

# Eating Right

## Regenerating our Indigenous Food Wisdom



Ma, not Alexa



**Eating Right**  
**Regenerating Our Indigenous Food Wisdom**

**Ma, Not Alexa**

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# Colophon

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# Eating Right: Regenerating Our Indigenous Food Wisdom

India has had a rich food heritage, which has protected both our planet & our health. In the last twenty years of globalization our food traditions have been destroyed by chemically grown and industrially processed, junk food, degrading our health and nutrition. Everyday policies are being made and laws are being written to privilege corporate profits above people's nourishment and health. As corporations hijack our seed, our agriculture, our food processing, our retail, they are destroying our livelihoods and the health of all citizens.

Most people of India are engaged in growing food, artisanally processing food, providing food to their community and their families, as small farmers, as artisanal processors, as small and tiny retailers, as hawkers and street vendors, as mothers and helpers. Our right to livelihoods with dignity and freedom is connected to our food heritage.

Industrialisation of food and the industrialisation of food safety standards has contributed to the spread of unhealthy diets and chronic diseases.

Source: Navdanya. 2017. Annam food as Health. Navdanya/ RFSTE.

Each culture has evolved healthy indigenous food systems or diets suited to their biodiversity and climate. Women have been central to the evolution of wisdom

and knowledge, of Eating Right. Healthy food systems are biodiverse, fresh and artisanally processed. Unhealthy, unsafe food systems are based on chemical monocultures and industrial processing with toxics and chemicals to be preserved for long shelf life or long-distance transport. This trend of unsafe food is governed by corporate greed, corporate control and corporate irresponsibility.

## “Eat Right” Is More About “Eat Wrong”

The national food regulator of India which is FSSAI (Food safety and standards authority of India) has tied up with e-commerce giant Amazon and is planning to bring its virtual assistant, Alexa, in setting up “Eat Right” labs in schools all over India. The campaign claims to create awareness amongst children regarding junk food that has started to be consumed at a high rate in India. Since the flood gates were opened to junk food by corporate globalisation rules of the WTO in the garb of sanitary and phytosanitary standards, our food regulatory agency and the Amazon CEO are under the impression that technology is the answer for stopping the junk food consumption in India, which the junk food industry and FSSAI have themselves actively contributed to.

Source: Shiva, V. 2005. Seed Dictatorship and Food Fascism. RFSTE.

Source: [https://www.fssai.gov.in/upload/media/FSSAI\\_News\\_Alexa\\_Economic\\_03\\_01\\_2020.pdf](https://www.fssai.gov.in/upload/media/FSSAI_News_Alexa_Economic_03_01_2020.pdf)

The Amazon-FSSAI “Eat Right Campaign” is based on deepening corporate control over our food where Alexa becomes the instructor of what to eat.

This is an assault on our Food Sovereignty and our Knowledge Sovereignty.

Instead of promoting education on our Indigenous Desi food cultures, the FSSAI is promoting ignorance.

As women of Mahila Anna Swaraj declared in 2018:

“Anna Swaraj (Food Sovereignty) is our birth right to our food heritage and our nutrition.”

The pressure of globalisation has opened the floodgates for the entry of industrially processed junk food which is getting a legal sanction from FSSAI. It is quite ironic to see the people who are treating junk food with such contempt and illustrating the problem caused by its consumption are the same people who are supporting it and allowing its entry into India's markets through other channels.

## Two Paradigms Of Food: Real Food Vs. Fake Food

Food is not a commodity, it is not "stuff" put together mechanically and artificially in labs and factories.

Food is life.

Food holds the contributions of all beings that make the food web, and it holds the potential of maintaining and regenerating the web of life. Food also holds the potential for health and disease, depending on how it was grown and processed. Food is therefore the living currency of the web of life. As an ancient Upanishad reminds us "Everything is food, everything is something else's food."

Good Food and Real Food are the basis of health.

Bad food, industrial food and fake food are the basis of disease.

Hippocrates said: "Let food be thy medicine". In Ayurveda, India's ancient science of life, food is called "sarvausadha" the medicine that cures all disease.

Source: <https://navdanyainternational.org/publications/manifesto-food-for-health/>

Industrial food systems have reduced food to a commodity, to "stuff" that can then be constituted in the lab. In the process, both the planet's health and our health has been nearly destroyed. Moving further down the industrial path of fake farming and fake food is a recipe for extinction.

The mad rush for hyperindustrialisation of farming and food, ignorant of nature's ecological laws and the biodiversity of life, the diversity of our foods and

food cultures, and the role of biodiversity in maintaining our health, and living economies, is a recipe for accelerating the destruction of the planet and our health.

**Fake food began with fake ingredients. The reductionist paradigm of “Nutritionism” reduced food to its nutrients, and then ingredients with equivalent “nutrition” were substituted.**

Health and Safety rules that forbade non-edible ingredients as “adulteration” were legalised through the corporate rules for “Sanitary Phytosanitary measures and safety standards”. Fake sugar, fake fat, fake fibre were normalised in our diet through industrialisation of food. But they could not be normalised in our bodies and our gut microbiome. The combination of agrichemicals and chemicals used in industrial processing has contributed to the epidemic of chronic diseases.

## Two Paradigms of Knowledge: Real Knowledge Based on Participation And Our Ecological And Cooperative Intelligence vs. Fake Knowledge of Artificial Intelligence

### **Death of Real Knowledge: Bezos and Alexa**

What we are seeing with the Eat Right Campaign is an epistemic negation of real knowledge and wisdom cultivated by the women, by the indigenous people of this planet.

Living Knowledge is knowledge rooted in food sovereignty.

Food sovereignty is not only about growing your food but also about knowing your food.

Fake knowledge is knowledge rooted in extraction and accumulation of profits for the richest 1% causing destruction and death on this planet.

Real Knowledge is based on participation and our Ecological and Cooperative Intelligence.

Real knowledge is the knowledge of our mothers and grandmothers, having withstood the test of time over centuries and shaped our bodies and this planet in a healthy way.

## Ma, Not Alexa

The claim is that the Eat right Campaign is “going to help children who are completely surrounded by junk food and Alexa will be the necessary mentor for the kids.”

In our societies, community and schools, we are mentored by our grandmothers, mothers (Ma), our teachers and elders. In the world envisioned by Jeff Bezos and FSSAI, Alexa will be the necessary mentor for the children.

The important question is do we really want Jeff Bezos to use the virtual assistant Alexa to be a role model for our kids?

The untold story of introducing Alexa as part of a child’s curriculum could have disastrous effects. Susan Pinker, a developmental psychologist gave the following message which seems to be a mutual and a valid concern of all the people who can see the futile dependency created on Alexa and other forms of technology. She explained: **“What children really need is social interaction. They don’t**

**need robots. Any withdrawal of social interaction in the history of child development has proven to be a disaster — they don't develop on schedule; their emotions don't develop; their empathy doesn't develop; and their language skills don't develop. Hundreds of studies, demonstrate that familial interactions built around the dinner table predict children's academic success and healthy socialization...It's not because kids are eating broccoli...it's because they're sitting face-to-face at the table and that time is concentrated on social interaction...time to exercise reasoning and language skills," which, she points out, are often non-verbal. She adds, "Acquiring communication skills means eye contact and reading facial expressions. Alexa can't provide that."**

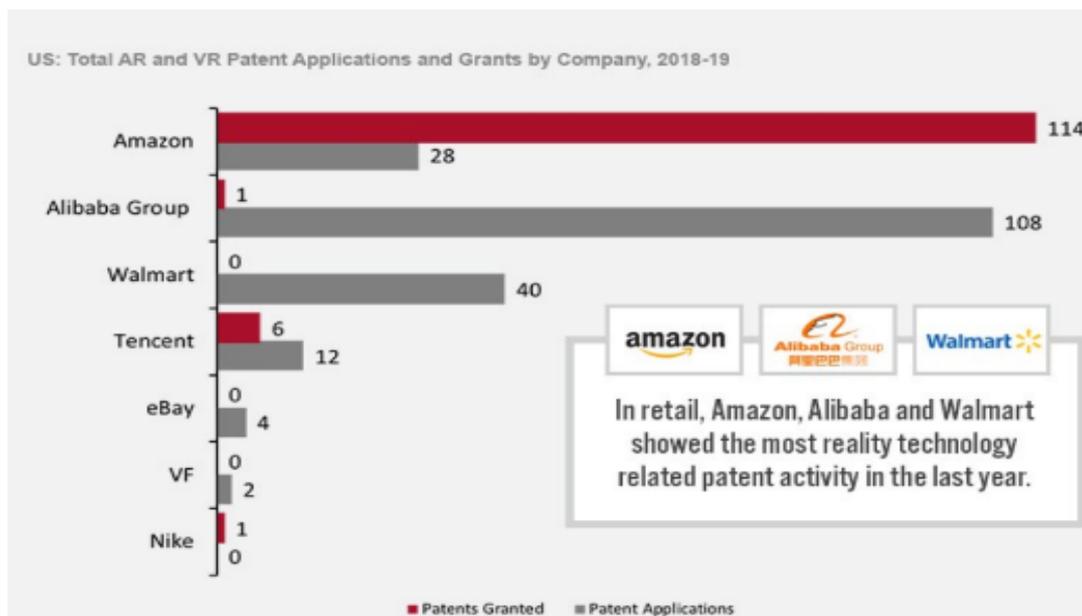
Source:<https://thriveglobal.com/stories/artificial-intelligence-alexa-impact-children-expert-opinion-tips/>

We are seeing a huge change in the lifestyle of kids that are growing up. A few years back, our adolescent years included engaging in outdoor activities, interacting with people, spending time with our families as a day to day routine. These habits have been subtly eradicated from kids' lifestyle in the present circumstances. All these lifestyle changes are causing illnesses such as depression, anxiety, and obesity at a very early age which was quite uncommon a few decades back.

## **The unnecessary burden of including Augmented Reality for the campaign**

Jeff Bezos is using the kids as a scapegoat for the 'Eat Right Campaign' to promote the usage of Augmented Reality in India. He has the greatest number of patents

regarding AR and is ready to expand his empire and monopolise this sector of technology as well. The company desperately wants to create the dependency on Alexa and is therefore including various gadgets that are all equipped with Alexa, be it Echo Frames which are the smart glasses or Echo Loop which resembles a ring.



Source: <https://www.fastcompany.com/4045491/why-amazon-is-getting-into-ar-money>

**“Alexa will provide the kids with all the information about our food systems, fats, proteins, salt content”**

The food would be deemed healthy and thus consumable by merely reducing its nutritional value to calories, fats, proteins and salt content by the ‘Eat Right’ campaign. In a child’s life in this country there are so many valuable life lessons that are imparted by the elders but most importantly by our grandmothers. Our grandmothers and mothers act like a bridge who connect us with our culture, our food and the true meaning behind the numerous festivals we celebrate all year long.

They play a huge part in moulding and helping a child develop wisdom and moral values. From taking care of us when we are sick with small illnesses like fever and stomach aches to handling our deep wounds, they take care of us with effective homemade remedies. These remedies cost nothing in comparison to the huge amounts of money we spend on buying medicines. The knowledge and wisdom that is gradually imbibed in our minds as a result of these experiences, can only be shared and cherished amongst humans. These bonds don't grow artificially but they are ecologically nurtured by learning from our mothers and grandmothers who cultivate our ecological living intelligence which shapes our wisdom and knowledge over a period of time, from generation to generation.

Grandmothers always were and always will be the centre of true knowledge and wisdom.



Source: <https://www.google.com/search?q=granddaughter-sits-on-grandmothers-lapFnj3tg&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjioP-IIDoAhUGU30KHd38AMEQ9QEwAHoECAyQBO#imgrc=udjMbWFrPk0rkM>

## Machine Learning Cannot Cultivate Wisdom

Similar to the limited abilities of a robotic mind, Alexa won't be able to convey the emotions and the intimate connection we, Indians, share with our traditional food and food heritage.

We are a civilisation of "anna" (food).

Food is life.

Food is celebration.

Our diverse festivals celebrate our diverse food.

Even if Alexa can record stories and "expand her database" what this "virtual assistant" can never provide is the innate feeling of connection that one only experiences through human interaction. For humans, to be is to be related. Being and relating are at the core of who we are. With the constant push of unnecessary technology down our throats we are losing our human touch. And a line is certainly crossed when we involve the kids in practices that harm the health of our bodies and the body of Mother Earth.

## FSSAI: Hidden Practices And Truths

The FSSAI was created by the global Junk food Industry to replace "The Prevention of Food Adulteration Act". It functions as a "Prevention of Food Safety Act", destroys our sovereign food safety, destroys our indigenous foods, our grandmothers' kitchens by making our indigenous food heritage based on local, diverse, fresh, artisanal, unpackaged food illegal and promotes and floods India with globalised junk food.

The Food safety and standards bill was introduced in 2005 and became an act in 2006. The Act repealed all the laws and orders which protected the rights of Indians to produce food which was safe for public health and their rights to have successful livelihoods while participating in the indigenous, living and circular food economies.

Food Acts/orders that stood repealed on the commencement of the above act were:

1. Prevention of Food Adulteration (PFA), 1954
2. The Fruit Products Act (FPO), 1955
3. The Milk and Milk Products Order (MMPO), 1992
4. The Meat Food Products Order, 1973
5. The Vegetable Oil Products Order, 1973
6. The Edible Oils Packaging (Regulation) Order, 1998
7. The Solvent Extracted Oil, De oiled Meal and Edible Flour (Control) Order, 1967
8. The Infant Milk Substitute, Feeding Bottles and Infant Foods, 1992
9. Any other order issued under Essential Commodities Act, 1955 relating to Food

Food Laws from which sections relating to food were required to be deleted/modified on commencement of the act:

1. The standards of Weights and Measures Act, 1976 and Standards of Weights and Measures (Packaged Commodity Rules), 1977
2. The Export (Quality Control and Inspection) Act, 1963
3. The Environment Protection Act, 1986 and Environment Protection Rules, 1968
4. BIS 1986
5. AGMARK 1937
6. Customs Act, 1962

7. The foreign Trade (Development and Regulation Act)
8. Other Acts/orders enacted by State Govts and UTs.

It was an absolute dismantling of food, not its strengthening.

There was no reference to the most distinct aspects of India's food systems: indigenous science, cultural diversity and economic livelihoods in local food provisioning.

This continues to be the case today.

Our main food regulatory agency continues to ignore India's rich holistic science of food based on Ayurveda and continues to promote the reductionist science of unhealthy food. We used to have a free economy that served local community and was governed by community control and local culture. But we are now in a place where regulation is done by centralised rules and standards appropriate for the 1% industrialised large scale manufacturing.

Source: Shiva, V. 2005. Seed Dictatorship and Food Fascism. RFSTE.

Step by step, FSSAI has destroyed our desi foods, dismantled our diverse and decentralised economy and facilitated the flooding of junk food.

## **STEP 1: Passing of the Packaging Order**

Step 1 was to pass a packaging order, making it illegal to distribute unpackaged food. The Edible Oils Packaging (Regulation) Order, 1998 was introduced for edible oils on grounds of food safety which shut down millions of small-scale oil mills and local edible oils like mustard. Combined with WTO trade rules of removing import restrictions, the law of false food safety flooded India's markets with oil from genetically engineered soya beans.

The main consequence of the mustard oil ban and the ban on the sale of edible oils in unpacked forms was the destruction of our oilseed biodiversity and the diversity of our edible oils and food cultures.

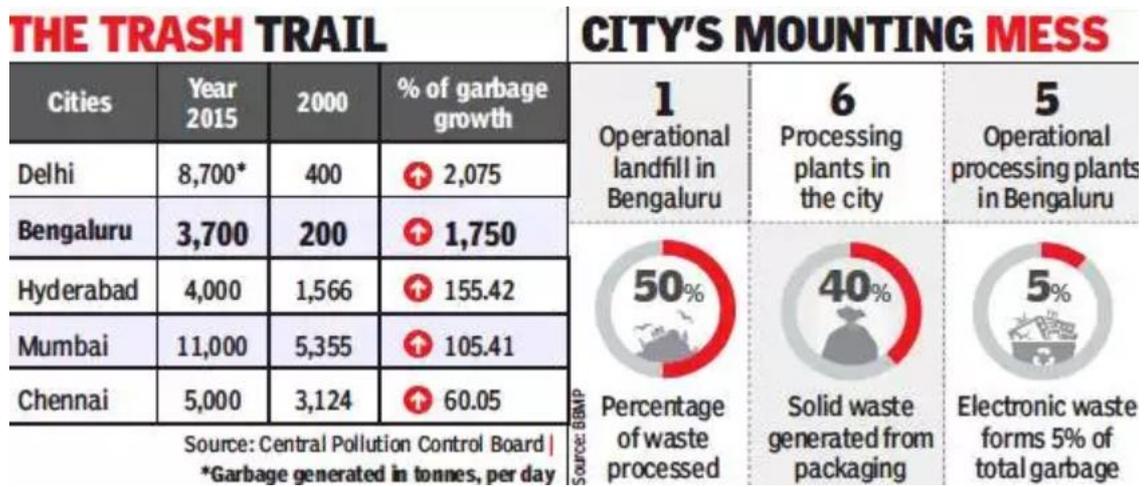
Pseudo safety standards destroy safe and healthy oils and have flooded the market with unhealthy hazardous oils. The manipulations of oil prices and the restrictions put on indigenous oilseed processing and sales forced Indians to consume soya bean oil and thus further strengthened a monoculture and monopoly. Small processors of eco-friendly and safe edible oil were rendered illegal through laws like this packaging order.

### **Packaging Laws: Generating Waste and Garbage**

FSSAI laws regarding packaging are a leading cause for the amount of plastic waste generated in our country. Our artisanal food culture was so rich and efficient that there was no waste that was generated. Everything was eco-friendly and long lasting and worked in compliance with mother earth. But as soon as FSSAI forcefully shoved packaging down our throats, the scenario changed completely. Our holy rivers have been turned into a dumping ground for the plastic, our mountains are filled with the 'FSSAI approved' industrial junk food.

These are FSSAI's own estimates in 2019 about the crisis that was created and controlled by them: **"India generates about 95 lakhs tonnes of plastic waste per annum. About 38 lakh tonnes is uncollected which ends up in the dump, rivers and even in animals."**

Source: [https://fssai.gov.in/upload/media/FSSAI\\_NEws\\_Plastic\\_ANI\\_04\\_10\\_2019.pdf](https://fssai.gov.in/upload/media/FSSAI_NEws_Plastic_ANI_04_10_2019.pdf)



Source: <https://static.toiimg.com/photo/msid-61612236/61612236.jpg>

## Latest assault on our Indigenous Mithai (Sweets)

FSSAI is now going to attack and exploit our neighbourhood sweet shops, specifically the small vendors and artisanal producers by forcing them to introduce manufacturing and the “best before” dates for non-packaged food items. This is yet another attempt by the FSSAI to promote fake industrial packaged food items by imposing unnecessary regulations on the sale of traditional sweets that has been a part of our culture since a long time. The amount of packaging waste it is going to generate is also a repercussion that the FSSAI won't talk about.

Source: <https://www.livemint.com/industry/retail/loose-sweets-to-carry-expiry-dates-fssai-11582630235556.html>

## STEP 2: Passing the Labelling Order

Step 2 was to pass labelling laws which made artisanal and healthy, safe food prepared by women and street vendors, illegal and spread industrially processed unhealthy and unsafe food.



Source: <https://www.e-startupindia.com/blog/fssai-soon-to-introduce-new-norms-for-food-labelling/10211.html>

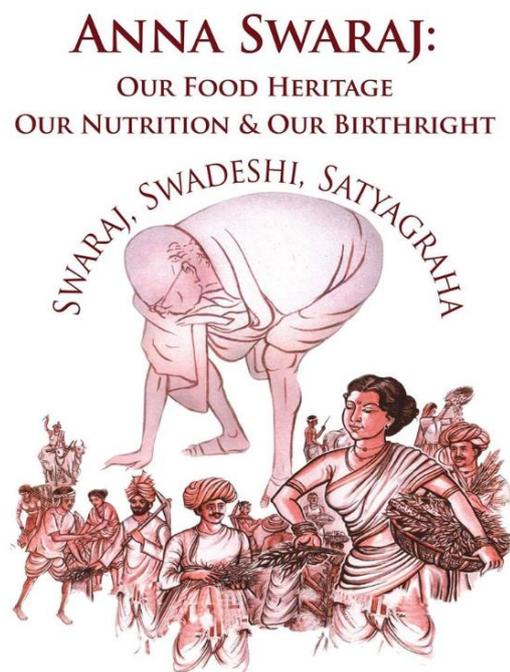
## **Women Defending Food Sovereignty- Mahila Anna Swaraj**

To defend the unjust regulations created by FSSAI, Navdanya, The Guild for Service, and the Diverse Women for Diversity- Mahila Anna Swaraj came together to fight for the right to the heritage of food and nutrition on the 'Quit India Day'. 9th August 2018 was rightfully observed as 'Anna Swaraj' where the recognisable message was women's fight to reclaim the traditional spaces lost to corporatisation of food and nutrition.

So, on Quit India Day, 9<sup>th</sup> of August 2018, at the Mandap of Gandhi Smriti, New Delhi we took a pledge to fight for our food sovereignty.

## **We pledged to:**

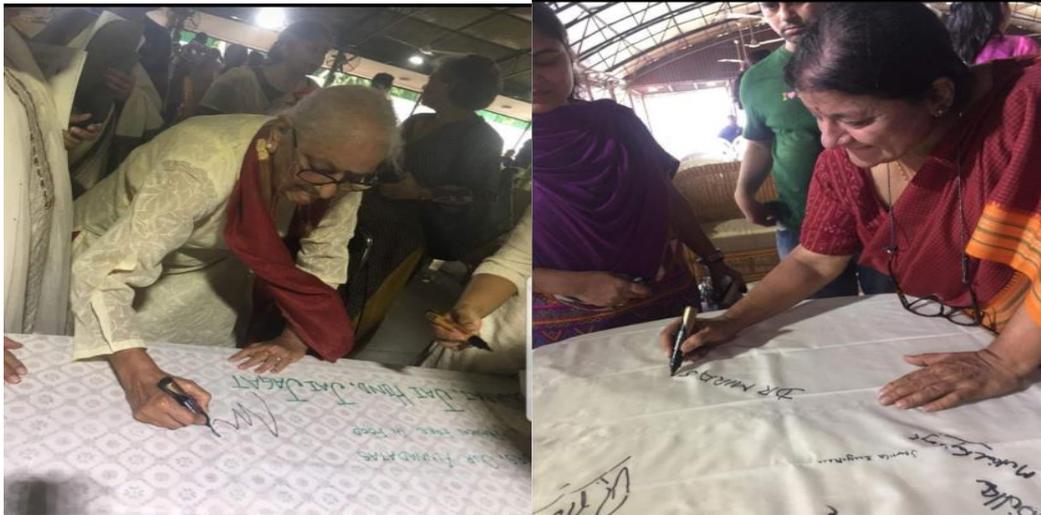
- Quit Food and nutrition Illiteracy & Ignorance about what we are eating.
- Quit Poisons, chemicals and GMO's in our food;
- Quit Indifference to the plight of our small farmers - our *anna datas*;
- Quit complacency to the violation & destruction of our food heritage;



## **We pledged to:**

- Work for Swatch Bharat through Swatch Bhojan. No junk within and no junk in the environment.
- Reclaim our right to produce our own food even it is in 1 square foot of our terraces, our balconies, back gardens.
- Remember that we are co-creators and co-producers of nourishment and through growing our own food, we connect with the seed and the soil, cultivate solidarity with our small farmers, small processors, our *anna datas*.
- Work together to provide good, safe, clean food to the members of our *anna swaraj* communities.

- Build on Gandhiji's legacy of *swaraj*, *swadeshi* and *satyagraha* so that we are *swashakt* to fight for *swad* and *swasthya* in our food and nutrition
- Sow the seeds of Anna Swaraj beginning with our families, our communities and our regions, till all of India is poison free.



On 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct, 2018, Navdanya celebrated Gandhi's 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary by renewing the movement for "Our Bread, Our Freedom" (Hamari Roti, Hamari Azaadi) with the assistance of Diverse Women from across the world. We came together to build alternatives that allowed us to celebrate and enjoy real food with real nutrition instead of the fake food with fake nutrition. Through our bread our message was to reclaim our freedom, reclaim our knowledge to produce diverse foods from diverse plants as food.

**"Our birth right to our food heritage and our nutrition, our livelihoods and our knowledge . This is Anna Swaraj. This is Food Sovereignty."**

With the new FSSAI Labelling Laws introduced in 2018 it will be impossible for women groups, the small scale cottage industry, the street vendors and the

indigenous cultural food processors to continue. With the passing of the labelling law artisanal, healthy, safe food has been made illegal and the industrially processed fake food is being promptly promoted through FSSAI.

## **FSSAI: Creator of Misleading Information**

### About Fats

FSSAI has equated the inedible products which are unfit for eating with our healthy oils and fats. For the labelling of fats they included saturated fats, monosaturated fats, polyunsaturated fats, and trans fat.

Through this unscientific reductionist labelling that hid the process and health impact, they are promoting hazardous trans fats and equating them with our healthy, artisanal, cold pressed and pure edible oils. They are attempting to both take away healthy food options from Indian Citizens and imposing unhealthy industrial foods.

According to a 2012 study published in the Annals of Internal Medicine, a mere forty calorie per day increase in trans fats increases the risks of heart disease by 23%. The Centre of Disease Control has also attributed heart attacks to trans fats. Trans fats were originally invented to make candles, but Proctor and Gamble bought the patent and started to use it to produce cheap food. Around the world trans fats are being removed from food. Trans fats have been shown to increase the risk of coronary artery disease in part by raising levels of the lipoprotein LDL (often referred to as "bad cholesterol"), lowering levels of the lipoprotein HDL (often referred to as "good cholesterol"), increasing triglycerides in the bloodstream and promoting systemic inflammation.

Our artisanally processed coconut and mustard oils are now being recognised as healthy, in spite of all the pseudo scientific propaganda against our edible oils for decades by the industrial food processing lobby which has been promoting trans fats in the diet, while displacing healthy oils and fats, through their influence on food policy, trade policy, scientific research, and the huge money they spend on misleading advertisement.

### About Sugar

The food regulation body unscientifically defined sugars in terms of chemical reductionism, instead of the quality and the difference. Processed white sugar, when consumed, is damaging to our health. Depleted of all the nutrients which are present in sugarcane and its artisanally processed products such as gur (jaggery), khan sari, refined white sugar is empty food. It is at the root of many metabolic disorders and chronic diseases. However, gur is very different in the process of production, the quality and the health impact from industrial sugar and fake sugars such as High Fructose Corn Syrup.

### Implication of HCFS

High fructose corn syrup, used as a sweetener for industrial soft drinks and sweets is a major contributor of the disease epidemic. A study published in the *International Journal of Obesity* found that in the 35 years since the introduction of HFCS, the rise in obesity has paralleled the increase in use of HFCS. HFCS leads to skyrocketing of insulin production, while it suppresses the response to leptin which regulates the appetite. With the disruption of its regulatory mechanisms, the body starts to store fat and obesity is the result.

## About Fibres

They have a section on fake dietary fibre which will destroy the fibre rich whole food flours of diverse grains in our diets. FSSAI has defined *“dietary fiber” as “carbohydrate polymers with a degree of polymerization (DP) not lower than 3, which are not hydrolyzed by the endogenous enzymes in the small intestine of humans. Dietary fiber consists of one or more of:*

*(A) Edible carbohydrate polymers naturally occurring in the food as consumed*

*(B) Carbohydrate polymers, which have been obtained from food raw material by physical, enzymatic or chemical means*

*(C) Synthetic carbohydrate polymers.”*

India is not the USA where industrially bred wheats have led to gluten allergies and celiac disease. Desi Indian wheats do not cause gluten allergies. India's wheats have been bred for diversity and healthy eating. Our flour, until recently, was ground artisanally and was whole flour with all nourishment intact.

Industrial breeding and industrial production of wheat based on uniformity, combined with industrial processing which damages the structure of wheat has led to an epidemic of gluten allergy. Industrial flour, called “refined” and “enriched”, has been stripped of its nutrients and fibre. Synthetic nutrients are then put back in the flour. To make flours white, they are bleached with chlorine or peroxide. Bleached flours are less digestible than whole wheat flours.

The regulatory body is aware of the fact that the cost of labelling and printing of the local fresh food clearly exceeds the cost of selling. Their true motives comes into picture when their verification process condemns small scale shopkeepers from selling safe and healthy snacks because they fail to have a proper plastic packing. On the other hand, companies like PepsiCo and Nestle, one of the major

contributors of the Poison Food, easily sell their poisons freely without consequences.

A corporate food system driven by greed is robbing us of real food and forcing **fake food** on us through **fake knowledge** and **pseudo safety rules**.

Pseudo food safety regulating bodies like FSSAI are facilitating the transition from good fat to fake fat, good protein to fake protein with melamine polymer (which is also responsible for kidney failures), from real fibre to fake fibre like Keratin and “carbohydrate polymers obtained from physical, enzymatic, or chemical means, and **synthetic carbohydrate polymers**”.

### **STEP 3: Introducing GMOs in Our Diet**

The new FSSAI Labelling and Display Regulations, 2018 rob us of our freedom to produce, process, distribute and eat good food according to our own food cultures. They are laws for forcing us to eat junk food, fake food, chemically contaminated industrial food and GMOs.

The proposed labelling law allows companies to sell food with 5% GMO's as GMO free, when the world standard is only 1%.

In addition, while having made a commitment in the Supreme court on GMO labelling issues, FSSAI has allowed illegal GMO food imports to flood India's market.

***Labelling of Genetically Engineered or Modified Foods*** : “All food products having total Genetically Engineered (GE) ingredients 5% or more shall be labeled. The total GE ingredients shall be of top three ingredients in terms of their percentage in the product. The labelling shall be as: contains GMO/Ingredients derived from GMO.”

Source: <https://seedfreedom.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/FSSAI-.pdf>

## **STEP 4: Introducing Alexa**

The Amazon-FSSAI partnership on Eat Right Labs in schools is the next step in this road to food colonisation by FSSAI in partnership with one of the worst corporations of the world. Alexa which is the virtual assistant for the device Echo is going to “educate” the masses especially the children on how many calories the food contains.

If the steps taken by the FSSAI are a decade and a half old and have colonised our food, “Alexa as the mentor on Eating Right” is the colonisation of the minds of our future generation.

## **Amazon and Jeff Bezos: Today’s Robber Barons**

Amazon, a new entrant in the distribution of our daily bread, has now become a big player in distribution with Jeff Bezos emerging as the richest man on the Forbes list with a net worth of \$131 billion, putting Bill Gates at second place. In 2017, he doubled his net worth with a 104% surge in the price of Amazon stocks, and a 41% increase in e-commerce. In the first six months of 2018, it recorded more than \$100 billion in net sales in the first six months of 2018.

Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/angelauyeng/2018/10/03/how-jeff-bezos-became-the-richest-person-in-the-world-2018-forbes-400/#1bd411721bee>

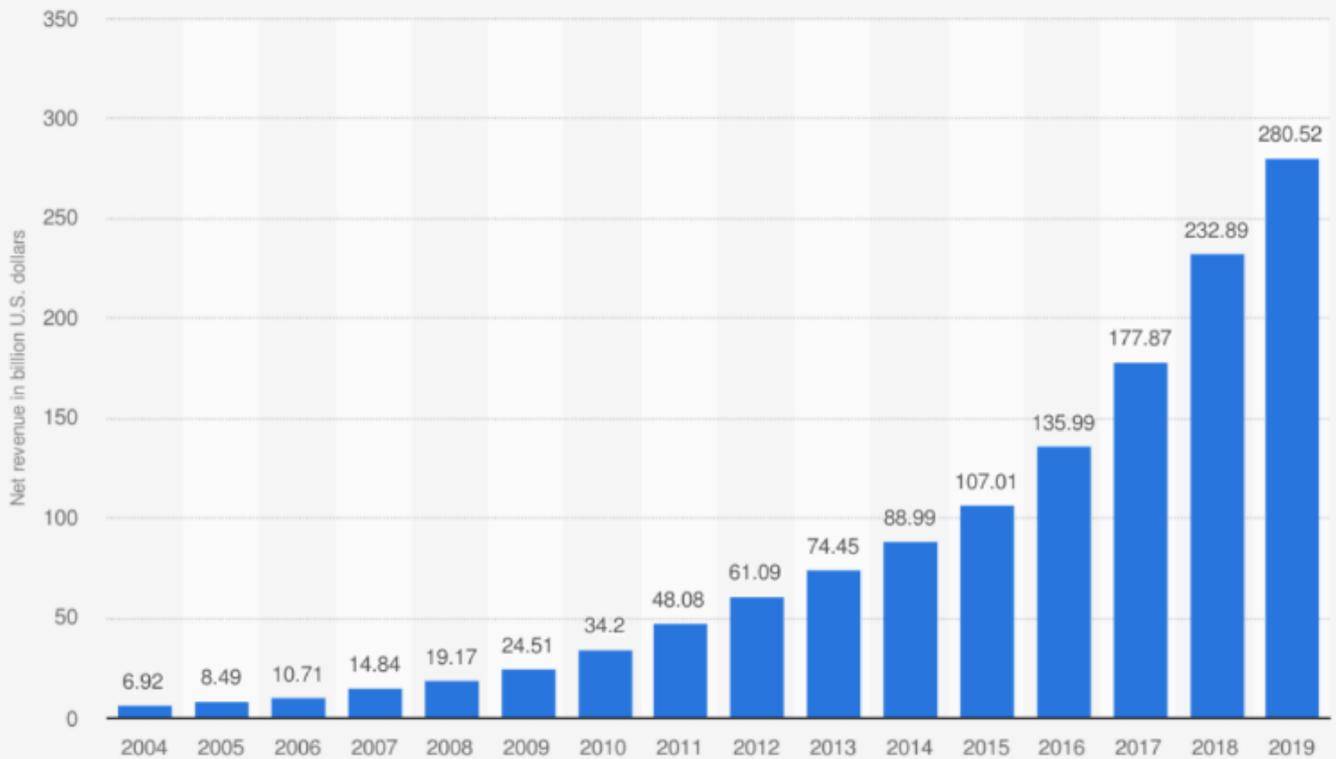
Jeff Bezos started Amazon as a start-up that dealt with selling books online. It took Amazon less than two decades to implement its exploitive practices that drove

out popular establishments like Drama Books, Westsider Books and even a firm establishment like Barnes and Nobles to extinction. It wasn't through perseverance that Amazon became one of the most successful enterprise but by using its market power to eliminate competition and taking control of one industry after another, leaving the commons with an economy that is less diverse and less innovative. It has been absolutely successful in destroying local economies and livelihoods, undermining the efforts of producers and worsened the income inequality.

In terms of the book sector Amazon controls 75 percent of online sales of physical books, 65 percent of e-book sales, more than 40 percent of new book sales, and about 85 percent of sales by self-published e-book authors.

## **The Growth of Amazon**

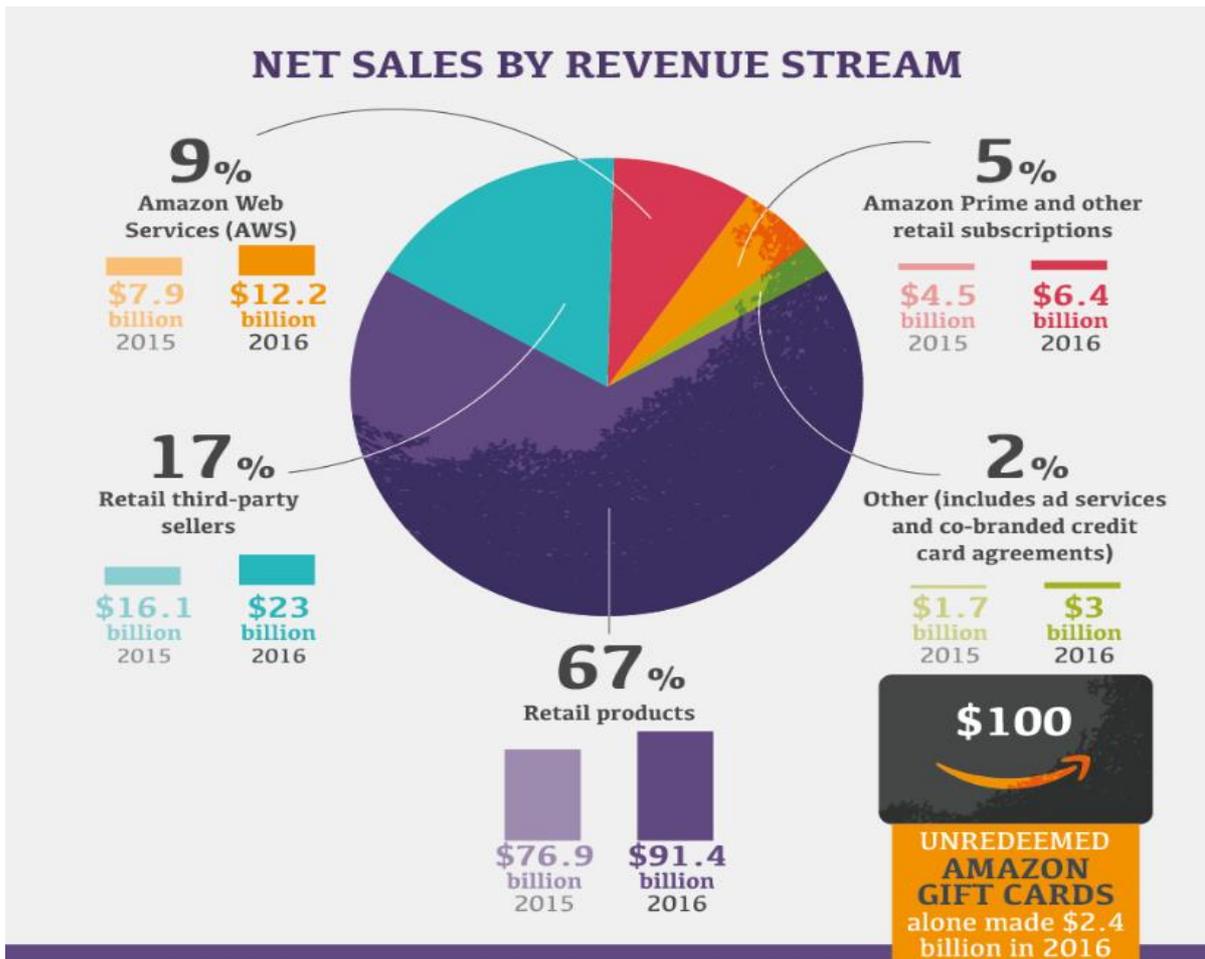
**Annual net revenue of Amazon from 2004 to 2019 (in billion U.S. dollars)**



Source  
Amazon  
© Statista 2020

Additional Information:  
Worldwide; Amazon; 2004 to 2019

Source: <https://www.statista.com/graphic/1/266282/annual-net-revenue-of-amazoncom.jpg>



Source: <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/breaking-amazon-makes-money/>

## Colonizing Retail

Majority of the net income of Amazon is derived from destruction of retailing by uprooting the small economies and multiple livelihoods connected to the small economies and centralising the system. The cheap prices that Amazon provides for the customers forces the other sellers to sell at a very nominal rate. Most of the shopkeepers couldn't survive the price imbalance which resulted in either unemployment or selling their products on Amazon at low prices.

| Revenue Stream                       | Net Sales (2016) | % of Total Revenue |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Retail products                      | \$91.4B          | 67.2%              |
| Retail 3rd party sellers             | \$23.0B          | 16.9%              |
| Amazon Web Services (AWS)            | \$12.2B          | 9.0%               |
| Subscriptions (Amazon Prime, etc.)   | \$6.4B           | 4.7%               |
| Other (ads, co-branded credit cards) | \$3.0B           | 2.2%               |
| Total Revenue                        | \$136.0B         | 100.0%             |

Now Jeff Bezos wants to strengthen his foothold in India. His alleged interest of 'helping the small-scale shopkeepers digitalise' by investing \$1 billion is a façade which is being recognised by the traders and merchants here.



Source: <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/breaking-amazon-makes-money/>

Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), a trade group that represents more than 60 million merchants in the country organised protests in 300 cities in India. They are well aware of the impact amazon has created and crippled millions of livelihoods.



Source: <https://i.insider.com/5e1f7fd224306a1d1c125029?width=750&format=jpeg&auto=webp>

## Two Paradigms of The Economy:

The Anti-People Economy of Enriching Corporations  
and Billionaires Through Extraction From Nature,  
Society And Our Minds

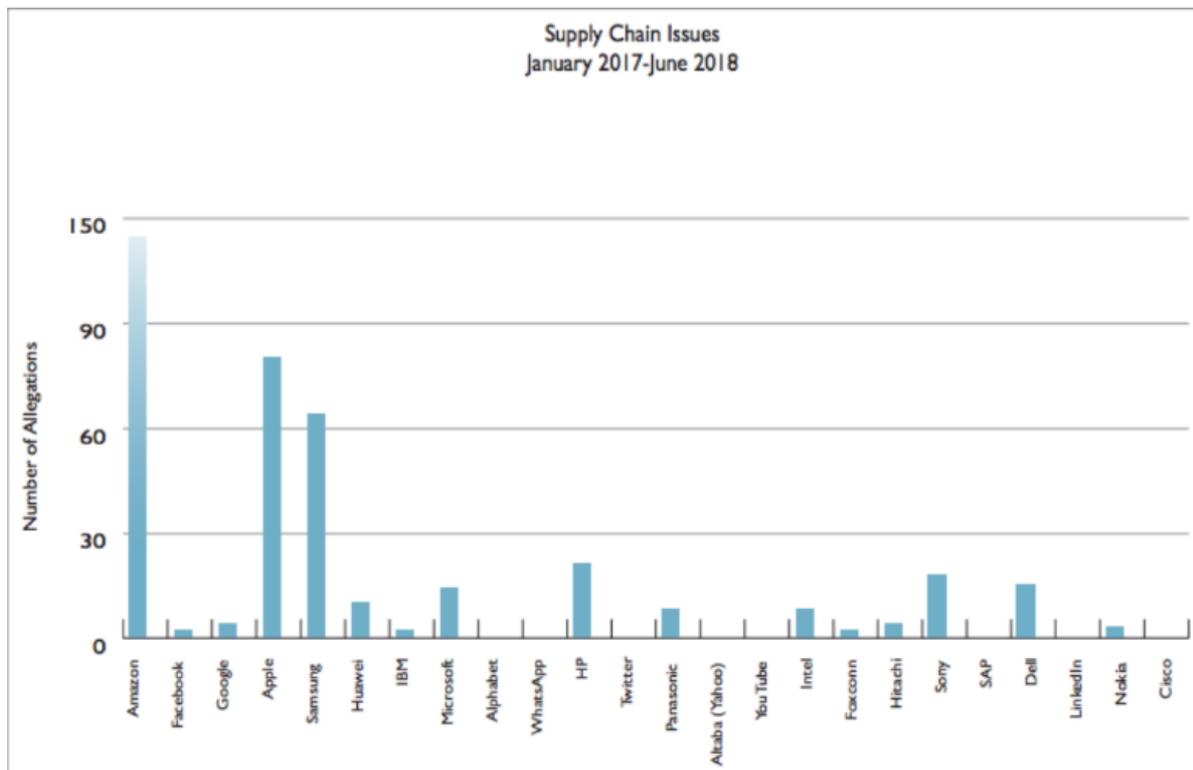
Vs.

Economies That Ensure Wellbeing for All Through  
Mutuality and Giving

### **The Anti-people economy of Jeff Bezos: Amazon's Labour Exploitation**

Bezos' model of economy is an anti-people model. The biggest company faces the greatest number of allegations regarding the exploitation of the workers.

The conditions are too inhumane to work with. It was revealed that Foxconn (Chinese producer of Echo and Kindle) employees are paid a minimum of 1.69 pounds an hour and they are expected to work for 60 hours per week which is far too much from the normal 36 hours a week issued by the government.



Source: <https://www.ignite.digital/amazon-labour-exploitation/>

The vicious treatment towards the workers is a global problem. In UK, it was reported that there were an estimated 600 calls for ambulance from the Amazon's warehouse and the situations dealt with pregnancy-related incidents, breathing problems, cardiac pain, electrocution, and even major trauma.

The CEO's hunger for more 'growth and capitalism' has made him ignore the emotional state of the people that work for him. An ex-warehouse manager confirms this view: **"We weren't trained to be understanding of their [workers'] struggles or communicate with them. It was all about mechanics. Workers constantly feel like their jobs are on the line because they are. We**

[managers] were supposed to be observing their [packing] rate and not be concerned with how hard it is to pack things. Managers were pressured to identify the weak links and get them out so that we can have a faster rate. It's a pressure cooker environment, and that's what you have to be to get to Amazon's level of efficiency."

Source: <https://www.ignite.digital/amazon-labour-exploitation/>

The linear extractive economy is based on extraction, commodification and profits. It has no place for the care of nature and community. It leaves nature and society impoverished.



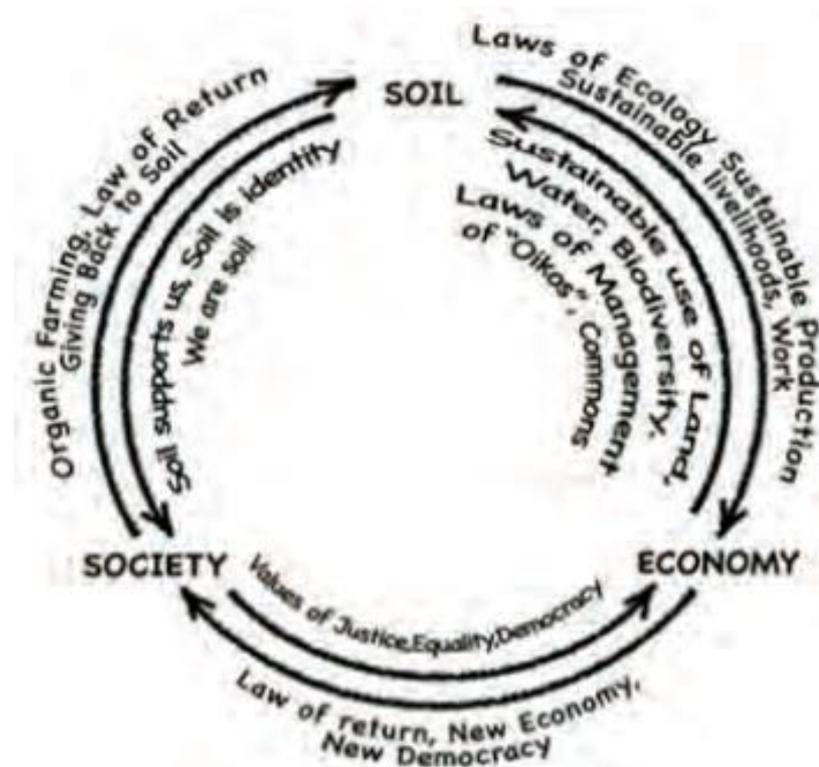
Source: Shiva, V and Shiva, K. 2018. The Future of our daily bread: Regeneration or Collapse. Navdanya International / Research foundation for science, technology and ecology.

# The Living Circular Economy of Local Communities

The law of return, of giving back, is nature's law of permanence. This is the basis of circular economies. Regenerative, renewable, sustainable economies that enhance nature's well being and ours are based on the law of return-of giving back in gratitude and deep awareness that we are part of the web of life.

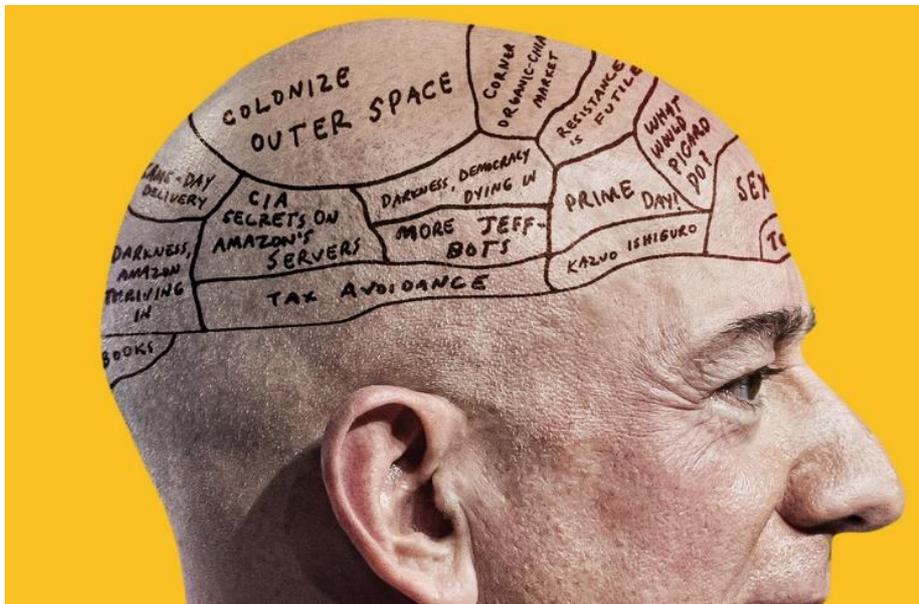
Biodiversity based organic farming and biodiversity of markets and economies is Navdanya's approach to rejuvenate soil, water and biodiversity, rural economies and the health of all through cooperation, circular economies and local food systems.

## Circular Economy



# Colonising Knowledge, Education and Our Children's Health through Alexa and AI

Bezos' Eat Right campaign is no different than the rest of his motives. Pushing Alexa in children's curriculum has nothing to do with helping them but the bigger picture here, is to capitalize the market and create dependency on their product.



Source: [https://cdn.theatlantic.com/thumbor/OMhnuLzdonTmwD7CnxhrMjICXk=/1920x1080/media/img/2019/10/10/WEL\\_Foer\\_BezosOpenerRedo/original.jpg](https://cdn.theatlantic.com/thumbor/OMhnuLzdonTmwD7CnxhrMjICXk=/1920x1080/media/img/2019/10/10/WEL_Foer_BezosOpenerRedo/original.jpg)

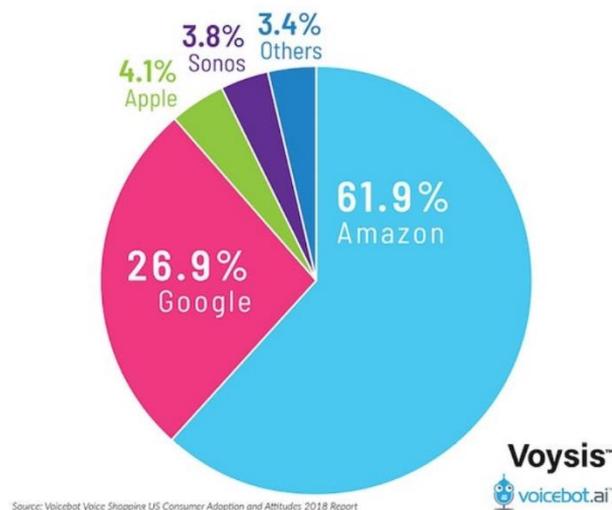
It was pointed out by the industry observers that towards the end of 2018 the companies lost money on each unit sold hence they were heavily discounted during holiday season. As Judith Shulevitz explains in her article in The Atlantic : "One of the major reasons that Amazon and Google are pushing these devices hard is because they want to colonize space. Not interplanetary space. Everyday space: home, office, car. In the near future, everything from your lighting to your

air-conditioning to your refrigerator, your coffee maker, and even your toilet could be wired to a system controlled by voice.”

It is added that *“By 2021, there will be almost as many personal-assistant bots on the planet as people.”*

Source: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/11/alexa-how-will-you-change-us/570844/>

**U.S. Smart Speaker Market Share - May 2018**



Source: <https://imgix.bustle.com/inverse/e1/9d/b7/c9/694e/4e28/a7fe/a69b61934e4e/voicebot-smart-speaker-market-share-may-2018-update-01-600jpg.jpeg?w=2000&auto=format&q=70&fit=max&crop=faces>

This country is native to different languages which shapes different accents. Even if Alexa miraculously clears the urban-rural divide its efficiency to understand all the lingua franca correctly is next to impossible. Though they have introduced Hindi and 14 regional languages their accuracy won't be

productive enough. This kind of technology works effectively for people who are proficient English speakers, not for a multilingual India.

**Rachel Tatman, a Kaggle data scientist with expertise in speech recognition explained that the voice assistants are going to work best for white, highly educated, upper-middle-class Americans, probably from the West Coast, because that's the group that's had access to the technology from the very beginning," she said.**

Source: <https://venturebeat.com/2018/07/19/alexa-and-google-assistant-are-30-less-likely-to-understand-non-american-accents/>

### **“A lot of millennials are in rural places and technology is closing in on the urban-rural divide”**

Rural villages account for about 65% of India's population where the majority of rural schools still lack proper infrastructure or studying material. Mobile phones have reached even remote villages, but ironically many rural subscribers don't have access to electricity to charge their phones. An attempt to introduce Alexa seems pointless in such places where the basic requirements are still a scarcity.

Source: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-3144952/QUANTUM-LEAP-Rural-areas-mobile-phones-not-electricity-charge-them.html>

Though it is true that junk food consumption is increasing in rural India at an alarming rate. It is ridiculous to see that junk food like Maggi and Coca-Cola is a rather easily accessible commodity in a place where one of the main challenges the people still go through is the unavailability of electricity.

This paints a very clear picture of our government's priority and their false attempt to terminate the consumption of junk food through 'Alexa'.

## **The Cost of Colonising the Minds of our Children**

As per the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) data 2011-2012, there are almost 1.4 million schools in India. In the year 2011-12, there were 7,12,437 Primary Schools, 4,74,294 Upper Primary Schools, 1,28,321 Secondary Schools and 84,133 Senior Secondary Schools. Even if we take a basic Amazon echo device which costs around Rs 5,000 and assume a total of five classrooms per school which is a very cautious estimation, the total cost will come to around Rs. 35 billion.

Source: [https://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/statistics/SSE1112.pdf](https://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/statistics/SSE1112.pdf)

## **The Future of Knowledge and Food:**

### **Choosing Ma over Alexa**

The battle against junk food, be it a rural place or an urban area can be constructively fought by spreading the right message through the trusted source. Ma and not Alexa will be the answer to the fabricated problems created by the 1% people in power.

Food has always been an integral part of our lives. The culture of reducing food to mere numbers and nutritional facts was western, reductionist, patriarchal and mechanised thinking that has been forced as a norm throughout the world. We were well versed with the art of keeping our local food alive through various festivals and traditions. With all the technical advancements that are happening, we are losing our connection with our culture and ourselves.

Let's rebuild and revive the lost connection not only with our traditional food but also the wisdom of our grandmothers with our younglings.

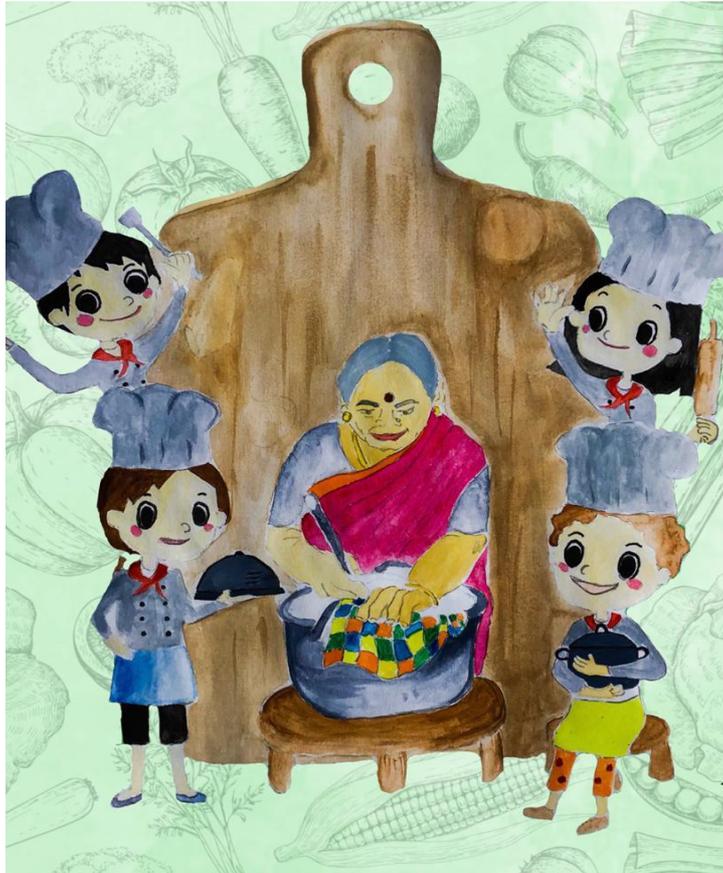


Illustration: Anugrah Bhatt

Eating right has to be right for the planet and right for the people, both producers and eaters. Indigenous agriculture and food systems based on biodiversity have protected the web of life, the livelihoods of the small farmers who provide 80% of food and health of people and diverse species.

The wisdom and knowledge of eating right has been transferred to future generations by our mothers and grandmothers over millennia in constant evolution. The invasion of junk food in our diets is a denial of the right of a child to healthy eating. The invasion by Amazon and Alexa into our school and our children's education is a denial of the rights of the child to access the wisdom and knowledge of the indigenous food culture.

Ma, not Alexa  
Eating Right: Regenerating our Indigenous Food  
Wisdom  
Shakti Declaration for International Women's Day  
8th March, 2020

In celebration of Women's Day 2020, we, the diverse women for diversity, commit ourselves to conserve, protect and regenerate knowledge for the health of the community by the community.

This is a declaration of women's knowledge and power in food.

Diversity of healthy and indigenous food cultures has evolved over generations with and by our grandmas. Our indigenous foods embody wisdom and knowledge of Eating Right. The continuity of healthy, safe, fresh and diverse food is the foundation of our food heritage and our food sovereignty. We have the responsibility to protect the food diversity that Mother Earth has gifted to us and our food legacy transmitted through generations through our grandmothers in myriad ways of processing and preparing diversity of healthy, tasty and nutritious food.

The best of contemporary science validates the knowledge and wisdom of our grandmothers: biodiversity is health and one continuum- from the soil to the plants, to our plates and our guts.

The hijack of our food system by global corporations has led to the flooding of India and other countries with unhealthy junk food and the spread of chronic diseases. We see all around us how the poison cartel is destroying our agriculture, destroying our farmers and destroying our health.

In spite of this knowledge, the WTO phytosanitary standards and the pseudo-safety acts have opened the floodgates to junk food manufactured by big corporations. This is the colonisation of our knowledge and our food. In India, the FSSAI rules are destroying our indigenous heritage. These laws are promoters of fake food and junk food.

These laws are an assault on our food sovereignty and our knowledge sovereignty.

The Amazon-FSSAI “Eat Right Campaign” is based on deepening corporate control over our food. FSSAI’s promotion of a technology like Alexa, created by Amazon, among our children and in our schools is a promotion of fake labels on fake food. FSSAI wants Alexa to mentor our children and “educate” them on food. But Alexa won’t teach you how to grow good food, how to grow the right food for the health of our bodies and our planet. It will teach you how read a fake label on fake food to increase the markets and profits of the big corporations.

Our mothers and grandmothers are the teachers of eating right in our indigenous cultures.

Our mothers and grandmothers are the reservoirs of knowledge about eating right.

Our mothers and grandmothers are the holders of wisdom about eating right. Eating right means how we eat should be right for the planet, right for the earth family, so no species is driven to extinction, the soil does not die, and the planet’s climate systems are not disrupted.

It means eating right for the farmers so that no farmer is uprooted and driven to suicide.

It means eating right for the health of our bodies so that our metabolism and our gut microbiome is not disrupted.

The test of eating right has been undertaken over the centuries. Our grandmas have been key in ensuring that the health of this planet flourishes by eating food which is wholesome and diverse. Based on a 6,000 year old legacy of food traditions and rich knowledge, women have shaped the rules of quality, safety, nutrition and health. Our food systems created living economies around food where farmers, processors and retailers join hands in self organised food communities.

Today, on Women’s Day, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2020, we commit to protect, defend and regenerate our food heritage, our living knowledge and our food freedom. We will not cooperate with initiatives and laws that attempt to colonize our food, our culture, our bodies, and the minds of future generations. This is our Anna Satyagraha, the fight to defend the truth of Eating Right.

We pledge to transmit to our children the knowledge and wisdom of Eating Right based on biodiversity, chemical and junk food free diets. Grandmothers,

Mothers and teachers, not Alexa or Jeff Bezos, will mentor future generations to know about healthy eating and our indigenous food cultures.

This is Anna Swaraj.

With schools in our communities we will organise:

1. Grandmothers' Universities on local indigenous food heritage and the knowledge of nutrition through biodiversity.
2. Little chef's classes with children so that the future generation remembers and learns how to cook indigenous local diverse foods.
3. Gardens of Hope and Gardens of Nutrition so that future generations learn that we are part of Mother Earth, they know how to grow their food, and through working with nature learn that everything we eat is a gift from Mother Earth – her seeds, her soil, her bees, and butterflies.