Full report on ‘Celebrating Nas’ – barley
September 17-18, 2022

‘Celebrating Nas’ - barley - was an event co-organized by Local Futures, Snow Leopard Conservancy, Ladakh Arts and Media Organization, and Kalpavriksh to revitalize, reconnect and revalue Ladakhi culture, tradition and food sovereignty through this humble and sustaining grain, highlighting its nutritional, cultural and agronomic importance, and also celebrating and reviving traditional local farming and food of Ladakh in general.

The four organizations came together to host open food stalls, music performances, rituals, traditional basket weaving and pottery making demonstrations, film and photo exhibitions, as well as panel discussions on various topics around food and agriculture.

The two-day event contained a lot of rich content - for both mind and body - and impressively good attendance, including many and mostly Ladakhis. Various Ama Tsogspas (Women's Alliance groups) from nearby villages, as well as new Ladakhi food restaurants, ran food stalls featuring different local food and dishes from across the

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region, plus local/organic products from mainly young people keen on agriculture and strengthening villages, and a Local Futures stall with our books.

There were also local artisans demonstrating their crafts: a basket weaver from Chushot, and a potter from Likir. These were hugely popular with attendees, many of whom tried their hand at the respective crafts. There was also a session with these craftsmen in the hall, where they talked about the importance of their crafts and knowledge, and ideas to maintain them in the face of the plastic throwaway economy.

Our guest speakers were agroecologist and seed conservationist Debal Deb speaking on the vital importance of self-sufficient local agriculture that is free from dependence on commercial inputs, and philosopher Anup Dhar discussing the bias against the rural and the village in the ideas of development and modernity.

Another of the many inspiring speakers, environmentalist Ashish Kothari, explained the importance of food sovereignty - the control of food by the local community - versus mere food security, which is only about ensuring access to food, irrespective of who, how and where it was produced.
Dr. Nordan Odzer from Nubra gave a very impactful talk about the cancers, diabetes, heart disease, obesity et al. caused by the corporate food system increasingly erasing the local nutritious food system. Spurred on by his intervention, Local Futures is now planning a campaign with him to spread this counter message to the entire region, and push for policies to resist the corporate takeover of the food system.

In the face of ever-more rapid and extensive globalization, events like ‘Celebrating Nas’ play a crucial role of resistance and renewal towards a saner, healthier, localized future.

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Photos by Alex Jensen and Ashish Kothari

For more information on our work in Ladakh, visit:

https://www.localfutures.org/programs/ladakh/