

**"Tribal Peoples as Leaders of Society
in a Future in which Fossil Fuels might be Scarce,
with Special Reference to the Kani Tribal People of South India",
an Interactive Talk, by Dr Eric Miller and Mr Murugan Kani**

The world's supply of "Fossil Fuels" (oil, gas, coal, etc) is depleting. It seems production of these resources in usable form has passed its peak, and these resources may become increasingly scarce and expensive in the coming years. The "Hydrocarbon Age" began in the mid-1800's, with the the coming of the wide-spread use of electricity and the "Industrial Revolution". It reached a peak around the year 2000, and we may now be on a downward slope. One estimate is that 30 years from now, we will have approximately half of the current supply-flow, and less and less after that. The term, "Peak Oil", refers to this idea. It seems the heart of the "Hydrocarbon Age" might be 1900-2100.

In the coming time of possible "Energy Scarcity", Mainstream society and culture might do well to learn from Tribal society and culture regarding methods of recycling and salvaging resources, and living sustainably with nature. Tribal people tend to be expert in these areas.

Key ideas:

Peak Oil

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peak_oil

Richard Heinberg is one of many writers and speakers discussing the Peak Oil situation. The text of an address -- titled "Conflict and Change in the Era of Economic Decline" -- he gave to the *International Conference on Sustainability, Transition and Culture Change* (<http://sustainabilityconference.org>), in November 2012, in Michigan, USA, is at <http://tinyurl.com/b76vqsg> (Part 1)
<http://tinyurl.com/a73uqu9> (Part 2)

Biological, Linguistic, and Cultural Diversity are valuable, and support each other.
Biocultural Diversity – the Web of Life. <http://www.terralingua.org>

Tribal methods of conserving and nurturing nature, living sustainably with nature, and recycling and salvaging materials, include

- * For residential huts, and also for huts for watchmen in fields of kilangu and other crops -- strips of plants, bark, and vines can be used to lash poles and beams together.
- * Areca-nut tree leaves, Bamboo leaves, Plaintain leaves -- can be used as toys (as a car that is pulled); for beating rice; and for thatch (tutti), woven for baskets, walls, roofs, doors, mats, etc. Bamboo can be used to make musical instruments. Beaten bark can be worn.
- * Baskets can be used for carrying fish, and (upside-down) as a seat or as a cage for chicks.
- * Certain types of soft, smooth leaves can be used as plates, bowls, spoons, and garlands.
- * Toothpaste can be made from a type of stone.
- * Wood fire can produce heated stones for cooking in the earth (heat transfer from wood, to fire, to stone, to food).
- * Re-cycling (second use) -- children can use old bicycle tires as toys (pushed by sticks).
- * When collecting honey, people sometimes blow smoke, or just air, on the bees, to confuse them so they might not sting, and to encourage them to move away from the hive. But people are careful to not kill, nor to seriously disturb the bees (which might cause them to re-locate).
- * When collecting *kumili* (wild mushrooms) in the forest, people do not pick small ones, and do not disturb the overall patch (sustainable harvesting of wild and semi-wild forest products).
- * A particular tree produces oil that can be used in lamps.
- * Fish-nets are not made of nylon (a petroleum product); fish-traps are made of plants.
- * *Eru-madam* (tree-house) -- built on the upper trunk and/or branches of a tree.
- * Some houses use living trees as one or more of its pillars.
- * *Pachai veeli* (green fence) -- a fence with some poles that are living plants or small trees.
- * When a certain vine is sliced open, water gushes out. This water is good for drinking, and also for treating certain medical conditions.
- * The name of a place along a river in the forest near Vellambi translates to, "During times of drought, when there was a shortage of food elsewhere, people could come here and survive".
- * All of the above can be taught to people with the help of storytelling, an art requiring no special fuel or technology. Tribal cultures tend to train people to be expert in storytelling.