sense of joy and inviting attention of others, "Hero of the show is here". Now Wolfgang, the GANGAMOON leader, was talking about personal and private sort of things. He was as much filled with joy, hope and optimism as much he was when

presenting the GANGAMOON proposal to the partners. Professionalism soon pronounced itself. Sooner than later our focus was GANGAMOON.

Fire in the heart of Wolfgang could be felt. He was again in full form. He delivered almost full speech, though quite informally and with full intimacy. His interest is boundless. He has inexhaustible energy and an enthusiasm that cannot be expressed in words. He is never complacent. I like him for he ignites the mind.

After hours of recreation and fun of get-together, we all set to retire. We come out very much elated. Wolfgang did not show a sign of any tiredness. He was looking as fresh, energetic and joyful as he was looking when I got introduced to him in person about 12 hours before. He pointed at a building saying it was very old. We bade good night and I gave a hug to Wolfgang.

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18 January's schedule was very hectic. We had to assemble for the second and final day workshop at 8.00 AM. Workshop venue was just 10 minutes' walk away. We reached there without having breakfast. Workshop activity had started at right time. Professor Wolfgang had started presenting all the 16 work packages of the GANGAMOON project proposal, one by one. Intensive discussion was going on. Participants were giving their inputs. Wolfgang had already prepared the whole project, to the great appreciation of all. Partners were only adding to some more value to it. Wolfgang was very considerate in incorporating the concrete and convincing changes. The first coffee break was the first 'breathing time' for Wolfgang.

At coffee time, Wolfgang asked us (Choudri and me) to take our claims from Anita, his secretary. Anita, a very good-looking and seemingly gentle woman threw her smile and showed interest in our introduction to her. I said, Anita is a very common Indian name and Choudri supported me. She was bit pleasantly surprised. Anita took all proofs of the claims and started processing the things.

The first half of the day concluded with lunch break. There was hardly any exclusive vegetarian food stuff. I enquired whether the soup was vegetarian. Wolfgang told me it was chicken soup. But I said I was a pure vegetarian and cannot eat anything non-veg. Wolfgang showed his host gestures as well as his concern for a vegetarian. He immediately rushed to his secretary Anita and asked her to bring some fruit for me.

In the meantime, I wanted to have a look at Wolfgang's office. I asked Klaus whether I could see Wolfgang's office from inside. He said in the affirmative with a sense that I was free to roam around. I entered the office attached to Wolfgang's main office. I had already seen his Secretary's office during first coffee break. In a large room adjacent with that of Wolfgang's office two students, both girls, were busy in their research work. I had conversation with the students and knew about their interests and research problems. On my request they also provided me facility of mail on their system. Both the students looked very hilarious, content and also committed to their work. It, needless to say, is the stimulating and inspiring impact of the mind-igniting Wolfgang. Meanwhile, I was served with a bowl of fruits and I had that vegetarian food sharing a bit with the students. I received mail from my daughter from Winnipeg, Canada. My wife was hospitalized; she gave me this uncomfortable news. It felt very bad. Wolfgang on my request helped me to establish communication from his office with my wife, who, by then had got discharged from the hospital and had returned home in India.

Wolfgang's World

Wolfgang's office is not just an office. It is more than that. A mini Universe in itself! One can readily imagine how busy he keeps himself with the work that spells superb creativity. Wolfgang's world gets emerged from this mini Universe and Wolfgang is accustomed not to leave any stone unturned to give it a shape. Always charged with energy and vibrant with utmost enthusiasm, he is desperate to change the world and create a new one.

Can one imagine a man can remain standing and keep speaking unabatedly for one half day and one full day? Not only speaking and presenting the proposal he had worked upon, also doing every effort to improve it significantly with partners inputs. Wolfgang has an indomitable stamina and courage. He worked days and nights even during Christmas and New Year. We, all the partners, who were not introduced to him in person, had become very friendly with him. He was managing his GANGAMOON team through e-mails, generating enormous interest about the project amongst them and churning out every thought and state-of-the-art methodologies to turn it into a superb project. Former President of India and a nuclear scientist Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam says, "Dream is not something that we see in sleep, but a thing that does not allow us to sleep." Wolfgang is that sort of a scientist. He has dreams and does every thing to make his dreams come true. Dreams give us energy. Dreams give us an stimulus. Dreams make our life more interesting. Dreams make our approach inventive.

Wolfgang has no sense of detachment. His workaholic nature does not have any reflection of any sort of 'unsustainability'. He always wears a freshness and cheerfulness on his face. He sprinkles many colours of humour during his talk. He entertains his guests. His overall approach to the things is not prosaic, dull or devoid of any interest as many of the scientists ought to be. His approach to change the world is rather poetic (as I would love to call it), full of innovativeness, is futuristic and holistic and reflects commitments to the cause of the Earth. He values cultures as much as he values the ecological integrity of nature and the natural resources. Water – the most plentiful yet the most critical resource on Earth – is his choice number one. His concerns for Himalayan glaciers, the Ganga and monsoon are also the real issues of our times.

In personal communication with me at Zur Noll, Wolfgang also talked about cultural togetherness between India and Europe. When he dreams about the phenomenal impact of the GANGAMOON, his face starts glittering.

Let me present an excerpt from an essay "Does Science Control People or Do People Control Science?" by Prof. Henryk Skolimowski, in his classical eco-philosophical work *Dancing Shiva in the Ecological Age* (1991):

"Perhaps what we witness nowadays is another trial of science and thereby another trial of Galileo. But science is being tried nowadays in new circumstances. It is not tried as a force which attempts to upset the *status quo*; but as a force which represents the *status quo*. It is not tried as an emerging civilization, but it is tried as a part of a dying civilization."

Professor Dr. Wolfgang-Albert Flugel, I am sure, is amongst the scientists who are revolting against this "status quo", who are giving a human face and ecological base to the science, and who are infusing life into science. His GANGAMOON concept is a glaring example. He is giving very aesthetic flavour to the world of science.

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Lunch break was over and Wolfgang again came over his business. He presented the remaining work packages of the project proposal with unshakable enthusiasm. Amidst his presentation he gave full attention to everyone there and listened to everyone's views to the substantial improvement in the proposal content.

A few moments of humour Wolfgang created kept the house livelier. The workshop concluded minutes before 6.00 in the evening. Wolfgang bade goodbye to all. He stayed robust and seemed flowering with hopes. This short poem of mine is dedicated to you, Wolfgang:

*Germany is unfolding
Its renewed vigour and creativity.
New hopes are flowering,
Fragrance is spreading in world's nooks and corners,
Message of peace and development,
Of values of life is capturing roots.*

*Germany is unfolding
Its power of unification
With the self, with the neighbours, with the globe.
Love and warmth
Are the new mantras of people,
Europe's culture has become
A stream of crystal clear water.*

*Germany is unfolding
Its power of healing.
Wounds of the past are healed up,
Now a new sunrise
Is glowing the land.
New opportunities are waving
And human vision
Is kindling the futures.*

*Germany is unfolding
Its great potentials.
Heralding the dawn
Of constant renewal,
Of rejuvenation,
Of reconstruction,
Shedding away the bitter memories
Of the 1940s
And writing a new history
Of total freedom,
Of complete reconstruction,
Of cultural unification,
Of human dignity,
Of resurgence,
Of global well-being.*

*Let not the Alps' snows melt,
The frozen mountains
Will preserve the memories of today,
Will be passing on the inspirations
To the generations of tomorrow.
Germany is unfolding*

*Its beauty infinite hidden within.
Dispelling all ugliness
And beautifying all facets of life.*

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We get up to disperse and bid goodbye to each other. Wolfgang was standing between Prof. Nayan Sharma and me. "I am here because of Nayan", I said to Wolfgang, in a sense of celebrating the moments. "No, you are here because of yourself", Nayan gave credit only to me.

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We had our vegetarian dinner and drinks at Zur Noll. This evening here was not colourful like it was the previous day. We were attended by another waitress who did not speak English. We were looking for the same waitress who contributed to make our official get-together the previous evening quite eventful. After some time, however, we found the same waitress at our disposal. She recognized us and served us virtually the same things that she did the previous evening. Another exciting evening at Zur Noll!

We returned Ibis around 9.00. My daughter was on phone line at around 9.30. We did lot of chatting. I was content with the feeling that the hectic day was turning a landmark day in my reminiscences. Before sleep, I was thinking deeply about my wife.

I would write a poem on my wife and then go into sleep. It must be another dreamful sleep tonight in Jena.

My Wife Gita

19 January 2008, my third day on the glorious land of Germany, was free from any official engagements. The first thing early in the morning I did was e-mailing the poem I had composed on my wife Gita the previous night, to my daughter and son, CC to wife Gita. This would be my gift to her. I composed the following poem:

*When in Jena –
The German town
Of the genius of history,
I feel the absorbance
In my psyche, in my mind,
In my heart, in my soul
Of my wife Gita.*

*My wife Gita
Is evergreen,
Like the evergreen forests
Of the Himalayas,
Like the evergreen conifers
Of the Alps.*

Cool breeze blows

*From the majestic Alps
Laden with fragrance of the love
That my wife broods over,
That my wife has
In her heart.*

*My wife keeps on moving
Moving and moving unceasingly,
She knows not to stop anywhere.
My family revolves round her
Like the Earth does
Round the Sun.*

*The Earth adds to its greenery,
The sky adds to its blueness,
The Sun adds to its sparkle,
The moon adds to its luminosity
The Universe adds to its beauty –
My wife brings all the difference!*

Jena –The City of Poets, Philosophers, Scientists and Students

I was trigger happy to take a round of the town and visit some of the destinations, and, of course, explore treasure of knowledge this German town had in its store. My destinations were preconceived. Jena is a town of philosophers, poets and scientists. The town has very good system of transport. Attractive trams and colourful buses provide excellent services. But a day before Professor Wolfgang-Albert Flugel had let me know that the Jena town was small enough and everything could be managed by walk. I had no guide to tell me the way to destinations. Dr. Choudri, my other friend, had gone to sleep after breakfast. I was alone for the destinations, and very much determined. What I had with me were the maps indicating the places I had to visit. My daughter knew my choices and so she e-mailed me the glorious places associated with philosophers and poets. She wrote me to take many pictures of the town also. But I replied her that I would not capture the things in camera, but in my words. Pictures can fade away with time, but words cannot. Moreover, words are eternal, pictures may not be; and words symbolize an intellectual creativity, pictures are merely a product of a mechanical phenomenon; pictures give only glamorous impression of the things, but words spring from soul. Your words speak louder than pictures, carry lot of weight and, if they have substantial meaning, in the times to come, they can go down into history. Poetry, drama, philosophy and legendary stories of the past are alive even today and enlightening our contemporary civilizations. Those who have expressed the things, people, places, events and feelings in words have done great service to the world.

I am an ardent lover of philosophers, ecologists and poets. These professionals make some distinction. They are in unique relationship with everything else. They owe a unique vision. They can look across Ages. They wish to build a world of their dreams. Of course, they are sometimes ridiculed by people, but I love them and have a passion for them. I had also developed my passion for the city of Jena for these reasons.

Nestled in the Saale River Valley and surrounded by muschelkalk cliffs, the city of Jena accommodates some 100,000 people in its lap with as many as 19,000 students of the Friedrich Schiller University and the University of Applied Science giving the youthful flair to the city. FSU website has this to state about the city of Jena:

“Generations of poets, philosophers and students have sung its praises in songs and poetry, perhaps most beautifully Gottfried Benn: “Jena before us, in the delightful valley”. Everywhere one goes culture is inescapable – above all, that of Romanticism, Classicism, and the Grunderzeit. A uniquely student way of life also started in Jena and went on to have fundamental repercussions in high politics: this is where the first student fraternity formed, whose black-red-gold banner, today the national colours, has signaled the democratic spirit of unity, justice and liberty ever since the meeting at the Wartburg in 1817.”

Having come to know the current strength and historical events fuelled by students of the city, I would now like to call Jena a city of poets, philosophers, scientists and students (phrase of my earlier impression did not have ‘students’).

* * * * *

I had the only full day – the 19th of January – to have glimpses of Jena. My destinations in the city of Jena included Ernest Haeckel’s House, Goethe’s Memorial, Botanical garden, Schiller’s House and Romanticists House. Ernst Haeckel’s House based in Jena was my first destination. I enquired at the Ibis Hotel reception about the location. Receptionist on duty looked at the map I gave to her and just showed me the way to the post office which was behind the hotel. After walking some distance, I showed the map to a young woman who was just waiting to cross the road. I wanted to know where the post office was located. She pointed at the post office which was quite near. While waiting for the signal to cross the road, she wanted to know who I was? I said I am a professor of an Indian University. She said she was a student. Then she wanted to know what subject I teach at University. I said, “Environmental Sciences”. She asked, “What is that?” I answered in a question, “Do you know ecology?” “Oh, economy”, she replied. “Not economics, ecology”, I said. “I don’t know”, was her response. I was a bit surprised that a university student had not heard the so oft-used term, the ecology. But then guessed perhaps that was due to different language she was exposed to in University. Then I asked her about the Ernst Haeckel Street that leads to Ernst Haeckel’s House. She looked at the map and pointed on the other side of the road, “that must be the Haeckel Street”. She was also quite ignorant about Ernst Haeckel. There was signal and we crossed the road together.

I took strides along the Ernst Haeckel Street which was indicated by a sign on a pole and after walking about 100 meters or so I reached the Earnst Haeckel House which was nestled on the land slightly elevated from the road level. But, to my bad luck, the House was closed. It was Saturday. So, I had to be content with watching it from outside. I noted down everything what was written on the boards at the main gate. It was in German. The house from outside did not look to be old.

Ernst Haeckel is a pride of Germany. Not only of Germany, but of the whole world. All biologists of the world are delighted today by the extraordinarily rich legacy of Ernst Haeckel, evolution’s controversial artist. He named thousands of new species, mapped a genealogical tree relating all life forms, and coined many terms in biology. He coined the phrase “ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny” and the terms “Darwinism” and “Ecology”. I find a brief account of this German biologist who was born at Potsdam on the 16th of February 1834. He studied medicine and science at Wurzburg:

“Ernst Haeckel, zoologist and artist, was the foremost proponent of evolutionary theory in 19th century Europe – more famous in some circles at the time than Charles Darwin. Today, however, Haeckel is most known as the foil of creationists, who rightly point out that he manipulated some of his iconic drawings of embryos to strengthen the contemporary case for evolution. Also, Haeckel’s pernicious racial views – and their apparent influence on Nazi ideology after his death – have been exploited to dismiss all of his work.

“Haeckel deserves closer scrutiny – but not only for his mistakes. His contributions include the discovery of thousands of new species of sea creatures and the development of graphical forms like the evolutionary tree. His fusion of science and art is the subject of the visually stunning film *Proteus* by David Lebrun, which had its US theatrical debut in New York this month”.

No, I can never trust Haeckel could harbour ‘pernicious racial views’. A biologist, an artist, a revolutionary scientist, and the Father of ecology (as I would love to call him) can only think of uniting and integrating people and the world, unlike a politician (at least of his times) who could act to divide and disintegrate. So, I dismiss the allegations of racialism leveled against Haeckel. This celebrity will always continue to be an inspiration for all lovers of the nature, all biologists, life scientists, artists, social scientists and thinkers. His “ecology” today has become instrumental for reviving our tormented planet.

I had fixed my gaze on the Ernst Haeckel House, which could be an obvious choice of a hardcore ecologist. I was looking at every plant inside the boundary of the House and was also eager to see if there were some birds around. I was breathing somewhat deeper, thinking of my teaching ecology to students, of eco-philosopher Henryk Skolimowski, of very sweet Juanita Skolimowski, of Germany’s this biologist who coined the word ecology. I should express in verse:

*Today’s world of ours
Is indebted to Ernst Haeckel
Who gifted us
With his invention –
The “Ecology”
Through which
We developed
An art of coherence and symbiosis
With all our life forms on Earth.
He gifted us a new wisdom
Through which we learnt
A reverential attitude
Towards tress, forests, mountains, rivers
And all seeds of life.
He gifted us with an abstract truth,
Which helped us
Discover our inner strength,
Our own power,
The power of saving ourselves,
The power of saving the whole Earth.
The Ernst Haeckel House in Jena
Should be a Place of Pilgrimage
For all who are for the cause of the Earth.*

While standing outside and ‘reading’ the Ernst Haeckel House, I wanted to have some interaction with a local. I could not find any for more than 10 minutes. I bade goodbye to the House (with a ‘see you again’ desire) and as stepped back towards stairs that join the house with main road, I happened to meet a local man with small stature and sporting a brush-shaped brown beard. He showed lot of interest in me. He was fluent in English. He liked me having interest in such sorts of things and ‘exploring’ interesting things in Jena which persons from abroad generally overlook. I enquired from him about how to reach the next destination, the Goethe Memorial. He was very kind in spending time with me and telling me the way to my next destination.

* * * * *

While I was trying to locate the Goethe Memorial, I got more familiarized with the city. I walked through new streets. I read a meteorological datum appearing in electronic form on a wall, indicating today's temperature, 14 degrees. Amazingly high! 14 degrees, that too in the month of January! I recollected Dr. Wolfgang telling about the impact of global warming, "These days Jena's temperature used to be -14 degrees, now it is +14 degrees". Global warming followed by climate change is horrible! This is posing serious threat to the whole life! This, in my view, is the greatest challenge humanity has ever encountered. I hope the land of the philosophers, poets, scientists and students is boldly accepting the challenge and is ready to fight it to the finish. Am I wrong, Wolfgang?

I again cross through the front side of the FSU. I am desperate to reach the Goethe Memorial. I am showing location and map to everyone I am colliding with walking on the pavements. No one I met, including a professor of biochemistry, knew the exact location of Memorial. A student asked me to follow her for the location. We were between the two churches, Catholic Church and Johannes Church. The Peace Church is also nearby. Wonderful sight! One would feel to be in direct conversation with Gods.

The student pointed on one side and said the Memorial must be somewhere there. I saw her off and wanted to talk to someone who could guide me to the exact location. I found a woman coming with her child. With all courtesy, I asked her way to the Goethe Memorial. She looked at the map and told me that it is near the Botanical Garden. She also suggested me to visit the Botanical Garden adding that there is an old Ginkgo tree also in the Botanical Garden. Our conversation endured and her very pretty child, a girl, was quietly showing some interest and murmuring something in her mother tongue. Her mother, a teacher in a school and very fluent in English, translated in English what her daughter wanted to know from me. "Why is he speaking English when he is not in Britain?" I showered my love on the child, patted her back and wished her good luck.

The child left a question in my mind which often puts me in the state of dumbness. Not more than two percent Indians speak and understand English. This language happens to be the language of the elite in India. Germans are very proud of their national language, and so are the Polish, the Dutch, the Swiss, the Russians, the French, and the likes. Europe is now in cultural oneness but has a diversity of languages. Every European country is proud of its national language. But in India, as also in other Asian countries, English is a kind of stigma. This has become the language of the rich and ruling class in these countries. English is a phenomenon associated with the British colonial legacy. In European countries, English is being mildly accepted as merely a language of mutual communication, in Asia this is emerging as a symbol of supremacy of one class over the other. Majority of the people not knowing English are often found deprived of resources and facing poverty, inhibition and dejection. A few Asian countries may be exception.

Language is a function of climate, soil and water. In India, they say, a language changes after every eight kilometers. Culture-language-ecosystem have a common axis. You can express yourself in the most effective manner only in your own tongue. It is thanks to English to a great extent and other colonial languages to a lesser extent that the local languages have been squeezed out of their development processes and numerous local/ indigenous dialects have been left on the brink of extinction. Language is a potent symbol of a culture. Our world will be richer when all cultures and their languages and dialects provide an appropriate environment to blossom. This lovely German child shot a question which would be helping me to ponder over a beautiful aspect of our global cultures.

The Botanical Garden of Jena

I got the way to the famous Botanical Garden of Jena. Entry was open. I was the only person walking in the garden at that moment. Enchanting undulating landscape with huge variety of plants, including the very old *Ginkgo biloba*! I was watching a variety of plants that the garden harbours. There were some rare plants. I was not just closely watching the plants, but was 'in conversation' with them. In winter season most of the plants had shed their leaves, but there was a lot to see inside. *Taxus baccata*, *Pinus nigra*, *Ginkgo biloba*, *Fagus sylvatica* cv. *Lanceolata*, "GOETHE-Ginkgo" were the plants I interacted with. The Botanischer Garten Jena (German for Botanical Garden) is very old, perhaps was established in 1640 as I could understand from a pamphlet in German language.

I wanted to be fascinated by *Ginkgo biloba* (in this garden the very old Ginkgo tree has been named "GOETHE-Ginkgo"). But this tree was without leafy crown in the season. This is the second time I watched a Ginkgo tree. I saw it for the first time in Manali, the inner Himalayan area of the Himachal Pradesh state of India in 1992. I have read many interesting things relating with this wonderful species, which is now regarded as a "living fossil". We need to protect, conserve and increase such wonderful species on Earth.

Homage to Goethe

Goethe is Germany's greatest man of letters... and the last true polymath to walk the earth.
– George Eliot

I failed to visit Goethe Memorial. No one could direct me to the spot. I returned to Ibis hotel to have some food. Goethe was in my focus. I knew a bit about him in my school and university days. Though I have been a student of plant, animal, and environmental sciences, I was fond of literature. I have been a voracious reader. I used to read everything – literature, poetry, drama, philosophy, apart from studying conventional courses in university. When I am here on the land of genius, I would like to pay my homage to Goethe in a few words (picked up from internet).

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was born on 28 August 1749 in the city of Frankfurt, Germany. He is a poet, a novelist, a playwright, a natural philosopher, a humanist as well as a diplomat. He is a great writer of the Romanticism period. He was greatly influenced by Shakespeare, Lessing, Gellert, Schelling, Schiller and many others. George Eliot called him "Germany's greatest man of letters... and the last true polymath to walk the earth." Goethe's *magnum opus*, lauded as one of the peaks of world literature, is the two-part dramatic poem *Faust*. *The Sorrows of Young Werther* is one of his well-known novel. *Theory of Colours*, the scientific text authored by Goethe had great influence on Darwin. He was a main spirit behind the Weimar Classicism in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The movements of Enlightenment, Sentimentality, and Romanticism were the contemporary ones. Goethe impressed Darwin, Hegel, Lamarck, Steiner, Mann, Andre, any many others. My heart-felt homage to Goethe.

* * * * *

I had a glimpse of many personalities of Germany whose statues have been put along the FSU boundary on front side. I liked it, for a nation must sing the glory of the past and derive inspiration from great people. Our glorious past enlightens our future.

I reached my hotel to rejuvenate myself. I sent mails to my daughter and shared some of my experiences of the town. While working on computer, I was joined by my friend Dr. Choudri. He accompanied me to the next destination – the Romantics' House. It was quite close to the hotel Ibis. This house seems to be quite familiar in Jena. Hotel receptionist told about its exact location. We reached the destination by just asking

three people on the way. Ultimately, when we were very close to the destination, we asked a woman about the house. Hearing us speaking English, she asked her daughter who was with her to respond to us. She said, “Romanticists’ House, there beside this green house”. A few meters away was the popular Romanticists House, indicated by “Literaturemuseum Romantikerhouse”.

We gently opened the door of the Romanticists’ House, approached the counter and asked the receptionist about the many features of and activities of this house. We had a glimpse of the House from the reception only. We did not go inside after paying necessary fee, as we could not have extracted meaningful things for us from the German literature.

* * * * *

In the evening, we roamed around in the markets of Jena. Superb malls, galleries, fantastically adorned stores – signs of burgeoning capitalism – are omnipresent. But that is nowhere in the list of my interests. These things have no room in my personal choices. Nevertheless, it was thrilling for me to look at the things stocked in the market.

The Vegetarianism

Choudri and I again thought of our vegetarian dinner and drinks at Zur Noll. But when we were near the Power Tower (about 40-storey or so high tower housing colourful shopping malls and the highest building of the Jena city), we were allured by a restaurant having lot of processed vegetables. We asked the owner whether he had something exclusively vegetarian to eat. He showed deep interest in vegetarian foods and vegetarian people. He was not understanding English, but we were understanding his body language, and he ours. He was referring vegetarian something like “vegetario” in German tone. We had fried potato chips with chutney. He satisfied our palate. But, Zur Noll remained in our agenda.

At dinner time we were at Zur Noll. We ordered vegetarian salad. I was taken a back to see the whole diversity of the vegetarian sources of food in a plate. It was the tastiest vegetarian salad I ever had. Many plants from which the salad was derived were there in the plate and many of them were not identified by us.

I prefer to pursue vegetarianism because of the ecological realities. We are born vegetarians. If we deviate from our natural food habits we do more harm to the nature than we would have otherwise done. From the food chain and food web prevailing in nature emerges the first principle of life’s stability: A population remaining closest to plants is the most stable population in nature. Energy flows from one trophic level to the other. As the life forms go farther from the first trophic level (i.e. the plants) to the higher trophic level (of top carnivores), their number and amount of total energy in their whole population goes on decreasing to the extent that there is no existence of a sixth trophic level in nature, because the fifth trophic level cannot have enough energy to support the sixth trophic level.

Vegetarians being closest to the plant kingdom have enormous energy to consume and ensure their prosperity. Feeding food grains to animals to convert them into high quality protein and then feeding on meat is too expensive to be afforded in long run. Anatomically we are only a vegetarian species. Our digestive system is that of a vegetarian species. Vegetarianism can save most of the energy from going waste and help our populations becoming more stable, more flourishing, healthier, and more vibrant. From ethical and aesthetic perspectives too vegetarianism should be the way of life. Vegetarianism is one of the dimensions of eco-philosophy, of eco-justice. Vegetarianism is also a non-violent mode of food consumption. Divine life Society of India regards vegetarianism as a way to save our Earth.

My Daughter Silvi

20 January 2008: I was just getting ready to leave my hotel and reach the Jena-Paradies to catch the 10.06 AM train on 20 January (though I caught one-hour early train) bound to Munich. I was expecting mails from my daughter in Winnipeg, Canada. When checked mails in the Ibis Hotel I got thrilled up to see two mails from Silvi Siddhu, my daughter. When my family was kept apart in three different continents – my daughter in the West, my son and wife in Asia and me in Europe – Silvi was the bridge to keep all of us connected. She had every moment's record of all of us.

During the whole journey from Jena to Munich, I am enjoying all picturesque scenes, rivers, canals, plain and undulated fields, hills and hillocks, forests, evergreen conifers, deciduous trees having shed all leaves in winter, lakes, ponds, small villages, houses with sloppy roofs, towns, cities, skyscrapers, hotels, industrial units, and, of course, the very enchanting faces of the Germans. During this whole journey who is constantly churning my thoughts and glowing my heart is my daughter Silvi.

When I am in Germany, my wife Gita underwent a serious health problem. I would have been much upset had Silvi not informed me about continuous improvement in her health. At lunch time on the second day of the workshop, I checked in Professor Wolfgang's students' office, a mail from Silvi informing me that my wife was in hospital. I immediately rushed to Wolfgang's secretary's office to ask if she could help me communicate with my wife. Prof. Wolfgang all of a sudden happened to be there. He was very kind to help me out in establishing telephonic communication with my wife. From the other end, my wife informed me that she just returned from Rudrapur hospital and that her condition then was stable. I thanked Wolfgang, who said that it was his pleasure.

I immediately e-mailed Silvi who was constantly taking care of her Mumma from the other hemisphere of the globe. She did not let me be worried even a little. She asked me to be wholeheartedly involved in the workshop and give my best possible input to it. She also encouraged me to meet ecologists, take pictures of the town and enjoy.

Silvi talked to me on phone and frequently e-mailed me. Every phone call of hers, every e-mail of hers brought strength, optimism, hopes and a bloom of happiness. She had guided me to Europe, to Germany and finally to Jena in Germany. She let me know the weather forecast of Munich and Jena prior to my journey. She also sent me a list of all the interesting places in Jena which I might like to visit. She also checked my room in the Ibis hotel on internet and expressed her contentment.

Such is my daughter Silvi: genius, beautiful, enchanting, honest, inquisitive, and committed to her duties, devoted to her work, and filled with courage, spirit, energy and tremendous enthusiasm. She has an igniting mind. She is for the cause of her *Karma*, for the cause of Earth.

I mailed Silvi pieces of my experiences of the German trip. I received very warm response. She reminded me of the Vitamin E cream she sent me as a gift from Canada through her Mother. The gift read: "To protect a writer's hands!" This was really a very encouraging complement for me. I love writing. I wish I were a good writer. Writer means a very great responsibility. Your spoken words will die very soon. But your written words are eternal. Writers are often so powerful that, as history would reveal, they have changed the world they are part of. So, if Silvi thinks I am a writer, the very complement fills me with pride and responsibility.

My daughter Silvi brings lot of sweet feelings to life. Wherever I am I find her an enlightening source for myself, an inspiration for myself. Silvi is most beautiful poem of my life. A poem dispels darkness. A poem illuminates soul. So does my Silvi for me. Let me express her in verse:

*My daughter Silvi
Is enlightened with wisdom and joy
And grasping well the laws of nature and of Universe.
She wears a winsome smile on her face
Glowing with hopes and contentment.
She is a charm of the planet,
Herself an articulation of Life,
A unique colour of the Universe,
A melodious song of living Earth
And the most beautiful poem of my life.*

Cosmos-full Life

Travel by train in Germany is very thrilling, very romantic. I was guessing that Germany has one of the most developed railway systems in the world. I found it like that. A day before we (with me Dr. BS Chodri of the Goa-based office of The Energy Research Institute – TERI) got our travel from Jena-Paradies to Munich booked from Jena booking office. The pretty women dealing at counter did not understand English, but she did help us as much as she could do. Body language is the best language. In order to express oneself one does not need to know other's language. Expressions on one's face are explicit and can be read better than the words. We could read the language of interest in and commitment to the job on the lovely face of that middle-aged woman who was not unable to have conversation in English with us, but was doing all we wanted. She also responded the questions we were asking her in her mother (or father?) language.

We had reached the Jena-Paradies station an hour earlier. Crowd is no rule at the stations. In India railway stations are usually clogged by crowd. We reached Platform No. 1 where the Munich-bound train was to arrive. We found only a lone woman who by her dress appeared to be a railway staff. We were showing her our tickets and asking about the train to Munich. Immediately, a train came with full speed. I was watching it as if I was watching a train for the first time. Its front portion was like that of a frog's snout, like that of an airplane. This shape helps reduce pressure of the air and keep pace with the desired speed. The staff woman was courteous enough and taking interest in us. The train stopped and she advanced towards a compartment. She showed us written Munchen (German name of Munich). She said (in German) that the train was Munchen-bound and that we could travel in it. We could only understand her body language. Immediately a young man came outside from the train. He was employee of the railway (perhaps equivalent to our TTE). He very humbly told us in English that the train was going to Munich and asked us to go inside with very inviting gestures. I had noticed similar heart-felt gestures of a railway staff boy when I was coming from Munich. Thanks, German railway.

The train had captured speed. Compartments were not filled according to their accommodation capacity. More than fifty percent seats were vacant. Journey was thrilling. It was an occasion to feel Germany closely. It was sunny. Sun is a rare thing in Europe. When it is sunny, it gives a soothing effect to mind. Sun makes life more lively. No doubt! This is not simply a compliment to the Sun. Sun is much more than this. Rather, the Sun is everything to life. Life has no meaning, no existence without Sun in the first place. The Hindus worship the Sun God; in that they have deeper understanding of the Cosmic laws leading to the evolution and sustenance of life. The Sun God was worshipped even during the Vedic Age. The Vedic Age – as the legends would prove – was replete of wisdom and was just to nature. The Vedic Age had established the all pervading power of the Sun and identified the Sun as the basis of all life.

The Sun was shining and so was my mind. I could not help capturing the thrilled mood into words. The mind was flying! When I feel elated I measure the self against my Cosmos. I started 'weaving' my doctrine

of the Cosmos-Earth relationship. I took out my notebook, drew the table from the back of the front seat and started articulating myself.

Life is not merely an attribute of the Earth. It is primarily an attribute of the Cosmos. Ray of life came from outside the Earth, from the Sun. Earth is blessed by the Sun.

The German land is shining with the Sun. Soil is warming, seeds are sprouting. The tilled fields outside are not entirely green. Seeds for winter cropping season were not sown long ago. They are sprouting out of soil and with them are sprouting new hopes. Every ray of the Sun brings new hopes for life on Earth. The plants are producers on Earth. For us they are umbilical cords connecting us with the womb of Mother Earth. Plants nourish us from the nutrients of the Earth's womb. Plants, in turn, fill in them the Sun's energy and convert it into chemical energy to prepare food from the atmospheric carbon dioxide and water in the soil. The Sun's energy thus is filled in each and every cell of ours. The Sun fetches life for all organisms on Earth. The Sun makes the whole Earth a Living Planet.

The German land is bathing in the Sun and I am getting a feel of Cosmos-full life. I would love to express in verse:

*The Sun warms up the Earth
The Earth embraces Life.
Converted into chemical form
The Sun's energy
Reaches each and every cell of ours
And the Life reverberates within us.
Rooted into Earth,
The Life enjoys the resources of the Cosmos.
How Cosmos-full is life!*

Forests, Croplands and Ecology

Forests in Germany as I could visualize from the peeping glasses of the train cannot be termed as ideal. Forest area is not up to mark (I may be wrong, for I have not done any formal study). Most of the forests harbour coniferous species. Broad-leaved trees are not occupying much larger area. Monocultures of even-aged stands of trees have least resilience but very high degree of ecological vulnerability. Such forests represent an ideal form of commercial forestry. Logging in the forests is a common scenario. Chipko leader and the celebrated Indian environmentalist Sunderlal Bahuguna would refer to such forests as timber mines.

Germany has considerable land area in the hills. Forests embracing high degree of diversity of mixed broad-leaved species infuse lot of resilience into the system and ensure ecological stability of the ecosystems. Encompassing diverse flora and fauna, such natural forests would impart ecological integrity to the whole system. Agriculture is very vulnerable and fragile. Agriculture is seldom sustainable. There have been many debates throughout the world over sustainable agriculture. Sustainability of agriculture is meaningless unless the system has ecological integrity of its own. Ecological integrity is imparted through three mechanisms, viz., gaseous flows, nutrient flows and recycling, and water/ moisture circulation. Forests (I mean forests in real sense of the word, i.e. those with dense canopy cover and high degree of biodiversity) trigger the processes that ensure ecological integrity of the system.

Croplands in Germany have little or no relationship with the forests. This is not symptomatic of sustainable agriculture. There are three principles for ecological agriculture (ecological agriculture is sustainable agriculture) as put forth by Dutch ecologist Eric van der Werf: living soil, biodiversity-complexity, and

nutrient flows. These principles are nourished by natural forests and culminate into ecological integrity and, consequently, into sustainable agriculture.

Fragile croplands require continuous replenishment of the soil with nutrients. The natural forests with lot of heterogeneity provide nature's subsidy to croplands. A forest has plentiful nutrients in its biomass and in its soil. These nutrients can be transferred on constant basis to croplands. Forest biomass (especially forest floor litter, leaves and herbaceous plants) can be converted into manure and transferred to croplands. A forest's contributions of nutrients to the cropland soils would help the German farmers to reduce (and in long run to completely avoid) chemical fertilizers. This is how the forests can help Germany to switch over to organic farming with very high degree of sustainability. Further, forests' role in moisture circulation and in the maintenance of micro climate would dramatically change the whole scenario, including curbing the global warming.

Europe has been a fertile land of philosophy in the world. Germany is an exemplar. Let me quote Professor Henryk Skolimowski, the first eco-philosopher of the world from Europe, who values forests as sanctuaries: "The wilderness areas, which I call life-giving areas, are important for three reasons: Firstly, they are important as sanctuaries. Various forms of life might not have survived without them. Secondly, they are important as givers of timber that breathes and out of which will be made beautiful panels and beams that breathe life in our homes. Thirdly, and most significantly, they are important as human sanctuaries, as places of spiritual, biological and psychological renewal. As chariot of progress which is the demon of ecological destruction moves on, we wipe out more and more sanctuaries. They disappear under the axe of man, are polluted by plastic environment, are turned into Disneyland." "

When I am observing forests – albeit thin stands of monocultures – largely sacrificed mostly for wanton needs, I take pity on the whole lot of scientists and politicians crying global warming global warming everywhere in the world, when they themselves are knowing the obvious reason of the problem. They are catching ear by rotating the hand. They should rather worry about the loss of the forests which Skolimowskian philosophy regards as the sanctuaries of life. What would be the fate of life if the sanctuaries themselves are in peril!

Let me conclude this part with a short poem 'Of Men and Forests' by Henryk Skolimowski:

*Forests are the temples,
Trees are the alters,
We are the priests serving the forest gods.
We are also the priests serving the inner temple
Treat yourself as if you were an inner temple
And you will come close
To the god which resides within
To walk through the life as if you were
In one enormous temple.
This is the secret of grace.*

Let Germany lead the Ecological Renaissance

One thing Germany can take lead in is the ecological renaissance (I would have loved to use the German equivalent of the word 'renaissance', but, unfortunately I don't know this beautiful language). Why should Germany take lead in ecological renaissance? There is concrete reason to pursue this. The very word "Ecology" was coined in Germany by the noted biologist Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919). Ernst-Haeckel-Haus Institut for Geschichte der Medizin, Natur-wissenschaft und Technik, 1882 Museum located in Jena is the

witness of it. As a hard core ecologist, I strongly pursue ecological processes. I heard a Russian ecologist speaking at the Eco-philosophy Summit 1995 in New Delhi, "Ecology unites, politics divides". World owes indebtedness to Ernst Haeckel who gave the potent principle of unity of the world – the Ecology. The word Ecology is sacred like Ganga. The word Ecology is sacred like soil, like seeds, like a banyan tree, like the Himalayas, like the Earth, and like the human conscience. Let Germany celebrate Ecology, which has germinated on its rich land. Let Germany strongly pursue Ecology at global scale.

Ecological renaissance is not absolutely necessary in our times, but is an imperative of our times. Only ecology can heal the tormented planet. Only ecology can revive our dying planet. Germany needs to be the first Green country of the world. For that would ensure sustainability of the nation. Ecology does not compromise with science and technology. Rather, it strengthens the foundation of science and refines technology, making it more environment friendly, more human friendly, more sustainable. Nor does it bring economic development or growth at a lower pace. Ecology nourishes the roots of social, cultural, geographical and economic roots.

What is the worst for the planet today? Undoubtedly the global warming and consequent climate change. This warming of the planet could lead to ghastly consequences. Even the finest technology cannot save human species from the global warming gradually spreading its tentacles. But the ecology has a key to do away with the global warming and setting the climate to its normal path. It is not the global warming that should be the issue. It is carbon sequestration that is the real issue. Global warming is simply the consequence of reduced rates of carbon sequestration and accumulation of free carbon in the atmosphere. Ecology has key to enhance carbon sequestration, reduce atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases, and, consequently impart cooling effect to the planet.

Germany might be a proud leader of the ecological renaissance. The land of Germany was wounded by the Second World War. Ecology would help heal those wounds. Ecology would avert chances of any political war. It would only help the peace to reign supreme. It will only help to infuse tremendous resilience, enormous tolerance. It will only help unite and integrate. It will only help generate love and affinity for each other. Onus of ecological renaissance is on Germany, for Germany has gifted the world with the nicest word 'Ecology'.

*Ecology is not just
Oikos + logos,
Or the study of the house we live in.
It is a melodious song of life on Earth.
Ecology unites our home –
That is the world.
Ecology integrates our body, our mind, our soul
Ecology integrates our nations, our world
Ecology integrates the living and the non-living
Ecology integrates everything with everything else.
Ecology is a love poem,
Ecology is a dance of life.
Ecology is the rhythm of our hearts
Ecology is the music of life.
Ecology is benevolence of Nature
Ecology is love of Mother Earth.
Ecology saves our Earth
Ecology sustains life
Ecology preserves the beauty of our Universe*

Ecology is an imperative of our destiny.

Munich: the City of My Dreams

Our train arrives at the City Central Station of Munich. Another train would take us to the Munich Airport in about 45 minutes. Arrival at the Munich Airport is very soothing. We were surrounded by beautiful buildings of transparent glasses (may be something else rather than glasses which I don't know). There was a very high roof of plastic-like material that was significantly enhancing the value of the overall architecture in the vicinity of the airport.

After taking our boarding passes, we came out of the airport building and roamed around the airport to enjoy the picturesque surroundings. We did lot of chatting, saw the things with analytical eyes and enjoyed coffee. After about an hours wandering, we returned to the airport. We underwent security checking and visited the vast airport precincts. Munich Airport is a mini 'globalised world' in itself. I had seldom imagined there could be a whole wonderful market inside the airport. Large attractive malls are harbouring all varieties of the commodities of the capitalist's world, the commodities giving the world a momentum of privatization, liberalisation and globalisation. The price tags of the commodities were teasing us. I actually never get attracted by symbols of the materialistic affluence. Germany for me was a destination to learn; learning from the learned Germans, apart from participating in the workshop.

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I am sitting in an airport lounge waiting for my 7.40 PM MUC-DEL Lufthansa flight. I am a little desperate to capture every moment in words and articulate into meaningful writings.

Moon is shining in the sky. Almost full moon attracts my attention and I am lost in my favourite subject, Cosmology. It is not still dark. Moon will assume more shining after sunset. I wish clouds will not cover the moon and I shall give some words to express my feelings about the Cosmic panorama.

A large number of newspapers and magazines invite my attention. I advance towards a rack loaded with the papers and magazines. I browse almost every one, but there was no English stuff to read. Everything in German. Even then I picked up the fattest paper to turn pages and see if I could elicit some thing I could understand. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* is the name of the paper. I turned more than 100 pages (I am sure it contained more than 100 pages) of the newspaper but could not understand even a single sentence, though I tried to read lot of matter, something on every page. I feel sorry for not knowing the beautiful German language. I wish I would try to learn it now.

When I got up after 'reading' the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* I turned back and found the same beautiful woman concentrated on a book. With slight humble gesture she introduced herself. "I am from Poland, not from Germany", she said giving a flash of sweet smile. "Poland?", I said, "I have a Polish friend, a great philosopher, Professor Henryk Skolimowski. You know him? "No", she said concentrating on her breath. I owe a passion for Henryk. When there is a reference of Poland, Henryk would immediately be my topic. Though I have never been to Poland, but I get a feel that Poland is my second home, thanks to Henryk Skolimowsski. It surprises me when our young generation is found not knowing him.

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I change my place. From the eastern side of the lounge I walk to the western side. There is still more than four hours' time for the flight to take off. Lights of the city were lit moments before the sun set. The western sky was growing pink. It was the time for sun set. I did not want to miss this cosmic event.

I have slip pad and pen in hand. Sun set in Munich. It is a first time event I am going to witness from another hemisphere of the Earth. Time is 4.40. Let me express the cosmic event in verse:

*Sun is setting
down the horizon.
Sky and Earth
are meeting with each other.
Moments of a cosmic celebration!
Having sparkled our half of the Earth
this is now set to illuminate
the other half.
The sun is setting
to rise again.
The other half of the Earth
will be showered by his radiation again.
The Sun is so just for Earth
and for life!*

*In the course of our journey of life
we need be just
like the Sun –
enlightening the world
and being fair for all..*

Clock hanging in the lounge strikes 4.45 PM. The Sun has gone down the horizon, clouds have turned pink as if adorning the sky!

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Dark is growing and Munich is glowing with lights. Munich is sparkling more than sky in the night! Looks like I am amidst shining stars! I recall a beautiful poem of the greatest eco-philosopher of our times, Prof. Henryk Skolimowski, titled *Reach for the Stars*:

*If you do not reach for the stars
You are not fully mature.
Small concerns will never make you
A great person, but only a fledgling.
Become mature!
This is the imperative of your destiny.*

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I change the place again and keep looking for the moon I was thinking of gazing the moon at night. Moon has more value in the night.

When sitting in the Lounge H44 waiting for boarding DEL-bound LH 762, the moon hanging in the sky eastwards attracts my vision. Almost full moon (tomorrow is the full moon day) reminds me of an acronym, the GANGAMOON coined by Professor Dr. Wolfgang-Albert Flugel. What a coincidence! This beautiful and heart-felt acronym has been coined in Germany by a German scientist. Though MOON in the word GANGAMOON has been derived from the word monsoon (as I presume), it naturally touches mind (at least an Indian mind). Ganga and moon together! Ganga (the river Ganges) is the most sacred symbol of India. Moon is a symbol of beauty for humanity. GANGAMOON – symbolizes a sacred symbol of Earth and a beautiful celestial body. What a meaningful confluence of the two – sacredness and beauty, Earth and a cosmic body! (Congrats, Wolfgang).

I recall my conversation with the learned professor and a visionary Dr. Wolfgang on the occasion of get-together at Zur Noll on the evening of 17 January. When we analysed the word GANGAMOON, Professor Wolfgang wore a glowing smile and felt a sensation of deep joy.

Ganga, legends say, was brought down to Earth from heaven by Bhagirath for the emancipation of his eighty thousand ancestors. This was the biggest ever project of that time! Bhagirath *prayas* is a metaphor in Hindia, which means incomparable and unparallel efforts of Bhagirath, the legendary king of the ancient times. GANGAMOON is the confluence of the Ganga and the Moon engineered by Prof. Dr. Wolfgang-Albert Flugel! Involving ceaseless efforts of Wolfgang, the GANGAMOON would prove to be the second biggest ever project of all times!

GANGAMOON will be implemented in the Ganga Basin of India. Wolfgang's team would make all Bhagirath efforts to preserve, clean and sanctify Ganga. The GANGAMOON will sow the seeds of new hopes in the fertile basin of the Ganga.

*Ganga – the most sacred river
Was brought down to Earth
By Bhagirath
Directly from heaven
For the emancipation
Of thousands of his ancestors.
Take a dip into Ganga
And you will get
All your sins washed away!
Ganga gave Earth
A meaning of sacredness.
Ganga gave life
A meaning of sanctity.
GANGAMOON
Is here
To preserve
That glory of the Earth!*

Why Moon is Lifeless!

I fix my gaze on the moon which was shining with the spell of darkness in the sky. I am occasionally nonplussed by a cosmological paradox: Lifelessness of the moon! Moon is the only natural satellite of the living planet Earth. Then, why is it lifeless? It is due to this lifelessness that we try to compare barrenness with moon: Barren like moon! On cosmological scale, moon and Earth have no significant distance from each other. Cosmologically, it can also be said that moon is almost attached to Earth, or moon is an indistinguishable part of the Earth. Why the atmosphere could not prevail on the moon? Why the seeds of life could not reach the moon?

*Moon has its fate
Intertwined with that of the Earth.
Moon revolves round the Earth,
Moon attracts our oceans,
As if wants to quench its thirst,
As if wishes to fertilize its mooring surface,
As if is desperate to blossom with life.
Alas! Moon is not living like Earth
Moon glitters in the light of the Sun
And spells its glitter on Earth.
Moon is non-living,
But makes the Earth more lively.
Moon has added to beauty of the Earth.
An awe-inspiring source for poets, writers and lyricists,
Moon helps cultivation of creativity,
Of peace, of penance.
A symbol of absolute beauty,
Moon arouses romanticism,
Induces co-creation,
Causes rhythm
And inspires to dance
With utter joy and contentment.
Moon is lifeless
But plays a life-enhancing role.
For the Earth
Moon is a boon.*

How lively it would have been if our only moon were life-laden like the living Earth! Since it is not, we cannot do anything, except weaving some theories about the life, about the Earth, about the moon. May our GANGAMOON Flourish. May the Ganga basin – the soul of Indian land blossom. Flowing Ganga is a metaphor of blooming happiness, blossoming liveliness, prosperity and eternity. Let us hope a Ganga flows on the Moon!

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Much water has flown into European rivers since the ecological and environmental movements started capturing human psyche following publication of the globally acclaimed Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* and the still-fresh-in human memory – the 1972 Stockholm Conference. Ecological movements appear to have met an immature death. The rapid globalization process of the 1990s proved to be a death knell for the ecological conscience emerged during 1970s and 80s. Eco-philosopher Professor Henryk Skolimowski, then with the Michigan University, had dreamed of an Ecological Age. His mind-boggling

work of early 1990s – *Dancing Shiva in the Ecological Age* – had stirred the conscience of our minds. This book and Skolimowski’s conscience-stirring writings were the main motive factors to give way to the establishment of the Indian Chapter of the Friends of Eco-philosophy (with me as its Secretary and Henryk its President) Skolimowskian eco-philosophy had conceived the Third Millennium as an Ecological Age. Economically globalised world is emerging out of ecological carnage. Ecological disaster is against human progress, against economic wellbeing, and it costs the whole Earth. Ecological Age, on the other hand, conceives an ecological affluence which goes hand in hand with economic affluence. Ecological wellbeing is economic wellbeing. Concept of an Ecological Age is progressive, futuristic and pursuance of the climax of sustainable development.

The concept of an Ecological Age is a baby of a Polish European, Professor Dr. Henryk Skolimowski. Sun of this Age must rise in Europe. Cultural unity of Europe has fertilized the land for an ecological resurgence. Ecological integrity and cultural integrity are the two aspects of a single coin. Cultural unity of Europe as of today is more pristine than the undergoing process of rapid globalization. And integrity is the first principle of life’s sustainability. This cultural integrity in awoken, flowering and vibrant Europe has become a reality at the dawn of the new millennium. Let the kernel of this unique unity evolve into an Ecological Age.

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21 January 2008: I have returned to India where my roots are. My visit to Germany was to participate in workshop and give my input. But it happened to be much more than that. It was my participation in the celebration of the birth of GANGAMOON, a baby of Prof. Wolfgang-Albert Flugel. It was not just a visit to Germany. It was a visit to Europe. Now one European nation amounts to the whole Europe. Never before in the living history of the world was Europe in such a sweet co-existence. A perfect European oneness! A unique and a fabulous gift of Europe to the world, to the humanity! Europe at one point of history was desperate to colonise other parts of the world. Today it has won over itself. This is the real victory. Europe must cherish this victory.

European oneness is a lesson, as it should be, to Asia where two neighbours do not even tolerate each other’s existence and where anarchy, religious fundamentalism, regionalism, social inequality, cultural fragmentation, political instability and violence have become a way of life. Europe has developed a symphony of unification. Asia is equally capable of that. Asian oneness might emerge from its unique diversity. Diversity has implications for enhanced resilience and sustainability. And where there is resilience and sustainability, there should be a spirit of co-existence, coherence, symbiosis and oneness. Asia should give an honest try, like Europe. That would be real globalization.

I conclude with a sense of celebration of what I have discovered during my Germany visit – the Europe’s unique oneness.

*Europe’s oneness –
A song of the Earth,
A pride of humanity,
A gift of the Third Millennium,
A celebration of cultural integrity,
A symphony of the world,
A new world in evolution!*

Note: This is the original writing of Prof Vir Singh, without any editing from WASWC.