Chapter - Two

Concept and Practice of Organic Farming: History and Politics
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Introduction

This chapter seeks to explore the history of the concept of organic farming, as to how it has diversified over time and accommodated various economic and political compulsions, not just in India but, also internationally. Organic farming as a concept and a movement emerged not just as a critical response to chemical farming, but also to the growing vulnerability of farmers across the world to the vagaries of the international agricultural market. This was particularly a concern for Third World farmers, as they struggled to maintain production in the face of rising costs of agricultural production and decreasing productivity of land. In all this, the organic farming movement has been appreciated for challenging the political economy of world agriculture and for raising related issues of fair trade, bio-diversity, food security, and self-reliance among farmers. It has also been closely associated with environmental movements and other social movements such as farmers’ movements, as a part of its alternative vision to mainstream economic growth driven development. Despite the radical politics that it currently represents the world over, there has been the mainstreaming of organic farming internationally and, of late, in India too. In the chapter, I critically reflect on the same to argue that the international organic farming market is now dominated by the same political and economic compulsions that it originally set out to challenge. This is evident even in my field study, wherein organic farming is struggling to match up to international standards and certifications to seek a presence in the world organic market.

In the chapter, I also present an overview on organic farming in India, in the issues that have been central to its philosophy and campaigns in different parts of the country. In this context, I begin by presenting the findings of some of the critical texts on farming in south India, largely based on field studies conducted in villages that have highlighted the experiences of villagers and particularly farmers with development initiatives within agriculture. These studies are useful as far as they highlight the limited significance of development initiatives as well as its long-term and probably unintended negative consequences on the lives of people. These studies reflect what I call the field view of development in India in that they help in laying out the larger discursive field on development, which has been critical of the state led development in India. Organic
farming movement is an essential part of this discourse although thus far it has remained on the margins of academic deliberations. There is a need to develop a holistic understanding of these critiques that are dismissed either as specific village studies that supposedly are incapable of providing macro level understanding of development concerns, or summarily set aside as politically motivated agendas and therefore (non-academic) outside the purview of serious academic thought and policy consideration.

**Organic Farming: Historical Overview**

The philosophy of organic agriculture has its roots within the modern agricultural practice that has emerged and developed with the advent of conventional - chemical industrialized farming. The agricultural polarisation commenced with the Industrial revolution there was commercialisation of farming through the agricultural revolution in the 1840s, which introduced chemicals as manures. Later, from the 1900s, farmers and agricultural researchers used chemicals for crop management techniques and synthetic fertilizers in agriculture. Large-scale use of chemicals as manures started immediately after the Second World War, when armament companies were in need of new markets. The introduction of Green revolution gave benefits to western agribusiness corporations and they entered the Third World agricultural market with fertilisers and commercial agriculture technologies’ (Grigg, 1989). Globally, agriculture slowly shifted from the traditional farm practices to the chemical and technologically intensive farming. Scholars and practitioners blame the green revolution for the collapse of traditional farm practices. Chemical fertilisers have increased farmers’ dependency on external farm inputs. In addition, market fluctuation in agriculture did not provide higher returns to the farmers. Over time, cost of agriculture production increased and farmers’ incomes stagnated. For reducing the financial burden, many farmers shifted from food to cash crops, which over the years have created food insecurity issues among the farmers. The higher use of chemicals in the fields to produce more food crops and control pests has raised concerns about food safety. Organic farming as a theoretical concept has a very recent history and emerged slowly over the last century. Different factors have contributed to its origin, growth and development in the world. Scholarly literature has classified the origin, growth and development of organic farm practice (Shi-ming and Sauerborn, 2006). However, a majority of these classifications explains the development of organic farming and they did not provide an in-depth theoretical base of organic farming in each stage. I have broadly narrated the stages of organic farming movement into four different stages
and each stage has introduced new perspectives as it emerged as a concept, practice and a movement in the world.

**Origin (1920-1960).** Alternative agriculture as a concept and idea has developed in the West during the 1920s when individuals in Europe and the United States were concerned about the growth path of agricultural development. They looked to reviewing and understanding agriculture farm practices to find answers to perennial problems such as erosion, soil depletion, decline of crop variety, low quality food, reduction in livestock feeds and rural poverty. Pioneers of Organic agriculture believed that in a nation, which depends on the health of the community, state and the country at large, agricultural growth should focus on soil fertility (Kuepper, 2010). They promoted the scientific approach of soil management through use of biological and organic components of the soil namely *humus*. The practice of the Humus farming by farmers has contributed to the birth of organic and biodynamic farming. In 1924, Rudolf Steiner introduced biodynamic farming in Austria, which had its base within the humus farming principles. Albert Howard (who had a close connection with Indian agriculture) was a pioneer who took practice of organic farming from India and introduced it as approach in the West. He wrote extensively about Indian traditional agricultural practice, ‘Indore method of composting’ in his book ‘An Agriculture Testament’ (1943). Globally in the 1930s, humus farming was replaced with the idea of ‘organic’. Walter Ernest Christopher James, (he was known by the name Lord Northbourne) published ‘Look to the Land’ in 1940 and for the first time, he used the term ‘organic farming.’ He defined organic farm as ‘*the farm itself must have a biological completeness; it must be a living entity, it must be a unit which has within itself a balanced organic life* (2005: 58).’ In this decade, the perspective on the organic farming has shifted as the term is now used to describe the process and functioning of a farming system that is against the use of chemical fertilizer as plant nutrients to maintain the balanced organic life of the soil. The publication of books and many discussions on different agricultural farm practices in the West, led to the development of 'alternative agriculture.' Different associations have established the development of alternative agricultural farm practices in the USA (Rodale Institute), New Zealand (Soil and Health), and UK (Soil Association). In the East, Japan was the first to

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1In 1940s at UK, Lady Eve Balfour conducted a long term project of comparing organic and non–organic production and published a book, The Living Soil’ that pointed out the importance of healthy soil and nutritional superiority of organically grown food. Balfour and Sir Albert Howard founded the British Soil Association; even today, it is in the forefront of organic farming movement (Heaton, 2001).
introduce innovations to agriculture, as the organic movement moved away from Europe to Japan. In the West, *Humus farming* became an important soil management approach, as practitioners gave scope for feeding the soil. The period from 1940 to 1980 has brought ‘polarisation’ of agriculture into organic and non-organic farm practices (Heckman, 2006:146). From 1940s, mainstream agriculture emphasised on improving the crop and livestock production at each stage and this ultimately led to the introduction of the concept of green revolution in the world. There was rising concern about the commercialisation of chemical pesticide utilization and a small group of scientists, farmers and writers scientifically explored the natural mechanization of nature in the creation of fertile soil, chemical free farm practice and experimented with alternative farm practice. In the 1960s, the traditional ideology of organic farming changed as new transformation was observed with its philosophy, politics and practices, as it expanded its scope through scientific observation of land, water and ecosystem. The small region, specific organic farm practice, has become national and global as it received the status of a ‘movement’ in the world.

**Conceptualization (1960-1980).** The emergence of the environmental movement in the 1960 and 1970s ended the organic polarisation from mainstream agriculture. Three events of this era had the significant impact on the development of organic farming as a global movement in the World. The counterculture movement (1960-70) in the USA gave organic agriculture a leftist, political and social spirit. It became influential in the expansion of organic food farming as it regained greater visibility and drew populist interest in the local and national front environment movements (Haedicke, 2012). Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1964) narrated and demonstrated the scientific certainties of the impact of pesticides on the environment. It highlighted the damages wrought on ecology and brought new argument against industrial farming. *Silent Spring* was the turning point

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2In 1936 Mokichi Okada began practicing nature farming; it included spiritual and agronomic aspects with a view to improving humanity. Masanobu Fukuoka introduced a different approach of nature farming. He became the proponent of no-till, no-herbicide cultivation of farm practice that was practiced by indigenous communities; his philosophy of farming was considered as nature farming "Do-Nothing Farming.'(Kristiansen, P. and Merfield, C. (2006)

3Soil has its own food web that is composed of bacteria, fungi, earth worms, insects, and other organisms that digest organic materials and leads to the improvement of the fertility of the soil; as it helps in the crop nutrients.

4The 1960s and early 1970s counterculture movement questioned America's materialism, cultural and political norms of the society. Counter culture movement brought idealist, artists, revolutionists and ‘back to landers’. The country was experiencing controversial issues such as civil rights, Vietnam War, Cold war, nuclear and environment issues, drugs and sexual freedom. Younger generations looked for a better world of peace, love, harmony; they embraced music, politics, alternative lifestyles, religion to expand onse consciousness.
for, and the beginning of both modern organic farming and the environmental movement (Beyl, 1991). In 1970s, DDT was banned in the developed world; however, it was exported to developing countries where farmers used it on agricultural produce. Rachel Carson predictions came true as the public, and especially the farmers, slowly realized the dangers of pesticides to ecology and human beings. Organic farming received social significance in the late 1960s and early 1970s, through the “Back to Landers” movement. In this movement, the younger generation migrated from cities to rural areas - the countryside- to experiment with a utopian lifestyle (Jacob, 1997). The new life in the rural countryside started with shared political goals, organic farming, community service and a simple life in the community. However, many city returned farmers did not give importance to the use of chemical or organic manure to improve the land and farm productivity; they did not engage in farming; instead, they simply neglected farming. The polarity of the agricultural farm vision such as natural, zero negligence, approaches and practices have brought new ideas, thoughts and concepts of rationally using, protecting the ecology and resources, ensuring food security and reaching sustainability in agricultural practices. These ideologies slowly created sustainable agricultural practices such as organic, biodynamic, ecological and natural methods of farming. The expansion of these concepts through research and practical application in fields has brought changes in farming perspectives. Organic agriculture emerged as a philosophy; the ideas of alternative practises in agriculture are relevant with their political, philosophical standpoints and are practiced by environmentally active, socially concerned activists and practitioners. Socio-ecological transformation in the perception of farming, environmental protests and movements all contributed to changing and shaping the movement of organic farming.

For providing global support in 1972, a farmers’ network forum ‘International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements’ (IFOAM) was founded in Versailles, France, to facilitate a socio-political organized movement against conventional agricultural practices as well as to promote organic farming around the World (Niggli and Lockeretz 1996). IFOAM is the single largest non–governmental organisation for organic farming.

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5 The Back to Landers concept emerged in the beginning of the 20th century and the movement reached its greatest vigor in 1960-70s in USA. The books such as At Home in the Woods: Living the Life of Thoreau Today (1951), Living the Good Life (1954) and We Like it Wild (1963) narrated the story of self-sufficiency and simple life and they became influential for the growth and expansion of Back to Lander movement.
agriculture in the world. Slowly the concept of organic agriculture spread to the domain of the agricultural market and ultimately to the consumers, who gradually became conscious about the food they consumed and sought information on the same. Organic farming has introduced inspection and certification of the organic status to the products in the industrialized chemical market. The next 20 years (1960-80) of organic farming has observed undesirable, unavoidable changes from its organic concept, philosophy and organic certification and market. The period has observed the establishment of the different organic agencies for the promotion and expansion of farm practices in the developed world. Third World farmers depended on the North for the certification until the introduction of institutionalisation of organics in these countries. The decade observed the development of the organic farming as it received recognition among the farming community; introduced certification, established organic certifying agencies, created organic consumers and set the stage for the development of organic industry in the West.

Institutionalization (1980-2000). In 1980s, the organic sector re-emerged as an eco-agriculture, as more farmers showed interest in adopting organic farming practice on their farmlands. Initially individual farmers and later foundations like the IFOAM brought together different groups and organisations under the collective organic farming movement in the world. Farmers, especially in the West came together as a collective force and developed certification bodies like the California Certified Organic Farmers in 1979. In 1973, California farmers established ‘California Certified Organic Farmers’ (CCOF) which established the first organic certification in the World (Guthman, 2002). Collective collaboration of these groups has brought standardization to organic products, market development, and research and consumer awareness. Various consumers, farm

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6 IFOAM is an international standard setting body, recognized by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). IFOAM was dedicated to the diffusion of information on the principles and practices of organic agriculture across national and linguistic boundaries.

7 Certification was introduced through standards. Organic standards define as what can labelled as ‘certified organic’ products and sold commercially. Organic standards provide detailed descriptions about the practices, inputs, ingredients for organic farm practice and explain the approaches that are permitted, prohibited in the purview of organic production and process. Certification in organic agriculture generally refers to independent third party certification. The producer (first party) or the buyer (second party) does not have the authority to do the inspection. An external accrediting, certifying agency is hired and a farm inspector inspects the land and audit trails (checking of record) of the organic farm. Once a farmer meets the required standards and submit an annual inspection report through the certification agency, his products are certified and the farmer can sell them as certified organic produce in the market. The Certification process among counties or regions is different due to the environmental, climatic, social and cultural factors of the region or nation.

8 FNAB (Federation Nationale d’ Agriculteurs Biologiques), FiBL (Forschungsinstitut fuer Biologischen Landbau) were founded in 1970s-1980s, they are the leading organic research institutions in the world.
groups have pressurised their national government to introduce regulations for organic production. The 1980s observed the expansion of organic farming beyond the industrialized West to the Third world. In these continents, farmers follow local indigenous and regional movements of agricultural practices. Farmers practiced low external inputs, non-chemical agriculture that had its own philosophy in the society. In South America, countries like Argentina and Mexico have adopted organic farming in their agriculture by adapting certification in these regions. Cuba demonstrated the contribution of organic agriculture to the development of the economy by making itself a self-sustaining country. Globally, individual farmers, economists, policy makers, developed and developing countries were astonished with the achievements of Cuba’s organic revolution. The collapse of the Soviet regime in the early 1990s affected the Cuban agricultural imports, subsidies, and markets disappeared and this forced the nation to look for alternative market and farm approaches in the country. The era has observed the race by the scientific community to understand organic farming; compare organic vs non-organic farm practices across the globe, as academic funding was made available for alternative agricultural farm practices. However, less research has been conducted on organic producers, principles and practices (Lockeretz, 2002).

During 1990s, agrarian discourse began to blame organic farming for following the path of industrial agriculture (Kristiansen, Taji, & Reganold, 2006:10). The expansion of the organic market economy replaced the local vegetable vendors with supermarkets;
increased organic products were exported to developed countries to satisfy the organic consumers. In the world, organic farming is identified with certification, consisting of standards (rule), inspection (checking the method of implementation). Trade organisations have been established; new regulations implemented and the organic movement has been promoted through national, international and government organisations.\textsuperscript{12} Most countries define organic farming consistent with the broad definition given by the FAO and IFOAM. The IFOAM sets the main principles of organic farming as to maintain the long-term fertility of soil, pollution free environment from agriculture techniques, foodstuffs of high nutritional quality and sufficient quantity (IFOAM, 2002). In March 2008, the World Board approved the following definition of organic farming:

Organic agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Organic agriculture combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved.\textsuperscript{(IFOAM, 2008)}

Several countries in the World have national legislation for regulating organic production; other countries are in the process of introducing national, state and regional legislation on organic farming.\textsuperscript{13} Until recently, Africa, Asia, Latin America, Eastern European countries did not have an internal market for organic products as they depended on the rich countries of Europe, North America, Japan, and Australia for the supply of certified organic products to international markets.\textsuperscript{14} In the World, organic standardization has introduced as a third party certification for the creation of an agreement within organic agriculture to know what an "organic" claim on a product means, and to inform consumers. From late 1990s, Third World farmers, grassroots practitioners, development agencies and non-profit organizations questioned the costlier affair of the

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\textsuperscript{12} The benchmark for organic farming was set by the ‘Codex Alimentarius’ of the Food and Agriculture organization (FAO) that closely follows the IFOAM. The guidelines were considered to be the highest International body on food standard, cover the principles of the organic production, requirements for the crop production, processing practices of labelling, inspection and certification protocol. These guidelines provide an internationally agreed framework for organic food in the international trade.

\textsuperscript{13} European Commission adopted EU regulation 2092/91 for organic farming in 1991 and later this regulation became the law (1993) and all EU member counties included and organic production are governed by the organic regulations (IFOAM and FAO 2002). North America, Australia and Japan have major market for organic products implemented organic regulations, IFOAM and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) set out Guidelines for the Production, Processing, Labelling and Marketing of Organically Produced Foods in 1999. In 2000, Japan published its organic regulations (JAS), and US came up with its final regulation for organic and on October 2002, the national organic programme was introduced.

\textsuperscript{14} The exporting country had to manage organic standards as per the rules laid-down by the importing countries as certification is provided by the developed countries where organic farming movement has originated.
third party certification process across the globe. They have promoted the localized organic farmers associations and market for the development of farmers. Currently in the world, there exist many private organic standards; governments across the globe have codified in the technical regulations. On the international platform, IFOAM has recognised three certification systems such as the third party certification, IFOAM's Organic Guarantee System and Participatory Guarantee Systems.\textsuperscript{15} Participatory Guarantee Systems were introduced in international trade due to the lobby of these development practitioners and civil society organizations from the South. Towards the end of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, modern organic farming shifted its perspectives, ideology and movement with the stages of growth in organic standards, certification or regulatory mechanisms, technology package, and market network (Khosla, 2006). In recent times, the organic farming market has developed in the West; the growing demand for organic products has raised farmers’ expectations of higher premiums for organically produced commodities. This has changed the entire understanding; today organic farming is considered as an industry.

**Organic Fair Trade Movement and Polarisation (2000 onwards).** From late 1990s, the World observed the process of globalization, industrialization and market liberalization that brought injustice to society and, ecology through manmade destruction of the world. On the other hand, these processes have created new forms of social movements in societies that are striving for the creation of an economically, socially sustainable society in the World (Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994). Many of these initiatives are moving towards the new local and global geo-political spaces as they bring together nation and state in the ‘alternative development discourse’. Organic farming has moved beyond market-oriented concepts and technique oriented practices, as it places emphasis on the much-neglected issue of social equity. The outcome is the emergence of new linkages between the ‘Fair trade and organic movement’ (Browne, Harris, P.J.C., Hofny-Collins, Pasiecznik & Wallace, 2000). Organic farming and Fair trade are two different movements, which originated at different time intervals in the world. The Fair trade movements go back 25 years. It originated as a social movement and market based

\textsuperscript{15} Initially, regional organic farmers groups introduced certification as on a voluntary basis, today it has developed as an complex and formal process through a certifying agency. IFOAM's Organic Guarantee System facilitates the development of organic standards and third party certification and provides an international guarantee of these standards and organic certification. Participatory Guarantee Systems are yet another approach, which focuses on local organic markets to ensure quality assurance as they certify producers based on the active participation of stakeholders and it is built on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange.
approach to create awareness about the injustice and social imbalance caused by international trade to developing countries. It aimed at helping producers of the Third World countries to improve their trading conditions and promote sustainable alternative trade approaches. The movement advocates for the payment of high prices to producers for maintaining higher social, environmental and product standards in their farmlands. Paradoxically, the movement has emerged in the developed, industrialized nations for countering the capitalist market oriented approach of developed nations. This focused sustainable forms of trade relationships with the small, marginal landholder. Initially, for attaining its stand in World trade, it focused on colonialism export products such as coffee, tea and cocoa products as third World countries were the major producers of these commodities in the world. International organic agriculture and fair trade movements critique ecologically and socially destructive conventional production and consumption patterns of the global food system and they seek to create and promote sustainable alternative agro-food production in the world. Both these movements have common grounds; organic farming narrating the natural, ecological conditions of nature and her production; fair-trade, highlighting the producers and social conditions of production in the world. Ideologically both these movements have a common interest in the creation of socio-ecological harmony in agricultural production and distribution. Although the international markets’ share for these movements is minimal, they are growing rapidly and creating a linkage between consumer North and producer South in the World (Raynolds, 2000). It is difficult to make a statistical analysis about the annual production of fair trade, organic commodities in the third World countries, as it has widened its horizon to include different agricultural commodities.

Today fair trade movements exist within different organic commodities such as organic coffee, cocoa, sugar, tea, vegetables, cotton, fruits, jewellery etc. The Fair trade for organic crops, processed food products and clothes has higher market share in the world. In a nutshell, this social movement has its own share of social, political, economic opportunities and constraints in the world; however, organic fair trade has reduced the global trade competitions that are based on produce price; as it has created a harmony between Northern consumers with Southern producers. Although it shifted the organic sustainable market to the South, farmers find it difficult to obtain certification for their organic commodities which are significant for the access of organic markets or organic fair trade market in the international trade. From the literature available and with my
understanding of organic farming I have mapped the developmental path of the organic farming movement.

**Chart: 2.1. Mapping the path of Organic Agriculture Genesís, Conceptualization and Expansion**

Presently, sustainability has become the core for organic philosophy with traditional concerns for healthy soil, food and people, and is also associated with economically, socially concerned, politically left, organic supporters in the world. In the 12th survey of worldwide organic agriculture, data found that today, a total of 37.2 million
hectares of agriculture land (including in-conversion areas) is organically managed with an annual increase of 6% between 2008 and 2009. More than 1.8 million organic producers (up 0.4 million from 2008) were practicing organic farming and most of these farmers are from developing/transition and emerging market countries. One-third of the world’s organic agricultural land (13.4 million hectares and 1.5 million producers) situated in developing, transitional counties and emerging markets like Latin America, Asia and Africa, respectively. The major share of organic production is located in Australia (approximately 12.2 million hectares), Argentina (4.4 million ha), US (1.9 million ha). The continent with the most organic agricultural land is Oceania (12.15 million ha), followed by Europe (approx 9.3 million ha), Latin America (8.6 million ha), Asia (3.6 million ha), North America (2.7 million ha), and Africa (more than 1 million ha). Currently 0.9 percent of the world’s agricultural land is organic (Willer and Kilcher, 2011; 55).

Map 3.1 Organic Agricultural Land And Other Organic Areas 2009-2011

Source: SOEL, FIBL, 2010

16 The data were gathered between July 2010 to February 2011 from 160 countries by the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) and International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements IFOAM.
Organic farming was once more caught in an uncomfortable spot as its path has created polarization in organic ideology, practice and process in the world. Ideological conflicts exist with the very concept of organic as it has multiple traditions and discourses in the world. Secondly, polarization is observed in the practice of organic farming approaches round the globe and thirdly, it is observed in the process of certification, polarization of global-local, farmer-local and organic markets. These issues are expressed more clearly in the conclusion of my thesis as it provides the contextual narrations for these issues. The civil society organisations and self-motivated, progressive, experimental farmers introduced organic farming as an ideology and farm practice and carried it forward through collective actions. The existing populist notion of development and farmers’ movement in the country has provided the required platform for the origin and development of organic farming. From the Indian point of view, organic farming is considered more than just an agricultural practice and its ideologies and practices express multiple, traditional paths of farm practice. The historical narration of the Indian path of organic farming will help in contextualization of organic philosophy, practice and contribution of Indian civil society organizations and organic farmers in the origin and development of organic farming as a social movement and expansion of organic markets in the country.

**Ethnographies from South India- A Field View**

Anthropologists are now questioning as to what makes a field ‘local’. According to Geertz (1973), ‘*anthropologists do not study villages..; instead they study in villages*’ (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997: 15). Today, in anthropology, the ‘field’ is replaced by ‘site’, which is the geographical location that facilitates exploration of research questions; and scholars have defined ‘field’ as the *intellectual field of enquiry* that pertains to the academic debates and discussions that are brought to bear in the study of a site. In this sense, there is no study that can qualify as local, as they are necessarily tainted by the larger intellectual field of enquiry that colours the production of knowledge. James Clifford further elaborates on this understanding of the ‘field’ wherein he argues that all ethnographies, or for that matter fieldwork, is allegorical in nature in that they stand for something other than themselves. “Allegory prompts us to say of any cultural description that does not represent, or symbolize that’, but rather, this is a (morally charged) *story* about that” (Clifford 1986: 100). If all knowing then is programmed, how does one justify research? While these questions are debatable as well as contested, the distinction
between field and site is important here, in that it allows for bringing together disparate studies done in different parts of India, and specifically South India, that loosely relate to the field of development and present a commentary on the reception of development initiatives by the people across these sites.

Critical of state led development initiatives, anthropological studies have highlighted as to how development initiatives have been largely *technocratic* in nature, while the main impediment towards successful implementation of programmes have been political. For instance, both Beteille (1971) and Kathleen Gough’s studies (1981) in Tamil Nadu demonstrated how the introduction of land reforms and the green revolution unfolded processes that were not anticipated by the planners. Since land reform and the implementation of the Panchayat Raj System in the 1950s, which, according to Beteille, to some extent challenged the caste hierarchy, it also led to greater ambiguity in the local stratification system. He observed that caste hierarchy is no longer uniform and there was greater ambiguity within and between castes over their status in the caste hierarchy. Caste hierarchy was now mediated by factors such as class and power in the village and the region.

Baviskar and Attwood (1996) brought together studies on cooperatives from across the country to understand as to why cooperatives succeeded in some states and failed in others. Interestingly, one of the main takeaways of the book is that the cooperatives succeeded where the political dominant castes were actively involved in its implementation. Gujarat and Maharashtra cooperatives were monopolised by the Patel and Maratha communities respectively. In Karnataka, cooperatives were successful in Dakshina Kannada (I discuss the cooperatives in Dakshina Kannada in detail in chapter 5), primarily because of the initiatives taken by the dominant communities in the region, that of Bunts and Brahmins. Village studies in Punjab revealed how the green revolution, which brought economic prosperity, accentuated existing social and economic inequalities in the state. Scarlett Epstein, in her longitudinal anthropological study conducted over forty years, compared two villages in Karnataka- the wet and dry villages of Wangala and Dalena respectively. She demonstrated how Wangala, which had wet land due to canal irrigation, became economically prosperous though state led development initiatives such as community development programme in 1952 and the Intensive Agricultural district programme in 1962. With these programmes, the farmers shifted from subsistence farming to commercial farming, which also improved their
access to resources and led to better living conditions. However, with this, family cohesion declined, giving rise to individualism, which finally led to the emergence of nuclear families. Economic prosperity created the condition of social disturbances, and increased the addiction of alcoholism. While the changes in Wangala reduced caste untouchability, it did not increase inter-caste interaction and cooperation.

Dalena, a village in Mandya district, despite being a dry village, showed vibrant, radical socio-political changes in the social structure. Lack of access to canal irrigation pushed the villagers to look for alternative economic opportunities outside the village. Villagers attempted to acquire the wet land outside the village, and by 1956, more than 73 per cent of households in Dalena had acquired wet land within the locality. This led to greater contact between Dalena and other villages contributed towards the diversification of economic activities, and replaced hereditary labour relations with contract-based work. The study brought out two different trajectories of development to illustrate that the process of development triggered by economic progress does not necessarily have a beneficial impact in the life of the people. Her study clearly demonstrated that macro level economic analysis cannot address various socio-economic problems, and that economic development does in fact unleash processes that accentuate existing socio-political disparities (Epstein, Suryananrayana & Thimmegowda, 1998). Studies on women have reiterated this aspect of economic development repeatedly. The disregard of women’s social realities and their inability to access and participate in the developmental programmes has been regularly highlighted in village studies (Kapadia, 1996). The Karnataka organic farming initiative in Dakshina Kannada similarly did not have any programme that addressed the concerns of women farmers. It can be safely argued that State led development initiatives or policies does not concern itself with how people perceive development and ‘what development means’ to them in their day-to-day life (Madan, 2002:21).

The field view of development has also reiterated that state led development initiatives have been culturally and socially insensitive, in that they do not converge with what people understand as the greater good. Sociological and anthropological village studies have reiterated the ‘need for sustainable culturally specific and locally significant development’ (Madan, 2002: 346). Vasavi’s study in Bijapur, Karnataka reveals how the farmers resisted being incorporated into the state’s discourse on agricultural development and continue to practice what they consider as desirable form of farming. Akhil Gupta
(1998) has made similar arguments in his work titled *Postcolonial Developments* among the Jats of Western UP. According to Vasavi, the productivity, technology and relief administration have become the basis for direct state intervention, which has promoted the homogenous model of development, based only on high returns from agriculture. The government assumes that the shift pertained only to the agricultural practices of the farmer; however, the state development model has led to the change in the culture of the people and contributed to the creation of what Vasavi calls a ‘*Hybrid Culture.*’ According to Vasavi, change in agriculture practice has created a disjuncture between agricultural production system and its culture. Farmers have been selectively adopted modernisations in their agriculture, wherein they have reproduced a mix of old and new. This culture according to Vasavi is hybrid culture, which according to her systematically erodes traditional practices that so far sustained them over generations, and fails to equip them with new skills and technologies to cope with situations of crises within farming.

Mosse in his study of tank irrigation in Tamil Nadu titled *The Rule of Water, Statecraft, Ecology, and Collective Action in South India* (2003) criticised the technocratic approach to water management first introduced by the British and later blindly adopted by the Indian government destroyed the self-sustaining, small scale, traditional water irrigation systems. He goes to the extent of arguing that tank irrigation introduced by the state was detrimental to the development of agriculture in the region. Mosse study explains as to how the local system of water management regulated other rights, such as distribution of water during drought, regulations for the settlement of the water disputes investment for the maintenance of tanks and interlinking of tanks etc. Historically tracing the water management system in the region, the study demonstrated as to how the British system of water management sidelined the equitable distribution of rights and responsibilities over water. The government programmes during colonial rule and thereafter failed to adopt a personalised developmental approach. There was no scope for local level participation in the new system of tank management, which led to the failure of many such developmental initiatives in the region. Different village studies have, time and again, highlighted the need to ‘combine human factor with cooperative
efforts’ for the success of the developmental initiatives in the local level (Madan; 2002; 21).17

Clearly, the field view of development brought out the general disenchantment of the people with state led development in terms of the efficacy of development programmes, increasing corruption, state patronage to the powerful in development initiatives that further consolidated existing hierarchies (Sharma and Gupta, 2006; Baviskar & Mathew, 2009), disregard for local systems of resource management, and the accompanying cultural resources and practices (Berkes, 2009; Benadusi, Brambilla & Riccio, 2011; Kurien, 1997) and economic disparity (Dantwala, Sethi and Visaria, 1998). Thus, it was no surprise that, in the 1970s, a number of protests and movements came up that challenged the top down development model of the state, and instead campaigned for people centred development. People centred approach argued that, if development is to be sustainable and successful then it has to be people-centred, and initiated with local communities as cognitive partners in thinking through development. The emphasis was on people’s participation, collective collaboration, and distribution of responsibilities that contributes to a sustainable, bottom-up approach of development. Organic Farming Movement emerged as a part of this general effervescence to find alternatives to the existing stalemate within the country.

**The Indian Experiment of Organic Farming Movement**

From 1970s onwards, India witnessed different populist movements across the country.18 The most significant one was the Chipko Movement (1973) in Central Himalaya, which influenced the public as the country witnessed many such agitations.19 It created a consciousness to protest against different social issues such as alcoholism, domestic violence and women’s representation in village councils etc across the country. Forest–based development conflicts in the tribal zones of Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh recognized the inter-connection between nature and human subsistence. In the 1970 and 1980s, the green revolution brought changes in

17 Susan Wadley in her study titled ‘The Domination of Indira’(2002) brings out how rural development schemes failed in Karimpuur village as they were disconnected from the rural realities and women’s lives and experiences (Madan 2002: 374).
18 Populism is an ideology, political philosophy or discourse that compares the people with elite and urge for socio-political changes in the sector, system or society.
19 Movement emerged as a protest against the granting of permission for access of the forest for commercial timber operators, while local people were denied from collecting forest products. Women actively involved as they had concerns for protecting forest and environment, as these are the subsistence for survival in the society.
agricultural production, rural life and the country observed nation-wide farmer protests against the repressive policies and programmes of central and state governments. The constant exploitation of the farmers, tribes and people through various state development initiatives, over use of chemical fertilizers, industrial disaster of Bhopal Gas (1984) have pushed the practitioners to look for alternatives in development. The farmers and environmental movements set the stage for ‘alternative movements in India’. The country observed the genesis, growth of different farm movements such as Beej Bachavo Andolan (Save Seeds Movement), Organic Farming and ‘GoMata’ (Indian Cow) as these became the central path for organic farming philosophy in India. In India, organic farming has its roots in the social movements initiated by the civil society organizations, supported by the left wing, progressive farmers and environmental activists. The origin and development of the Indian organic farming movement can be discussed from two domains; firstly, it originated and was developed by civil society organizations and secondly the institutionalization by the Central and State agricultural departments and certification agencies.

In 1980s, Vijay Jardhari, a Chipko activist and farmer from Jardhargaon village in Tehri Garhwal District of Uttarkhand, initiated the Beej Bachavo Andolan. He received inspiration from the Chipko movement - a socio-ecological movement influenced by the Gandhian ideology of Satyagraha and non-violent resistance. After the success of Chipko, Jardhari returned to his village to engage in farming. In the village, agricultural extension officers had introduced new seeds and chemical fertilizers (Alvares, 1999). Farmers including Jardhari used and received higher yields. In the next year, he used the same seeds and avoided the use of chemical fertilizers and yield decreased in the farmland. When he raised his concerns with the village elders, he found many farmers were having the same issues and agricultural yields had reduced tremendously in the past few years. He found that the continuous use of high breed seeds in the region had reduced the availability of the local, native varieties of the seeds from the farmers’ fields. He believed in the Gandhian ideology of self-sufficiency, traditional farm philosophies for maintaining harmonious relations between farmers and ecosystem. The ideology pushed for the creation of a movement with the support of his Chipko colleagues and it was called the

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20Civil society organizations are the non-state collective actors’ voice, has presence in public life, units people under shared goals and interest in society. Civil society organizations are formed based on ethical, social, cultural, scientific, religious and philanthropic grounds. It includes non-government organizations, professional associations, foundations, independent research institutions, community based organizations, faith-based, people’s organizations, social movements and labour unions.
Beej Bachao Andolan. Initially, he visited remote villages in Uttarakhand, collected traditional seeds through communication with the villagers, farmers and created awareness on the preservation of traditional diversity. It spread its views through slogans "Apni mitti apni khad; Apne beej apna swad khet hamare beej tumhare; nahin chalenge! nahin chalenge". (Our earth, our own manure; our seeds and own taste, ours are the fields, and the seeds are yours; no, this will not work, this will not do). In the last three decades, farmers’ movement has saved and conserved the local, indigenous seed varieties, rebuilt the regional gene pool, and extended its production to wider areas through ‘seed exchange.’ It is a unique movement of conserving, protecting and distributing seeds with farmers from across different region; it supported small and marginal farmers’ interest in society. 21 Similar movements like Navdhanya, (from 1991) organized the ‘Bija Satyagraha Movement’ to keep control over seeds sovereign in farmers’ hands.

The Beej Bachao Andolan has influenced practitioners to concentrate their initiatives on the conservation, protection and development of local varieties of seeds throughout the country. 22 When development practitioners knocked, at farmers’ doors they were amazed to find local seed preservers, keepers and conservationists conserving and expanding the legacy of seed diversity, as it was a part of cultural life. 23 Traditional seed preservation has socio-ecological and cultural discourses as it signifies the communities’ way of life close to nature. Farmers never discussed or practiced farming in isolation; instead, farmers believed that indigenous farming, seed and water preservation are an integral part of their socio-ecological and cultural life. Biju Negi an activist from the Beej Bachavo Andolan spoke about seed preservation as follows:

We all know that knowledge is power. No one understands this better than the big companies that wish to come and occupy your space. Divest the farmer of his knowledge; say its old and outdated; give him an entirely alien knowledge (and free seeds to push that), and he is a puppet in your hands. [...] Traditional farming meant that the farmer donned the mantle of several scientists rolled into one: a botanist, a zoologist, a veterinarian, a soil scientist, a climatologist, and so on. He was not a puppet in anyone’s hands. He knew his work, and he could take his own decisions. He had control over his farming [...] (Terra Green, 2007; 49-50).

21 It is advocating the recognition of legal status of ‘farmers’ to women as she is the protector of traditional knowledge and seeds, ‘scientist’ status to farmers as they engage in experiments, innovations and knowledge development in agriculture and direct representation of the farmer in government policy decisions.

22 The civil society organizations such as Annadan (Auroville, Tamil Nadu) Organic research centre and rice varieties (Shivamoga, Karnataka), Deccan Development Society (Andhra Pradesh), Green Foundation (Bangalore). Today these organizations are at the forefront of promoting organic farming in different parts of the country (Alvares, 1999).

23 Geroji Antony (Kottayam, Kerala), Dr. Mohan G.S (Kodagu. Karnataka ), Boregowda (Mandya, Karnataka)
Beej Bachao Andolan based its ideologies in the Gandhian philosophy of self-sufficiency, and strongly opposed the dependency of the farmers on policy and programmes of the government that are inclined towards the mass production of raw materials to support the growing demand of the market and farmers’ dependency on external outputs such as manures and seeds on the agricultural department. This movement has faced criticism for its anti-developmental approach as it proposed farmers’ move back to the traditional agricultural farm practiced from the green revolution, which was considered the path toward food security in India.

The Indian organic scenario, discussed organic farming as a concept and movement. The concept is native to India as this agricultural practice emerged and developed within the subcontinent. Interestingly no concept can remain static as change is inevitable from the period of inception; today organic farming is seen as a separate, alternative practice, which gives importance to sustainability and environmentalism. This farming practice is amalgamated with different agricultural practices such as Alternative farming, Permaculture, Biodynamic, Indigenous, and Sustainable, Zero budget natural farming, Nature eco-farming, Alley cropping and LEISA or Low External Input Sustainable Agriculture. The development path of organic farming has broadly evolved from two roots; first, organic movement and concepts were influenced by Indian philosophies associated with nature, ecology, and Gandhian ideologies which initiated by non-government organizations such as Beej Bachavo Andolan. Secondly, the organic concept and movement was influenced by the market and western ideology that was based on the standards, certification and economic profits. The subject, context and perspective of my research require a deeper analysis of Indian philosophy of organic farming and I have therefore attempted to conceptualize Indian Organic farming.

**Conceptualization of Indian Organic Farming.** Beej Bachavo Andolan, a farmers’ grassroots movement was influential in sowing the seeds of organic philosophy among farmers and it actively campaigned for the preservation of traditional seeds, protection of livestock, traditional knowledge and agricultural practices in Uttarkhand. The Andolan conceptualised the Indian perspective of organic philosophy based on collective collaboration. Indian organic farming philosophy is different from the western notion of organic farming. In India, organic farming is a school of thought, a philosophy and a way of life of farmers in their day to day agricultural practice. Cultural essence of Indian agriculture has deep roots in a traditional organic society that had co-operation and
cultivated spiritual vision in its practice interlinked with nature and the spiritual world. In India and other Third World Countries, farming is not considered an occupation; instead, it is seen as a livelihood and a source of income and a way of life interwoven with the farmers’ socio-economic, political and cultural life. Indian philosophy of organic farming touches all segments of the farm and farm practices such as ecology, tradition, seed preservation, animal welfare, self-reliance, and sensible use of energy, conservation of water and soil that connects the farming with nature and life forces and brings in the holistic perspective of farming. Organic farmers relate organic agriculture to nature and culture, which go together, and it does not exploit the land for market driven production. Organic farmers observe farming as a divine practice for the spiritual advancement and welfare in harmony with nature, family and society. Civil society ideologies promoted the farmers to practice a disciplined life by subjugating the individual desires of market driven farm practices by exploiting nature.

The approach of the Beej Bachao Andolan is linked with the Gandhian vision of self- sufficiency and political autonomy of the farmers. Since the 1980s, civil society organisation like Karnataka Raja Raita Sangha is propagating traditional nature farming; a farming approach practiced by the ancestors in harmony with nature. The Indian organic movement has incorporated the idea of Swadeshi in its campaign against biotechnology. Karnataka Raja Raita Sangha, Annadana, Deccan Development Society, Green Foundation, seed conservationists and seed exchange networks are supporting the Swadeshi movement in the protection of seed diversity and gene pool of the nation. Traditional farm practice believes in the conservation, protection of local seeds in the farm or community, reduction of the farmers’ dependency on external inputs and resists the domination or exploitation of moneylenders and markets. Organic farm philosophy hopes to provide the market with local, native commodities to safeguard the food security of the region. Organic farming philosophy is associated with the Gandhian views of Village Swaraj. It encourages the production of raw materials within the agricultural land to meet the individual and family needs and thereby reduce farmers’ dependency, alienation or exploitation in the society. The development of organic village industries in the community can help in protecting the food security of the region and the development

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24 Gandhi introduced the idea of Swadeshi in Indian freedom movement by buying Indian clothing and burning western cloths to reduce Western economic domination.
25 For Gandhi, Village Swaraj is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its wants, yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity. Thus, every village’s first concern will be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its cloth [...].
of food processing units etc can help in the development of rural economy. Organic farming as a practice promotes the introduction of appropriate technology for the progress of farmers and village economy. It gives importance for local techniques, village level industry and local markets for localizing organics in the country. The organic farming practice minimizes the mechanization of agriculture, promotes self-reliance and self-sufficiency of family and village in food production and political autonomy for farmers, village, or community to empower the society. The erosion of traditional farm practices, after the green revolution has made civil society organisations concentrate on the development of organic farming philosophy at the grassroots. Understanding the dearth of literature in organic and sustainable farming, development practitioners have conducted workshops, conferences and seminars across the country; brought civil society leaders, activists, organic practitioners and progressive farmers under a single platform for promoting and developing ‘Indian organic literature.’

From the 1990s, civil society organisations and progressive farmers have focused on the development of different practical applications of organic farming practices through the scientific lens at the grassroots. Civil society organisations have given prominence to the development of livelihoods and environment friendly farming with localization of farming at the grassroots level. Over the years, civil society organisations collaborated with organic farmers under a single banner for collective decision-making and introduced a formal association namely; OFAI (Organic Farming Association of India) in 2003 and in 2006. It was formerly registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 in Goa.

From a phase where organic farmers experienced constant ideological, practical conflicts over shifting from modern agricultural practices to organic farming, the movement has come a long way. Many farmers are moved back to traditional methods of farming and exploring the possible innovations and experiments with the existing

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26 In 1984 the country organized the first civil society conference on organic farming; this conference was called by Association of the Propagation of the Indigenous Genetic Resources at Wardha, Maharashtra. The prominent people who actively engaged and developed Indian organic movement are Vandana Shiva, Sailen Gosh, Claude Alvares, Kishor Mehta, J.E David, Bhaskar Save, Ravindra Bhole and many local farmers and civil society organizations from across the country. Organic farming discourse has given value for the application of organic philosophy in agricultural field to attain prosperity and self-sufficiency in farming (Alvares, 1999).

27 OFAI is concentrated its activities on three areas, institutional building, associational activities and outreach programmes for the extension of the organic farming among the small and marginal farmers and tribes. Association has a PGS facilitating council under the PGS organic Indian Council for the purpose of recognizing the local groups of the farmers and tribal communities that wish to participate in the Participatory Guarantee System or PGS for organic labelling of agricultural and natural grown products.
different alternative schools and practices. In the process, many have moved away from
the market-oriented approach to localized organics in the village. These transformation
farmers have attained through experiments, as farmer believe the predominant philosophy
is to maintain ecological harmony and balance in the organic eco-systems. These farming
practises have given importance to nature, sustainable use of land, soil, water, ecology in
their farm philosophy and practice. The Indian organic farming philosophy lays stress on
a harmonious relationship between plant, soil, microbial populations in farming and
human- nature relationships in society. This philosophy is in contrast to modern
agricultural practices based on individualistic, competitive and market oriented industrial
farming.

Today the slogan ‘Chale Gaon ki Or, Chale Gai ki Or, Chale Prakriti ki Or’
literally translates as ‘Let us move to the village, let adopt the cow, let us move towards
nature) is creating huge conscious, deliberate attempts in the preservation, protection and
conservation of traditional agricultural farm practices in rural society. The cow in India is
worshiped as the mother of the universe and her worth is seen in agriculture,
transportation, food, medicine, sports, religious functions and the economy. In rural
households, the cow is an auspicious animal as it has religious, social and cultural
connotations in the society. India has a depressing story to narrate about the condition of
the Indian cow breeds and animal husbandry in the country. The partition of India took
away the major fertile Indus valley, crises created by periodic floods and droughts and a
steadily increasing population forced the country to look for short-term and immediate
solutions to meet the food requirement of the country. During this moment of crisis, the
country found hope in the Western notion of development and imported technology and
process. In agriculture, ploughs were replaced with tractors to harvest the land. This
brought changes in another farm related occupation ‘animal husbandry.’ Indian nomadic
pastoralists have developed over centuries some 70 different local breeds of cattle. Some
of these cattle have been developed in the specific region for agricultural purpose. Indian
breeds are recognised in Western countries and they have imported these breeds. The
Indian National Dairy Development Board set-up by the central government gave
importance for milk production. With the western model of dairy industry, it has imported
cows from the West and the Jersey and H.F. breeds have replaced the Indian breeds,
affected its growth and development; today only 33 native breeds have survived and
many are still in the danger of going extinct. During this time, traditional agriculture and
animal husbandry sectors introduced green and white revolutions, respectively, where the focus has shifted from quality of the product to quantity of the agricultural production.

The Indian organic movement is re-writing the importance of livestock (especially cows) in agriculture. The introduction of local, traditional, new varieties of soil nutrients through Panchagavya and Amrut pani have brought back ‘cow’ in Indian organic farming. Organic farmers and spiritual leaders have taken the oath of protecting and developing Indian breeds in the country. In Karnataka, Ramachandrapura Math occupying a prominent position under the leadership of Raghaveshwara Bharathi has started a number of religious, social, educational, cultural and environmental programmes for the benefit of the rural population. Bharathi has introduced a project ‘Kamadugha’ a unique attempt to save, propagate and research Indian breeds of cattle. I think that this is not a mere hobby for him as he has dedicated his life to save Indian cattle and for that, he has created a number of awareness campaigns. As a charismatic leader with his intellectual and spiritual strength and moral vision, he conducted "Vishwa Gou Sammelana" on April 21 to 29, 2007 at Ramachandrapura Math, Karnataka. This nine-day World conference came up with 15 resolutions, protected and propagated Indian cows, banned cross breeding, banned the use of chemicals in agriculture, promoted cow based farming, restored grazing land etc. Similarly, many such movements and initiatives are on-going in Indian agriculture and the Indian cow is slowly returning to agriculture and allied activities in the society.

**Indian Government Initiatives**

The second path of organic farm movements came with the globalization process as the country experienced new economic policy and that contributed to the development of organic markets and organic industry in the Indian subcontinent. The existing varied climatic conditions in India provide scope for the farmers to practice organic farming and make the country into leading organic producers in the world. The new economic policy of the 1990s opened up the national market to international entrepreneurs, organic

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28 The project has taken real initiatives as it has collected 27 pure native breeds of cattle from across Indian and protected them at Amrita Dhara Goshala at Hosanagara in Shimoga District, Karnataka. It has totally banned the artificial insemination to discourage inter-breed hybridization. 12 GoShala’s were opened across the country for developing local breeds of the cattle. In Karnataka and Kerala, 68 days (5830km) Bharatiya GoYatra (cow-awareness campaign) was conducted. 500 native cows were brought from Rajasthan and distributed in Karnataka and Kerala through Shaankara Goyatra campaign. Cow Therapy Centers (GoChikitsa Kendra) were opened in Karnataka for treating serious diseases. Awareness programmes have been given on the use of cow manures in various centres with the vision of increasing the popularity of the organic farming.
farming came as agrarian discourse and conventional farmers started organic field experiments on their land. In India, most of the farms are ‘organic by default’ (excluding conventional). Today, farmers need to have a certification to refer their farm practice as organic and products are organic products in the market. The actual data, percentage of organic farmland in Indian continent are unknown and the majority of the farmers, tribal people are non-certified organic farmers, as they are engaged in indigenous farming. This farm practice has gained attention among farmers, entrepreneurs, policy makers and agricultural scientists as it reduces the external expenditure on farm materials, farmers’ dependency on financial loans and decreases in cost of production. The high demands of organic consumers in international and national markets and development of fair trade markets have increased the agricultural profit of the farmers in the organic market. The development of Indian organic farming is associated with the expansion of agro-technologically driven sustainable farming promoted by agriculture practitioners, scientists and academicians.

**Institutionalisation of organic farming though policy**: Indian organic farming currently occupies a new space in agri-food discourse, and practice. It has moved from a marginal position to integrated, collective and collaboration of organic farmers; growth of national organic markets at the international level has opened new avenues in Indian organic farming movement. The acceptance of organic farming as an official socio-political discourse in the central government development perspective is a very recent one. The country is promoting a holistic discourse in organic farming by encouraging farmers to construct values and develop an interest in agriculture in general and organic farming in particular. Different agencies have prompted organic agriculture in the country; but government initiatives did not materialise in organic farming until its eighth five-year plan. Maneka Gandhi, the then Minster of State for Social Justice and Empowerment, gave prominence to introducing green shops throughout the country for marketing

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29 The North-East India has considerable scope and opportunity for organic farming development as it has the least utilization of chemical inputs. In this region, farmers are using the natural organic manures as a source of soil nutrients. Lack of development activities in these regions have become blessing in disguise for agriculture.

30 As estimated, India has around 76,000 hectares of organic farmland (certified) and 2.4 million hectare certified forest area for collection of wild herbs (Bhattacharya and Chakraborty, 2005).

31 Business standard in its bulletin (4th January 1994) highlighted that central government is allocating Rs 26 crore for the promotion of organic farming in the country. The programme has involved the Krishi Vijyna Kendra, Universities and NGOs.
organic products. After her departure from government, it lost its focus (Menon, D; no date).

The Government of India took a serious interest in organic farming when European markets rejected the food consignments; due to the unacceptable level of pesticides found in the Indian export commodities. Government of India, considering the constraints of the export market, showed interest in recognizing organic farming and, certified organic farms for export purpose. Interestingly, the Ministry of Commerce also took an interest in the concept of the organic farming. On the other hand, the Ministry of Agriculture, which deals directly with different agricultural practice, farmers did not bother to explore the possibility of introducing organic farming practice as an experiment, till recently. The year 2000 is a landmark year in Indian organic farming development as central government took four major decisions as pointed by Bhattacharyya & Chakraborty (2005; 8),

1. The Planning Commission constituted (2000) a National Steering Committee (NSC) that identified implementation of organic farming as a National challenge and suggested introduction of organic farming through projects as a major thrust area for the 10th Plan. It recommended the introduction of organic farming in the North East Region and rain fed areas, where the consumption of agro chemicals is low or negligible.

2. The National Agricultural Policy (2000) recommended promotion of traditional knowledge of agriculture relating to organic farming and it is scientific upgradation.

3. The Department of Agriculture and Cooperation (DAC), Ministry of Agriculture constituted (2000) a Taskforce on organic farming and recommended promotion of organic farming.


32 She stimulated the TRIFED (Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited) a government cooperative dealing with the tribal produce. She initiated this through the launch of ‘Tribes’ in Delhi a first shop to market the products of the tribes including organically grown food.

33 Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) has been selected as the prime agency for the implementing the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP). APEDA with no expertise in organic farming took up the responsibility of developing the national organic farming certification and export of the organic production. For the preparation of standards, it consulted the experts from West and national standards were introduced as the National Standards on Organic Production (NSOP). Civil society organizations criticized NSOP for its Eurocentric perspective and they expressed that national organic standards didn’t reflect the strength and traditional aspects of organic farming from the country. Under the NPOP, documents like National standards, accreditation criteria for accrediting
Government of India has initiated various promotional activities such as establishment of a National Institute of Organic Farming in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh in 2003. The ‘institutionalisation of organics’ has begun with the national organic farming policies and government funded projects in different states such as Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, and Gujarat. These states have encouraged farmers to adopt organic farming by including it as a state policy (ibid; 2005). The organic farming policy has introduced standards and certifications for the organic farming practice. The civil society or service providers of organic farming were given the opportunity to apply standards at the field level to reduce the technical difficulties during certification. The policy has integrated organic farm approaches within the conventional food system, as the policy did not make it mandatory to use traditional seeds in organic farming practice. In India, organic farming has higher demand, due to its diverse climatic conditions and provides an opportunity for the production of diverse food products as these have greater demand in the international market. The Indian Export market is flourishing and demand for Indian organic products (spices, food, textile, ayurvedic health care) in the international market has provided an opportunity for the corporate players to venture into organic market and connect ‘Agribusiness’ to organic market.

The connection of agribusiness to organic farming by the giant corporate houses has provided a livelihood threat to the small farmers in the countryside. The recent changes in the Indian organic sector have changed the qualitative nature and characteristics of organics. The commercialisation of organic farming has led to the growing tension among orthodox organic growers and converted market centred farmers over the philosophy and practice of organic farming. The consensus of organic growers is that changes in the nature of organics would lead to the organic agricultural development from alternative to conventional practices of organic farming (Hall & Mogyorody 2001). The Survey conducted in Gujarat and Karnataka revealed the farmer’s motivation for shifting from inspection and certification agencies, accreditation procedure, inspection and certification procedures have been prepared and approved by National Steering Committee. Ministry of agriculture has accepted the Indian national standards for domestic organic certification and now Indian organic standards are acceptable in the European countries.

It monitors the accreditation and certifying agencies for the organic farm product and develops norms for the certifying organic products and providing financial support to the implement promotional activity for organic farming.

Agribusiness is the systemic way “in which the activities of farming are integrated into a much larger industrial complex, including the manufacture and marketing of technological inputs and of processed food products, under highly concentrated forms of corporate ownership and management” (Whatmore 2000, p. 10).
intensive practice to organic practice; as three main factors influencing the farmer’s transition to organic farming are as follows:

1. Environmental problem associated with the conventional farming.
2. Institutional factors like Non-Government organisations’ intervention
3. Own initiative by the farmers owing to philosophical influence (Puutaswammaiah, Ian & Amita 2006: 19-20)

Farmers are experiencing dilemmas with regard to principles, philosophies and practices of organic farming. The confusion is natural, as many farming families and communities have moved away from traditional practices during the green revolution phase in India. The modernization and mechanization in agriculture have created a lack of belief in the traditional notion of farming. Today the second and third generation of farmers lack awareness about indigenous approaches of farm practice. Some of the existing constraints in organic farming are the underdeveloped rural organic market, political interest of the stakeholders; service providers in different parts of the country have jeopardized organic farming development and policy-programme initiatives. Organic literature is extensive and it is emerging as a field of inquiry in the range of disciplinary studies from agriculture, geography, political science to rural sociology in the West (Burton, Rigby & Young, 1999; Padel, 2001; Lampkin & Padel, 1994; Lynggaard, 2001; Michelsen, 2001; Lesjak, 2006). However, Indian experience of organic farming is very limited in the academic discipline and there exists a limited literature or studies in the context of alternative agriculture, which critiques the state led development.

Chapter Conclusion

From the beginning of the 20th century, there have been tremendous changes within agriculture. Historically, diversity in the production of agricultural crops was a significant pre-requisite of traditional agriculture practices. However with the modernisation of farming, the diversity which was once an integral part of the philosophy of farming has now become farmers’ choice, preference or alternative approach which includes conscious decisions regarding choice of farming practices, crops, manures and access to resources in the farm level. State patronage for mainstreaming of modern methods of farming (principally along the lines of green revolution), has interestingly also led to the creation of alternative farming approaches, which are directly or indirectly connected to traditional farming philosophies and practices. From Carson book Silent Spring, Back to Landers movement, environmental movements across the world have
questioned and cautioned the world over the present path of modern development. In the 1970s, traditional methods of farming received recognition in the West and slowly contributed towards the development of organic farming which critiqued the modern capital intensive agriculture in the world. Over time, farming has become more an individual entity and on farm technological development, is the essential pre-requisite within agriculture. Similarly, organic farming also has evolved and has created its own economy. It is now market driven, with the introduction of standards and certification, as well as with the concern over fair trade. Today organic farming is serious business, not just the world over but also in the Indian sub-continent.

Organic farming questioned the state led developmental paradigm, which focused on capitalisation of agriculture. However, within the social sciences, organic farming has remained on the margins - an area bordering between social activism and politics (in what is often dismissed as a utopian vision on farming). As a long-standing critique of chemical farming, it has not been given due recognition. Within Indian academics, organic farming is stereotyped. It is considered unrealistic, harking back to traditional notions of collective collaboration, and the Gandhian vision of Village Swaraj. At most, it is seen as a social movement, rooted in social activism, and therefore beyond the purview of serious academic research and theorising. Therefore, today it is essential to bring organic farming initiatives within the purview of mainstream academics to discuss and observe as to how organic farming is opposing state led development in agriculture. The chapter was an attempt to bridge this divide and bring in the discussion on organic farming within the larger churning within academics over democratising development thought and practice. Organic farming can be traced to farmers’ experiments and initiatives in the local level and my research is one such effort to document people’s reflections and experiment with organic farming, albeit in the context of the Karnataka Organic Farming Project. My study elaborates on the concept and practice of organic farming as promoted by the state, as against how the farmers reflect on the same in relation to the conditions of contemporary farming. The organic farming policy introduced a single, universal policy for the entire 10 agro-climatic zones in the state. The Policy proposed the objectives and defined programmes that are needed to be implemented to promote organic farming across the state; however, the significant part that is missing from the policy is the reflection on the field view of Organic farming. The Policy does not acknowledge previous agricultural policies, which the Karnataka government had proposed for the development of agriculture in the state. It
does not critically engage with the issues that actually led to the formulation of the Karnataka State organic farming policy. Lastly, if state led development has to be better understood, it has to analyse the perspectives, lived experiences of the people for whom the policy or project is proposed.