Vasudhā Calling

A newsletter for enabling sustainable living

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Vasudhā
Enabling Sustainable Living

Natural Resources Development Project
Vivekananda Kendra
LIVING IN TUNE WITH NATURE

Comprehensive Platform for Knowledge Sharing on Sustainable Living

Towards a Greener Future:
Introducing the Sustainable Lifestyles Resource Centre

G. Vasudeo

At a time when humanity faces unprecedented environmental and social challenges, the need to reconnect with our natural roots and reimagine our way of life has never been more urgent. The Sustainable Lifestyles Resource Centre—an initiative of the Sustainable Lifestyles Resource Centre (SLRC) by VK-NARDEP—stands as a timely response to this call, offering a comprehensive, community-rooted platform to nurture and promote sustainable ways of living.

What is the SLRC?

The SLRC, based in Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu, is envisioned as a vibrant hub to inspire, educate, and empower individuals and institutions to adopt sustainable lifestyles. It bridges ancient wisdom with modern innovations, leveraging VK-NARDEP's decades-long experience in ecology, construction, energy, farming, water management, health, and inner sustainability.

The Resource Centre's approach is structured into **nine core components**, each designed to serve diverse stakeholders—from policymakers to grassroots communities.

1. Knowledge Building

At the heart of the Resource Centre is a robust knowledge system. The Centre will develop a compendium of sustainable living principles, publish a dedicated journal, create multimedia resources, and curate vernacular literature. These efforts aim to make sustainability accessible and rooted in local culture.

2. Knowledge Dissemination

Knowledge without outreach limits its impact. Through digital and physical exhibitions, community and school outreach programs, and a dedicated observatory website, the Resource Centre will reach audiences across age groups and geographies. Social media campaigns will further amplify its message.

3. Networking

The Resource Centre actively fosters collaboration across sectors. By hosting seminars, curating practitioner databases, organizing retreats, and running practitioner-aspirant circles, it builds a strong community of practice and shared learning. Showcase events and an online repository will make innovations in sustainable living more visible and replicable.

4. Experiential Living

Sustainability is best learned by doing. The SLRC will offer hands-on courses and field labs on sustainable agriculture, energy, housing, health, and food. The campus itself will function as a 'living laboratory', enabling real-world learning that inspires and equips participants to replicate these models in their communities.

5. Capacity Building

Through intensive training programs, advisory services, and expert dialogues, the Resource Centre aims to build a cadre of changemakers. Whether you are a student, farmer, bureaucrat, or businessperson, the Resource Centre offers tools to turn intention into action.

6. Movement Building

The Resource Centre seeks to catalyze a grassroots movement for sustainable living. Mass events like rallies and marathons, community mentorship circles, and movement conventions will create momentum and build a shared identity among “Pro-Planet People.”

7. Model Building

Innovation is essential. The Resource Centre will pioneer and test sustainable lifestyle models—from renewable energy technologies to waste management systems—showcasing scalable solutions that can inform both practice and policy.

8. Policy Advocacy

To enable systemic change, the Resource Centre will develop policy briefs, organize seminars, and participate in key policy forums. By engaging with decision-makers, it seeks to mainstream sustainability across governance structures.

9. Market Hub

Sustainability needs markets. The SL Resource Centre will create platforms for producers and consumers of eco-friendly goods to connect. Buyer-seller meets, e-commerce linkages, and product showcases will help build green value chains.

Education and the Road Ahead

In collaboration with universities, the Resource Centre will offer online and offline courses, advocate for curriculum integration, promote peer learning, and offer scholarships. Over time, these efforts will seed a new generation of sustainability leaders.

A Vision with Roots and Wings

The SLRC is more than an institution—it’s a movement, a learning ecosystem, and a community builder. It reminds us that sustainable living isn’t a distant ideal but a way of life within reach—grounded in simplicity, harmony, and collective action.

Together, let’s build a future that sustains us all.

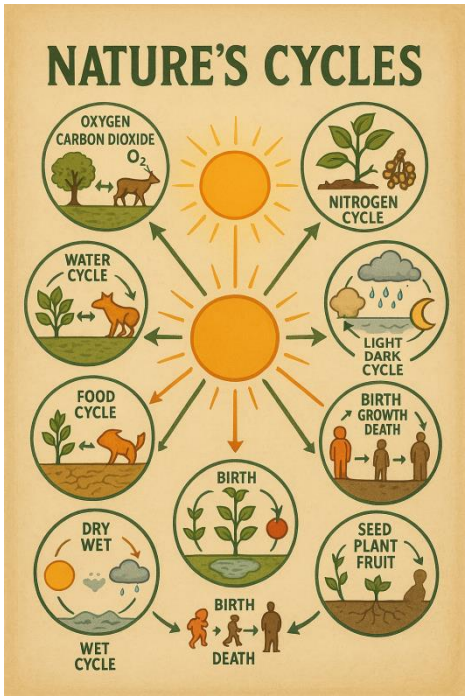
Nature Proposes - Man Disposes

Dileep Kulkarni

In this series, we will look at the salient features of the nature's system one by one, and understand the follies of human system vis-a-vis that. It will provide us many insights for making changes to move towards sustainability.

CYCLICITY

The most fundamental feature of nature's system is its *cyclicity*. All materials in nature continuously move through various cycles. There is a cycle of oxygen and carbon dioxide, a nitrogen cycle (involving fixation and release), a water cycle, and a food cycle. The food cycle involves the synthesis and breakdown of organic substances. Plants synthesize food through photosynthesis, binding various elements to carbon atoms. This food is consumed by herbivores, which extract energy by breaking these chemical bonds. Carnivores, in turn, feed on herbivores. The excreta and dead bodies of all animals still contain residual energy, which microorganisms utilize. In doing so, they break down the chemical compounds, releasing the elements back into the soil—a process known as *degradation*. Plants then reabsorb and re-synthesize these elements.



Nature also operates through other cycles—light and darkness (day and night), dryness and wetness (seasons), and in plants, the cycle of seed → plant → fruit → seed. In both plants and animals, we see the cycle of birth → growth → death.

None of this is new to us—we all know it. But do we ever truly reflect on *why* nature operates in cycles?

Let us examine the question from a different angle: what would happen if there were no cyclicity? The entire system would eventually come to a halt. For instance, without plants, the limited oxygen in the atmosphere would be consumed by animals, and the exhaled carbon dioxide would not be reconverted into oxygen. Eventually, all animals would suffocate. The same consequences would follow if the water or food cycles ceased to function.

This shows us that if finite resources are to sustain life indefinitely, they must flow in cycles. Because natural resources are inherently finite, cyclicity becomes critical. It is cyclicity that sustains life over geological time scales.

All action requires energy, and the energy that drives nature's cycles is solar energy—light (photons) and heat (infrared rays). The availability of this energy determines the system's throughput. Thus, in temperate regions, the throughput is higher, while in colder regions, it is lower.

Until around 1750, humans mostly respected the natural limits of solar energy. They relied on direct solar inputs and their derivatives—muscle power (from food), wind, flowing water, and wood or charcoal. Though this usage increased the throughput slightly beyond a pure natural system, its environmental impact was minimal and within nature's capacity to recover. Except for

the burning of wood and charcoal (which are active processes), all other energy sources were passive.

However, everything changed after 1750 with the advent of *produced* energy. The Industrial Revolution introduced steam power generated by burning coal. A century later, petroleum and electricity emerged as dominant energy sources.

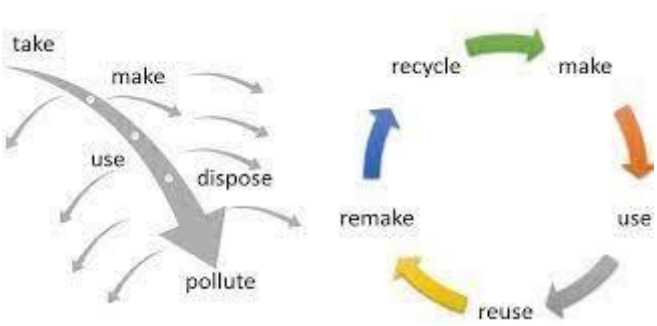
In the era of passive, naturally available energies, the economy was *cyclical*. But with the emergence of produced energies, the economy became *linear*, and soon, due to compounding, *exponential*. The earlier steady-state economy transformed into a *growth economy*. Development began to be measured as linear growth in per capita consumption, production, and GDP.

As cyclicity was neglected—overpowered by linear thinking—development inevitably became non-sustainable. Increased throughput led to overexploitation of non-renewable resources, causing their depletion and the accumulation of non-degradable waste. Even renewable resources began to be exploited at such high rates that their degradable waste could no longer be processed effectively. As a result, even *degradable* waste started to pile up.

In our techno-savvy, energy-addicted world, we now burn potential soil nutrients to generate electricity! Consequently, soils are deprived of biomass and are losing fertility. To compensate, we resort to chemical fertilizers, making agriculture a linear process. Although agricultural output increases linearly, so does the degradation of soil—ultimately rendering the land barren and abandoned.

The same pattern is evident with water and forests. Linear exploitation of water is lowering water tables, while overuse of forests results in deforestation and land denudation. Albedo is rising.

We must recognize a fundamental truth: *cyclic processes are continuous; linear ones have an end*. The pre-1750 circular economy was sustainable. The post-1750 linear economy, by its very nature, is not.



Still, the end of any linear and unsustainable system—such as our current industrial civilization—is part of a longer natural cycle. Regardless of how proud we may be of our conceptual model of linear economic growth, it is merely a temporary phase within nature's overarching circular system. Eventually, nature's cyclicity will reassert itself over human linearity. This could result in either a gradual economic contraction or a sudden collapse.

If such an outcome is inevitable, wouldn't it be wiser to prepare for a *soft landing*—a deliberate, gradual downsizing of the economy—rather than waiting for nature to impose it upon us? This can be achieved by rediscovering the wisdom of pre-industrial civilizations that predominantly used renewable energies. While those societies may have lacked glamour, they possessed something far more vital: *sustainability*.

After every rise, there comes a fall. It is best to remain conscious of this cycle—especially when we find ourselves ascending.

Forgiveness and Mental Decluttering

Raghunandan Trikannad

Infant sun reflected on the wavelets of *Ganga;* a soft but cold breeze blew, announcing the approach of winter. The *Ghats* hummed with innumerable voices chanting verses and *Mantras* form the Vedas. It was dawn in *Kashi*—the city of light that had fascinated him since his childhood. Arul from Tamil Nadu was aware, of Kashi playing a great role in the birth and renaissance of our culture. He was on a short visit taking time off his otherwise busy career. Besides the wisdom of our culture, a practice prevalent at Kashi, had attracted him there. If one dies in this city of light, Arul had heard, one attains liberation; and that Lord Shiva cuts the chains binding the person to this ephemeral word. He was now a youth having a successful career. After checking into a hotel Arul began his search of places where old persons stayed, *waiting for death!* It took some time to locate a *Dharmashala.*

Arul's curiosity got stirred as he approached two elders to ask them about the practice. In a positive response, they introduced Arul to the fifteen inmates, most of whom had chosen to spend their last days in hope of breathing their last in this holy city. They were allowed to stay there only for three months, and if they *survived,* they had to leave! Arul visited them at least once a day and became familiar with them. One virtue they all had in common: *faith—unshakable faith.* Their days were spent in devotions—worship, prayers, and in *Japa—Om Namah Shivaya,* the five syllabled *Mantra* on Lord *Shiva.*

One of them, Triveni Sharma, about ninety, was disturbed as though something was eating his vitals. Arul asked if he could be of help, Triveniji said that while leaving his town, he had bid farewell to all his relatives and friends, except one, who had been his dearest friend during youth, and who was very much alive. He had not met him, because of a bitter fight they had some *forty-five* years back! This regret would not allow him to die. Arul volunteered to bring his friend if it was near Kashi. A twinkle of hope appeared in the old man's eyes. Very next morning, Arul reached *Belar* and met Usman Khan and told him about Triveniji. The moment he heard his friend's name Usman was ecstatic, there were tears of joy at this unexpected calling. Arul assured Usman Bhai's son that he would escort him back after the meeting.

The meeting was truly a great learning for Arul: we keep nursing old wounds *apparently* caused by persons, nurturing grudges, and *be miserable.* Even if the wound is generations old, we refuse to correct the course of our life. The wound or grudge, is only a passing wave in our mind, kept alive through repeated recollection. By *forgiving* and *forgetting,* we are relieved of the burden weighing upon our being. It is not necessary to wait for old age or death for learning forgiveness, earlier done, lighter and purer the mind will be! Triveniji had not even sought apology, the spontaneous embrace with his dearest friend Usman Bhai, had purified both of them like the Holy *Ganga.*

Every Leaf a Lesson: Discovering the Wisdom of the Green World

N. Krishnamurthi

In ancient Pataliputra, a dedicated student of Ayurveda completes twelve years of rigorous training under a wise Acharya. For his final test, he is asked to find a plant with no medicinal value. After an exhaustive search across gardens and forests, he returns empty-handed, realizing that every plant has some utility in healing or supporting life. His teacher affirms that true knowledge lies in recognizing the purpose and potential in all of nature—and by extension, in all human beings, words, and actions. The story offers profound insights into nature's wisdom and the interconnectedness of all life forms.

Levels of Learning

1. Moral Learning (Values & Ethics)

- Respect all life forms.
- Avoid calling anything or anyone "useless."
- Practice gratitude for nature's abundance.

2. Experiential Learning (Observation & Understanding)

- Explore local plant life and its uses.
- Study traditional knowledge like Ayurveda.
- Engage with nature consciously—observe, question, learn.

3. Introspective Learning (Self-Reflection & Awareness)

- Reflect on your place in the ecosystem.
- Recognize hidden potential in self and others.
- Meditate on the sacredness of all life, including plants.

Sustainability and Sleep Quality

T. Valliappan

As per the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is the promotion of good health and well-being. Achieving this goal requires a multidisciplinary approach that fosters effective thinking and the development of solutions to ensure a good quality of life.

While people often give adequate attention to physical well-being, mental well-being does not always receive the same priority. Sleep is a critical aspect of mental health, and the *quality* of sleep, in particular, influences our ability to think clearly, plan effectively, innovate, and act with focus.

Various interdependent factors influence both the amount and quality of sleep. These include stress levels in personal and professional life, economic pressures, societal dynamics, and even geopolitical conditions.

Although much research has already been conducted on why we sleep, what occurs during sleep, and how much sleep is needed at different life stages, the central conclusion remains consistent: quality sleep is essential, and understanding the factors that contribute to it is vital.

To make progress toward the SDG of good health and well-being, individuals must develop personal rules and adopt a disciplined approach to sleep. If we are already leading a sustainable lifestyle as part of our daily routine, achieving quality sleep becomes significantly easier.

Here are some approaches that contribute to a sustainable lifestyle and, in turn, improve sleep quality:

1. Decluttering the mind:
Keeping the mind free—or at least less burdened—during bedtime can lead to more peaceful sleep. Practicing mindfulness, journaling, or simply slowing down our thoughts can help quiet the mind.

2. Understanding life and letting go:
It is essential to recognize what is within our control and what is not. Developing the clarity to distinguish between the two helps us release the emotional weight of things we cannot control, reducing mental agitation and aiding better sleep.

3. Less is more:
As the *Bhagavad Gita* reminds us, excessive attachment to material possessions can intensify the fear of loss and death. By embracing minimalism and stepping away from material and financial excess, we can reduce unnecessary stress and anxiety—common causes of poor sleep.

Let us try to integrate these practices into our daily lives and observe the positive impact they have on our sleep quality.

Amish Community of United States

N. Karthikeyan

Looking for a Radical, Real-Life Model of Sustainability? Meet the Amish.

If you think sustainable living is all about solar panels, eco-apps, and carbon credits, it's time to challenge your assumptions.

The Amish community in the United States—largely invisible in mainstream discourse—has quietly built one of the most *authentically sustainable* lifestyles in the modern world. And they've done it not through technology, but through values: humility, community, and a deep reverence for the land.

Imagine a society where:

- **Ploughing is still done by horse**, preserving soil health and cutting fossil fuel use to zero.
- **Pesticides and synthetic fertilizers are shunned**, and instead, natural cycles of fertility are honored using compost, crop rotation, and polyculture.
- **Homes function without electricity**, yet communities thrive—without digital distractions, consumer debt, or burnout.
- **Healthcare is based on herbs, massage, and time-tested remedies**, with elders and family at the center of care.
- **Every barn is built by neighbors coming together**—not because they're paid, but because they believe in mutual aid.

And perhaps most radical of all: the Amish *choose* to say no to most modern technologies—not out of ignorance, but after carefully asking, "Will this strengthen or weaken our family and community?" That alone is a revolutionary question in an age of blind acceleration.

Their education is just as intentional: children learn carpentry, farming, homemaking, and two languages (English and Pennsylvania Dutch), all before the eighth grade. Schooling isn't about upward mobility—it's about cultural continuity and self-sufficiency.

Underlying all of this is a spiritual ethic: the Earth is a gift, not a resource to be exploited. Sustainability, for the Amish, isn't a trend or a policy target—it's a sacred duty.

If you are serious about learning how to live simply, with dignity, resilience, and care for the Earth, *do not overlook the Amish*. They are not a relic of the past—they may be one of the clearest windows into the future we desperately need.

Know more about Amish Community: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B9He5DVePvk (Retrieved on 16 May 2025)

Zero waste Packing Innovation

Dr. A. Madhan Kumar

ASARAMOMONA

- What can we **add** to an object to improve it?
- What can we **subtract** from it without damaging it?
- What **aspec**t or component can we alter?
- Can we **rearrange** its components?
- How can we **adapt** the object for other uses?
- Can we **magnify** the object greatly?
- What could be the **opposite** of the object (that is, what object would have opposite properties)?
- Can we **minify** or miniaturise the object?
- Does the **object** have other uses than the present one?
- Are there **new** ways of utilising the object?
- Are there **alternative** ways of producing the object?

Reusable Coconut Shell Bowl – A Zero-Waste Innovation

Coconut shells are often discarded as waste in markets, households, or tender coconut stalls. But with a little creativity and sustainable thinking, this **natural waste** can be **upcycled into beautiful, durable, and eco-friendly bowls**—used in homes, cafes, and even luxury resorts.

What can we add to an object to improve it?

- Add a base stand to make it stable for serving food.
- Add a natural polish (like linseed oil) to waterproof the shell and give it a shiny finish.
- Add a bamboo or jute handle to turn it into a scoop or ladle.

What can we subtract or delete from it without damaging it?

- Remove the hard inner husk lining to smoothen the inside surface.
- Remove sharp edges to make it safe to handle and wash.

What aspect or component can we alter?

- **Change the shape** by sanding or carving the edges (oval, leaf-shaped).
- **Add artistic etching** or natural dyes to make it more aesthetic.
- **Create a lid or cover** for storage use.

Can we rearrange its components?

- Combine **half-shells of different sizes** to make stackable containers.
- Attach multiple shells into **a hanging planter or decorative mobile**.

How can we adapt the object for uses other than the present one?

- Use it as a **candle holder**, **jewelry tray**, **soap dish**, or **eco-friendly gift box**.
- Convert it into **bird feeders or plant pots**.

Can we magnify the object greatly?

- Create **giant coconut-shell installations** for art or public awareness exhibits on waste.
- Make a **large community serving bowl** from joined shells for feasts.

What could be the opposite of the object?

- A **disposable plastic bowl** (non-biodegradable, mass-produced, uniform).
- The coconut bowl represents the opposite: **biodegradable, handmade, and unique**.

Can we miniaturise the object?

- Turn it into **tiny condiment bowls**, **seed trays**, or **toy kitchenware** for children.
- Make **portable travel-size bowls** with foldable or nesting design.

Does the object have other uses than the present one?

  - **Crafts** (painting kits for kids)
  - **Rituals** (in temples or homes for offerings)
  - **Storage** (coins, buttons, spices)

Are there new ways of utilising the object?

- Partner with **artisan cooperatives** to make high-end zero-waste kitchenware.
- Sell in **gift shops or eco-travel stores** with a story tag (“from waste to worth”).

Are there alternative ways of producing the object?

- Use **solar drying and polishing** instead of chemical treatment.
- Use **local tools and village skillsets** instead of machine cutting.
- Collaborate with **NGOs or SHGs (Self-Help Groups)** for local livelihoods.

Links :

i. thengacoco.comboontoon.com+4Thenga+4Thenga+4Ecoideaz+11Thenga+11Thenga+11
ii. https://coconut-shell-craft.ueniweb.com/
iii. https://www.tamakiinternational.com/portfolios/coconut-shell-products/
iv. https://www.amnotplastic.com/coconut-shell-crafts.html

REVIEW

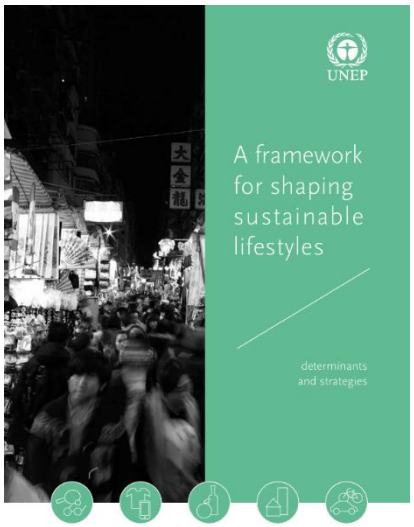
Review of 'A Framework for Shaping Sustainable Lifestyles'

N. Karthikeyan

Publisher: United Nations Environment Programme, 2018

If you're seeking not just to live more sustainably but to understand *how* and *why* our everyday choices matter—and how they are shaped—then *"A Framework for Shaping Sustainable Lifestyles"* is an essential guide.

What makes this book stand out is its clarity in showing that sustainable living is not only about reducing your carbon footprint or recycling more—it's about rethinking the systems that influence our food, housing, transport, and leisure. It invites you to look deeper: at the motivations behind consumption, the social norms we follow, the infrastructure that surrounds us, and the policies that guide our choices.



Whether you're a concerned individual, a student, a development worker, or a policymaker, this book will help you:

- Understand the **real-world barriers** to sustainable choices—and how to overcome them.
- Identify **practical actions** you can take at home, in your community, or workplace using the REDuse framework (Refuse, Effuse, Diffuse).
- Recognize how **attitudes, accessibility, and infrastructure** must align to enable lifestyle shifts.
- See sustainability as a **collective journey**, not just a personal one.

More than a manual, it's a call to action that empowers you to think critically, act strategically, and influence change around you. Grounded in research but rich with practical tools, this book helps transform sustainability from a vague ideal into a lived reality.

If you aspire to live in harmony with nature while promoting fairness and well-being for all, this book is your roadmap.

Download the book:
https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/sites/default/files/a_framework_for_shaping_sustainable_lifestyles_determinants_and_strategies_0.pdf

RESEARCH REVIEW

Review of 'The imperative for regenerative agriculture' by Christopher J. Rhodes

N. Karthikeyan

Citation: Rhodes, C. J. (2017). The imperative for regenerative agriculture. Science progress, 100(1), 80-129.

For anyone working at the intersection of sustainability, food systems, climate resilience, and resource conservation, *"The Imperative for Regenerative Agriculture"* by Christopher J. Rhodes is a must-read.

What makes this article especially valuable is its **sweeping yet deeply analytical approach** to the current agricultural crisis. Rhodes meticulously lays out the ecological and energetic limits of industrial agriculture—soil erosion, fossil fuel dependency, nutrient depletion, and biodiversity loss—before convincingly making the case for regenerative agriculture as a viable, science-backed alternative.

Unlike many texts that treat sustainability as a goal in itself, this paper argues persuasively that **sustainability alone is not enough**; what we need are *regenerative systems* that actively restore soil health, carbon balance, and ecosystem integrity. The author connects regenerative practices such as permaculture, agroecology, and circular economies to broader societal goals like climate change mitigation, water conservation, and energy transition.

Of particular interest to professionals:

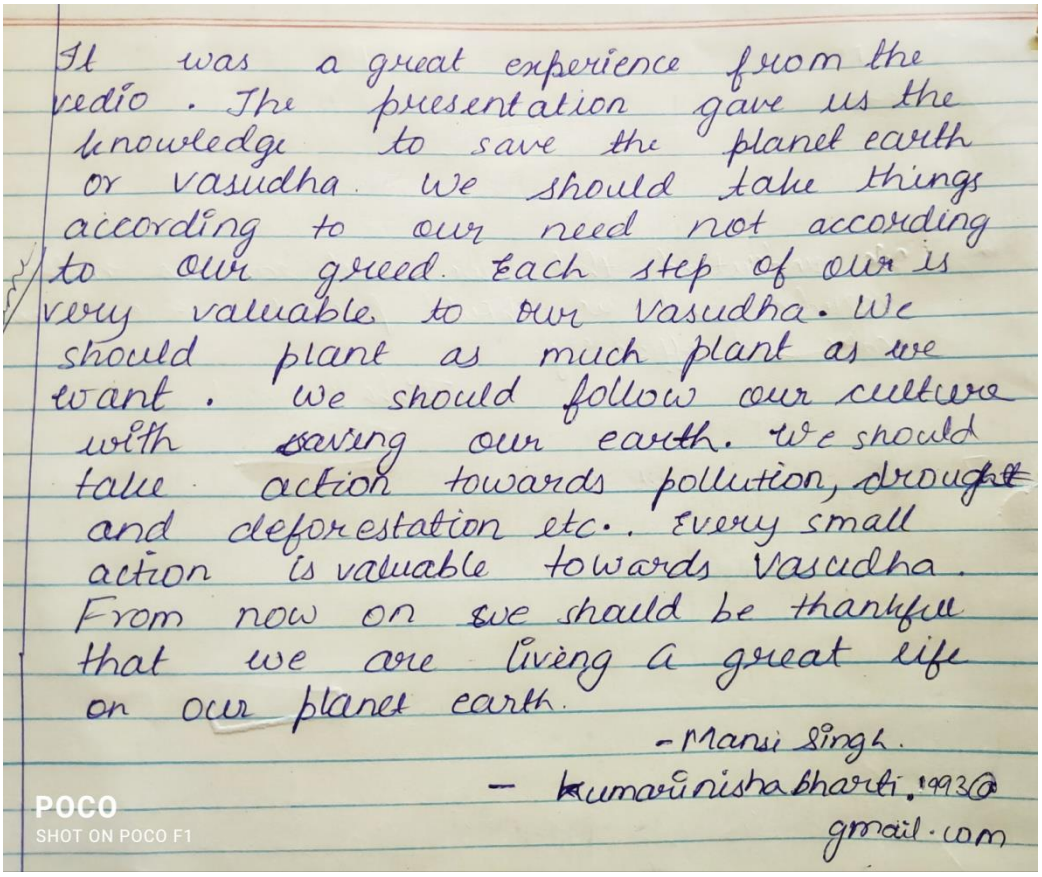
- The paper offers a **systems-level view**, linking soil, water, energy, food, and climate.
- It explores **peak oil and peak phosphorus** as critical, often-overlooked constraints.
- It underscores the **biophysical foundations** of agriculture through compelling evidence on soil organic carbon, land degradation trends, and productivity decline.
- It offers **strategic insights** into how smallholder farming, urban agriculture, and policy reform can become engines of regeneration.

More than just a critique of conventional agriculture, this is a roadmap for transformation—articulate, interdisciplinary, and grounded in both history and science. For sustainability professionals seeking to deepen their understanding or influence agricultural transition policies, this article offers both a **diagnosis and a call to action**.

About the author: Christopher J. Rhodes is a well-recognized figure in the field of sustainability, particularly in areas related to regenerative agriculture, environmental science, and energy policy. He has authored over 250 peer-reviewed academic papers, accumulating approximately 20,000 citations, reflecting his significant impact on the scientific community. Rhodes was the Corresponding Author of the "World Scientists' Warnings into Action, Local to Global" framework paper, published during the COP26 climate change conference.

TESTIMONIALS

In the month of April, 6600 visitors came to see the Vasudha exhibition. Mansi Singh from UP who visited on 3rd April wrote the following in the visitor's book.



It was a great experience from the vedio. The presentation gave us the knowledge to save the planet earth or Vasudha. We should take things according to our need not according to our greed. Each step of our is very valuable to our Vasudha. We should plant as much plant as we want. We should follow our culture with saving our earth. We should take action towards pollution, drought and deforestation etc. Every small action is valuable towards Vasudha. From now on we should be thankful that we are living a great life on our planet earth.

-Mansi Singh.

- kumarinishabharti.1993@gmail.com

POCO
SHOT ON POCO F1

Vasudhā
Enabling Sustainable Living

Let us join hands to help her in self- rejuvenation,
by living holistic life lived and preached by sages