

Preparation Handout for a

Videoconference between Students  
at IITM in Chennai, India;  
and American University in Cairo, Egypt.

Videoconference Theme:  
**Everyday Creativity:  
"Indian" and "Egyptian" Ways of Doing Things.**

Course (on the Cairo side): **South-South Dialogue: Perceptions and Reflections from the Global South.** American University in Cairo.

Course (on the Chennai side): **Communication.** IIT-Madras.

Date: Wed 24 Oct.

Chennai Time and Location: 2:45pm. ICSR Building, 3rd Floor.

Cairo Time: 11:15am.

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Please write and bring to the session some notes on the following topics:

1) **(Thoughts about one's self.)**

What are you really interested in? What are you really good at? How have you discovered and developed these interests and abilities? Regarding one or more of these abilities -- In what ways are you good at it? What could be said about your **Style** of doing it?

2) **(Creativity, imagination, and role-playing.)**

Imagine you and a group of friends have been ship-wrecked on an uninhabited island. What are some of the first things you might do?

3) **(Thoughts about one's group's heroes.)**

What famous Indian/Egyptian person do you really admire? What do you like about this person's **Style**, including **Methods of approaching and solving problems**?

4) **(Thoughts about one's group.)**

Is there actually an "Indian/Egyptian way" of doing things (thinking, speaking, and behaving)? Is it possible to make such generalities? Can an entire people indeed be said to have certain personality traits? If yes, please give examples about your nation's/culture's **Personality**. Have you noticed people from other countries seeming to act differently from ways people act in your culture? If so, in what ways do others tend to act differently? That is: What are some ways you recognise a non-Indian/non-Egyptian, in term of their behaviour? Please give examples.

5) **(Thoughts about one's group's language.)**

Discuss some expressions (in English, or translated into English) that seem especially Indian or Egyptian. Indian expressions in English might include: "Spirit of cooperation". "Please do the necessary".

6) **(Creativity and sustainability.)**

In countries in the Southern Hemisphere such as India and Egypt, there are traditions of there being scarcities of certain types of resources. This concept of **Scarcity of Resources** may in some cases lead to creativity in designing systems to make the most of what one has.

Below are some examples of such **Creativity, Ingenuity, Improvisation, Recycling, Conservation**, and **Sustainable Practices** (practices that involve regeneration of resources, and not depletion of resources).

Have you seen any of the following ideas in action? (Some of them are from Reading no. 3, far below.) Might you like to experience some of these processes? Why and how might they work? Why and how might they NOT work? Please share any thoughts -- including additional suggestions -- regarding these kinds of possibilities.

- 1) Rain-water harvesting (from roofs, into large containers).
- 2) Systems for sharing tools between neighbours.
- 3) Car-pooling.
- 4) Food co-ops (groups of people buying food in large quantities).
- 5) Shared sewing studios.
- 6) Home restaurants.
- 7) Child-care centres in homes.
- 8) Buildings which allow social activities in common spaces.
- 9) Places where residents can discuss community issues.
- 10) Services that enable older people to pool resources among themselves.
- 11) Multi-service meeting-centres for retired people.
- 12) Community-managed services for the care of children and the elderly.
- 13) School services that utilise the participation of parents and grandparents.
- 14) Stimulating children's creativity by helping them invent and manufacture toys.
- 15) Bicycles available throughout the city for minimal rental fees.
- 16) Community repair shops in which riders learn how to repair their own bicycles.
- 17) Modifying bicycles to create vehicles for disabled people.
- 18) Crank-power (by hand, pedaling by foot) to power radios, computers, etc.
- 19) Exercise equipment that generates electricity.
- 20) A solar-powered air-conditioner.
- 21) "Getting off the grid" -- local production of electricity (solar, crank, etc).
- 22) Multi-channel and multi-media (online and offline) communication platforms connecting producers and consumers directly to each other.
- 23) Enabling farmers to sell their own products (*Farmers' Markets* in cities).
- 24) Eating locally-produced food.
- 25) Services, events, and places promoting local traditional products.
- 26) Spreading the culture of recycling and recovering by designing products from recycled material.
- 27) Making furniture using found materials.
- 28) Separating trash into categories such as compost (bio-degradable) and other; using the compost to fertilise plants.
- 29) Creating situations and environments to use discarded objects for new purposes and give them a new beauty. Designing objects with alternative uses for a second life.
- 30) Defining systems of exchange not based on money (bartering, trading).
- 31) Open workshops, where people can undertake repairs supervised by experts.

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Readings for the Wed 24 Oct session are below. Please choose two, and write and bring to the session some questions and comments regarding these two writings.

- 1) "Everyday Creativity", by Carlin Flora, in *Psychology Today*, 1 Nov 2009, <http://tinyurl.com/yjw9e45> .
- 2) "Cross-cultural Cooperation in Arabic Construction Projects" (2009), by Amir Mahran and Rob Geraedts, <http://tinyurl.com/8bpqlfr> .
- 3) "Creative Communities for Sustainable Lifestyles", <http://tinyurl.com/8kg5zcm> . Especially the "In-Depth Brochure" (2007), <http://tinyurl.com/8afqsew> .
- 4) "Ethnographic Videoconferencing" (2012), by Eric Miller, [www.storytellingandvideoconferencing.com/44.pdf](http://www.storytellingandvideoconferencing.com/44.pdf) .
- 5) "The Art of Dialogue" (2005), by Patricia Romney, <http://tinyurl.com/cu3vxcd> .

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For further info about this videoconference, please call 98403 94282, and see [www.storytellingandvideoconferencing.com/9.html](http://www.storytellingandvideoconferencing.com/9.html) .