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## Ancient Wisdom and Sustainable Development

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Climate change and global warming is real, now proven that it is caused by human activities and that it is accelerated by the burning of fossil fuels.

As of early September 2015, the average global temperature has risen 1.4 degrees Celsius since 1880, and nine of the ten hottest years on record have occurred since 2000. Carbon dioxide stands at 400.84 parts per million, the highest levels the Earth has experienced in 650,000 years. Since March 2022 there has been unusual rise of temperature surpassing 470 C, first time ever, in certain Northern parts of India.

Evidence from ocean sediments, ice cores, tree rings, sedimentary rocks and coral reefs show that the current warming is occurring 10 times faster than it did in the past when Earth emerged from the ice ages, at a rate unprecedented in the last 1,300 years.

Humans' dependence on fossil fuels, economy of consumption, achieving ever-higher profits and continuous growth, are all part of the dream of the modern world. For decades, we've assumed that, in the face of development, the destruction of nature is inevitable. We allowed tree-felling in favour of luxury apartment complexes or ignore the razing down of critical forests to make way for highways. But the scarily reducing amounts of forest cover, the high rates of pollution, and unbearable weather shifts have put paid to that. We have and even still now acting in certain ways that drive global warming and put life on Earth—not only human life but that of all plants and animals as well—at risk.

However, the world is finally waking up to the stark reality that we can no longer degrade nature for development or stand neutral ground. To restore some semblance of balance, whatever we create next must add to nature.

Now, the search for a new paradigm – Sustainable Growth or just Sustainability, that can ensure economic development without jeopardising environmental quality is being intensified. World seeks to establish a philosophical foundation where people think about nature before thinking about themselves, which can make us realise the deeper underlying reality of basic oneness. Natural Science doesn't simply describe nature, it is part of the interplay between nature and mankind. This ecological harmony is possible when the entire universe is seen as a single largest family including all the living beings of the world. Vedic civilization realised this world view when they say, 'vasudhaiva kutumbakam.' This world view further developed in the Upani-adic age with a firm philosophical foundation through its cosmological unity and sustainability.

Such a holistic world view offers a new paradigm for development, a new socioeconomic system free from exploitation, defining in a novel way the relationship between man and nature thus realising the ecological balance we need today.

Sustainability, however, is often viewed through a futuristic prism, yet what we often miss out is that ancient wisdom can hold important lessons. The struggle to be more sustainable is a relatively new phenomenon, but inspiration can be drawn from ancient farming and water management techniques. Innovation and technology can help us adapt these techniques to meet our present-day needs.

When we think of “innovation” and “technology,” we probably link it directly to modernity, futurism, and industrial development. The word that probably won't make the list is “ancient.” And yet, ancient natural technologies might well give us the answer to adapting to climate change that we desperately seek in modern innovations. Ancient wisdom can guide and teach us more sustainable infrastructure without exploiting or outright destroying nature. In responding to climate change with complex infrastructures and monotonous high-tech design, we're forgetting that we are sitting on a goldmine of millennium old knowledge — about living in symbiosis with nature and striking a balance between growth and harmony.

The Ancient Wisdom has always been in the world. It is knowledge of the nature of things and of human nature. It is the Wisdom of understanding and compassion, of which all of us feel in need in the depths of our being. One way to shift our focus and incorporate a more Earth-friendly (and life-friendly) way of living into our everyday lives, is to weave together modern knowledge and ancient wisdom

While we may not be able to resurrect everything, we left in the past but it's worth understanding that some ancient innovations and processes might still serve us well. The point of looking both forward and backwards is to arm ourselves with a wide range of tools to adapt to climate change. It isn't loud claim but numbers of countries around the world are looking to ancient wisdom

for guidance and have reached levels of innovation that perfectly balance what was previously considered un-balanceable.

Some of the examples that elucidate how ancient knowledge ne ancient wisdom is being utilised : – a study found that Tibetans living in Himalayan region are very susceptible to climate change, yet the people utilize a wide range of ecological zones for their subsistence.

Many other studies are underway and being conducted to determine how we, the mankind can utilize this type of wisdom on a global scale.

Extreme weather has impacted played havoc with farmers across globe, while some are started adopting new technologies, others are looking back to explore old processes that worked then. Keith Elverson, expert of UNEP says there is probably no ‘silver bullet’ to solve everything but to look both forward and backwards to develop a wide set of tools as we adapt.

Below are some of the examples of such adaptations and utilizing ancient wisdom in the various part of world, it’s fascinating to read about lost ancient wisdom:

‘Floating Rice’ of Vietnam Mekong Delta where farmers were shown by a researcher Nguyen V K as how to work un-conventionally against intense floods and swamps to grow high yield variety and rediscovering ancient grains. Floating rice has become well adapted to floods as the foliage grows much more than the level of floods.

Harvesting rainwater, the ancients seem to have mastered the art of harvesting rainwater, diverting it from two ephemeral channels and then storing it in large reservoirs built on the site.

In Bhuj itself, the group called Arid Communities and Technologies ([www.act-india.org](http://www.act-india.org)), has been working for long in understanding the traditional water harvesting and management system at Bhuj and they tried reviving it with the help of local communities. A small old well recently cleaned up by people voluntarily is now supplying water to about 50 families.

In Kolkata, India, BHERI waste water aquaculture system management is the innovation in organic technology that has made its way to no of countries to do organic aquaculture and use waste water in a sustainable. It features ~300 fishponds that carry out chemical-free water purification by relying on combination of bacteria, algae, sewage, and sunshine instead of coal-based power. It’s also a source of food, an agricultural field, and a way of cleaning wastewater before it enters the Bay of Bengal.

There are other ancient techniques as well like using ducks instead of pesticides for managing insects etc. In Heilongjiang, China, Fang Yongjiang, a farmer, thought up a chemical-free

approach that required no technology — only the clever thinking of ancestry 600 years introduced ducks into rice paddies to feed on the weeds and insects so pesticides wouldn't be needed. Their droppings doubled up as natural fertilizer, which was a win-win. Fang initially began with a handful of ducks over 25 acres. In just a few years, other rice growers also implemented the ancient wisdom to bring the number up to 500 acres of pesticide- and fertilizer-free rice paddies monitored by ducks.


In Bolivia, Oscar Saavedra's non-profit, Sustainable Amazonia, has taught 500 families a method of agriculture back from 400 BC — 7-foot high elevated fields that stood higher than floodwater levels and were surrounded by canals. During flood season, the canals would hold the water to prevent the fields from flooding. During droughts, the same nutrient-rich canal water would be used to irrigate the fields.

By going back to the culture of the open well, by using only the dynamic water table, by recharging aquifers, and by reserving the deeper aquifers for droughts and other emergencies we can hope to tide over droughts in the era of climate change. This is the water wisdom which we must learn from our ancients.

Many of ancient innovations are absolutely in tune with nature, using available resources smartly to create a mutually beneficial relationship. They might be simple or complex, but usually, they're already there in our history books if we took a closer look. As they say, history repeats itself — and a lot of our modern problems were also faced by ancestors when their times were considered “modern.”

The Borana, a cattle-herding tribe in Kenya, is surviving droughts in arid Isiolo County by reintroducing an abandoned, centuries-old traditional grazing management method. Called “Dedha” (which means “council” in the local dialect), the system relies on placing decision-making authority in the hands of the elders who ensure that all herders have adequate pasture and water for their animals. Since Dedha was reinstated in 2011, the Borana have lost fewer animals to drought, according to Victor Orindi of the Adaptation Consortium, a group that works to mitigate the effects of climate change in Kenya. Conflicts over natural resources have also been reduced, he adds. The county is in the process of passing legislation that will officially recognize the authority of Dedha councils.

Projects like AIUla's Cultural Oasis in Saudi Arabia are trying to integrate lessons from the past to create a more sustainable future for areas in need of development. These ancient techniques are being updated with new technology and innovative thinking to address sustainability issues such as desertification.



The Azawak region of West Africa has badly suffered from desertification and water scarcity due to the impact of climate change. The water crisis has had a severe impact on both the local environment and the traditional nomad communities who farmed it.

NGO Amman Imman is using water harvesting methods to restore ecosystems to improve the livelihoods of those forced to migrate.

On the concluding note - large part of world's remaining ecosystems is in the hearts of the lands of indigenous people. For millennia, they've lived in harmony with nature without giving up on progress – and that goes to show that there is hope for environmentally-friendly solutions to modern problems through ancient wisdom.

Ecology depends on the interdependence of multiple processes and schools of thought, so it's impossible to say that there's one right way to tackle all of the world's environmental problems.. The smart way to go about adapting to climate change is to listen to those who've shown resilience in the face of it for years and reach a happy balance.

No matter where we live, we're all still dependent on the same web of life. There is immense value in looking at solutions that succeeded in the past to see whether we can correct our course in time. Ancient Wisdom integrating with sustainability means not only integrating the economy with nature and society but also integrating the past with the present, the present with the future, and technology with culture.