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urban and rural

The alternative strategy for the coming revolution is going to be soil based. The cities used to have 'free air' but now they have mostly polluted air; they have grown too big and there seems to be very little chance of changing them. But that does not mean that there is no chance at all. There is no need to escape from the cities. If you are there, work to change them. That is already happening. A large number of constructive alternatives are being organized in the cities and that is the subject matter of this issue. We have taken a few sample projects to illustrate what can be done.

The old-fashioned socialist revolutionaries were dedicated to the industrial proletariat and the working classes. Therefore they believed in industrialization and were attracted to the industrial and urban belts. But people like Mahatma Gandhi and Mao Tse Tung saw a great folly in their approach to the land, to food production, and to a sane relationship between humans and nature. They asked the city-dwellers to go to the countryside and learn the wisdom of peasants, even if for only a short period. In this direction we can see the germs of a new movement to strengthen the small, self-reliant and inter-related communities.

There is no inherent and irresolvable conflict or contradiction between the rural and urban patterns of settlement. Where have we gone wrong? We have attached an importance to cities out of all proportion, and destroyed the balance between the rural and the urban. Rural areas are suffering from de-population and urban areas from over-crowding. Rural life is deprived of all joyful and cultural activities, and urban centres have monopolized the cultural life to the extent that culture has become almost an object of consumption. That is why there is a need to re-create the balance, de-populate the cities to a certain extent, change their cancerous nature and make the urban and rural areas inter-dependant and inter-related. Make the cities more humane — smaller. *Satish Kumar*