Vasudhā Calling

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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

How China fixed its urban air pollution

G.Vasudeo

For many years, cities like Beijing were known for heavy smog. Photographs of the city often showed buildings hidden behind a grey haze. Schools closed during severe pollution days, people wore masks outdoors, and flights were sometimes delayed because of poor visibility. Air pollution had become one of the most visible environmental challenges in China's rapid economic growth.

However, over the past decade, a remarkable change has taken place. While challenges still remain, the air quality in Beijing and several other Chinese cities has improved significantly. This transformation did not happen overnight. It was the result of determined policy measures, technological changes, strict monitoring, and public participation. The story offers useful lessons for many countries struggling with urban pollution today.

Recognising the Crisis

By the early 2010s, air pollution in China had reached alarming levels. Coal-fired power plants, heavy industries, construction dust, and the rapid growth of vehicles had filled the air with fine particulate matter (PM2.5)—tiny particles that enter deep into the lungs and cause serious health problems.

Public concern grew rapidly. Citizens began sharing real-time pollution data online, and doctors warned about increasing respiratory illnesses. Recognising the seriousness of the problem, the Chinese government launched an ambitious national strategy in 2013 called the "Air Pollution Prevention and Control Action Plan." This plan marked a turning point in how China approached environmental management.

Reducing Coal Dependence

One of the most important steps was reducing the use of coal, which had long been the backbone of China's energy system. Coal burning produces large amounts of particulate matter and sulphur dioxide.

In and around Beijing, many coal-fired power plants were closed or converted to natural gas. Residential coal heating systems were also gradually replaced with cleaner fuels such as natural gas or electricity. Several surrounding provinces reduced their coal consumption and shifted toward renewable energy sources.

These changes significantly reduced the amount of smoke and pollutants entering the air.

Controlling Industrial Emissions

Industries located near major cities were required to adopt strict emission standards. Factories that failed to meet the new rules were either upgraded, relocated, or shut down.

Steel, cement, and chemical industries were particularly targeted because they were major sources of pollution. The government introduced continuous monitoring systems to track

emissions from industrial plants. Data from these systems were shared with environmental regulators, making enforcement more effective.

This shift showed that economic activity could continue, but polluting industries had to change their methods.

Cleaning Up Transportation

Another important contributor to urban air pollution was the rapid increase in vehicles. Large cities like Beijing introduced several measures to control emissions from transport.

Stricter vehicle emission standards were introduced, similar to those used in Europe. Older and highly polluting vehicles were gradually removed from the roads. Public transport systems—including metro networks, electric buses, and bicycle-sharing programmes—were expanded significantly.

China also became a global leader in electric vehicles. By encouraging electric buses, taxis, and private vehicles, the country began reducing emissions from urban transportation.

Managing Construction and Dust

Construction dust and road dust also contributed to air pollution. Cities introduced rules to control dust from construction sites, including covering materials, watering exposed soil, and improving waste management.

Urban greenery was expanded in many places to reduce dust and improve air quality. Trees and green spaces not only absorb pollutants but also create cooler and healthier urban environments.

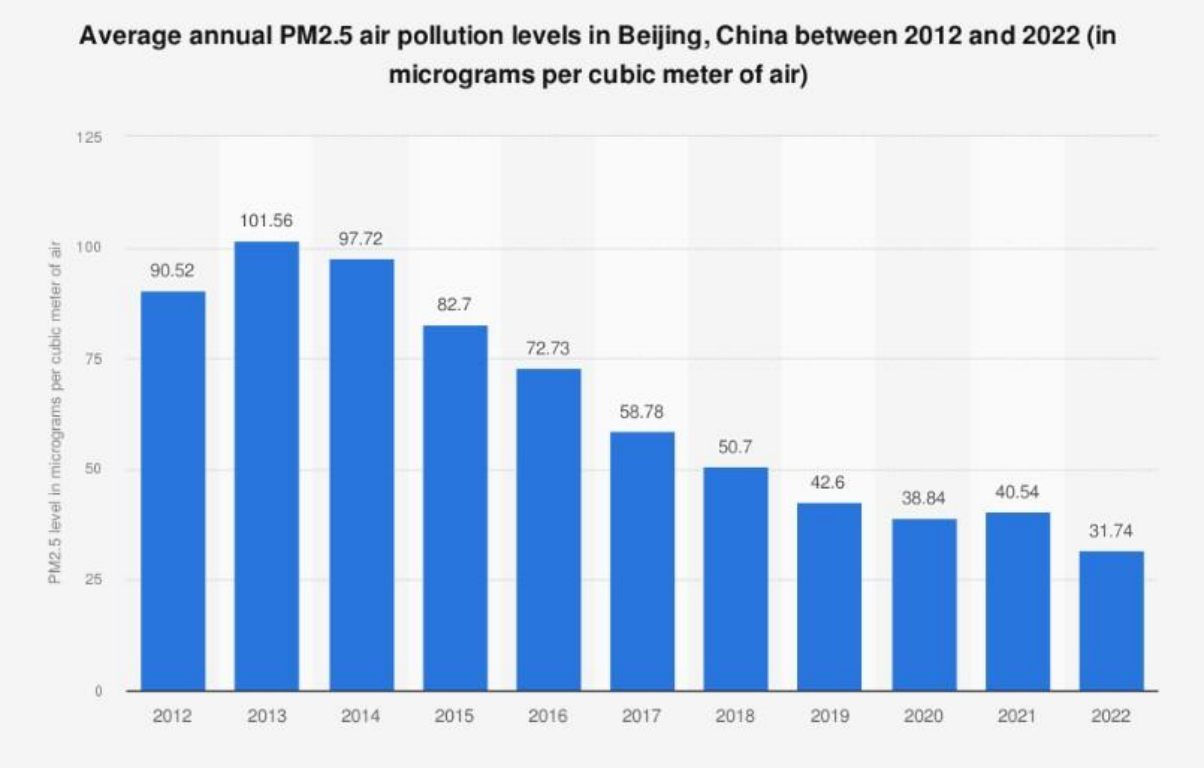
Strong Monitoring and Accountability

One of the most important changes was the introduction of real-time air quality monitoring. Hundreds of monitoring stations were installed across Chinese cities. The data from these stations were made publicly available through websites and mobile apps.

This transparency increased public awareness and pressure for improvement. Local governments were also evaluated based on environmental performance. Officials were held accountable if pollution targets were not met.

Visible Results

The results of these efforts began to appear within a few years. According to various international assessments, Beijing’s average PM2.5 levels dropped by more than 50 percent between 2013 and 2021. Similar improvements were recorded in several other Chinese cities.



While air pollution has not completely disappeared, the thick smog that once defined Beijing's skyline has become far less frequent. On many days today, the city enjoys clear blue skies that were once rare.

Lessons for the World

China's experience offers several important lessons.

First, environmental problems require clear recognition and political commitment. When governments treat pollution as a serious public health issue, meaningful change becomes possible.

Second, solutions must be comprehensive. No single measure can solve air pollution. Energy, industry, transport, and urban planning all need to be addressed together.

Third, monitoring and transparency play a crucial role. When pollution levels are measured and publicly reported, both governments and citizens become more aware and responsible.

Finally, technological solutions must be combined with changes in behaviour and policy. Cleaner fuels, public transport, and energy efficiency all contribute to healthier cities.

The story of Beijing's cleaner skies also reminds us of a deeper truth. Environmental crises are often the unintended consequences of rapid development. When growth ignores ecological limits, the damage eventually becomes visible—in polluted air, degraded land, and declining health. Yet the same societies that create these problems also have the capacity to correct them. Through awareness, innovation, and collective effort, even severe environmental challenges can be addressed.

Yoga—Path of Discipline and Surrender

Raghunandan Trikannad

Mist envelopes the foothills, while lofty Himalayan snow-peaks are in communion with the infinite sky. It is early hours of the day; stars have slowly started disappearing giving way to blushing dawn on eastern horizon. In a small cave on the shoulder of one of these peaks facing east, sits a hermit, eyes open, looking at nothing in particular, but into eternity, alert, and waiting.

As if joining him, there is alertness within and without the cave. The Sun rays enter the cave hesitantly—soothing, soft, and warm. Almost at that very instant, something happens within the hermit—a shocking recollection of his own nature, which has always been His, and all doubt, effort, and struggle dissolve like the mist outside, surrendering to Sun.

The cave is filled with Bliss of Self-discovery. He laughs at his effort and struggle to overcome what he believed to be obstacles in the search! This blissful laughter echoes through the mountains, and sky! Grace resonates as he comes out. Standing with his arms raised, gives a clarion call to humanity: 'Listen Oh ye children of Immortality, even those occupying the divine worlds.

I have known the Supreme Person Who is all radiance that shatters ignorance.'[1] Even after thousands of years, it can still be heard. The call however, is only a whisper within our hearts. Some respond, some others choose to ignore, while all others cannot even hear it amidst the outer and habitual inner noise of desires, worry, and boredom!

Spirituality is a search for order amidst chaos, wisdom amidst confusion and conflict, and eternity amidst death. A paradoxical declaration is made by all enlightened persons, that after all their effort, they have not discovered anything new, but only realised who they always are!

A genuine doubt arises, if this were true, then why all the effort? Man lives predominantly in mind. Whatever mind thinks he follows it blindly. There is a word in Sanskrit: "Manoratham—the chariot of mind!" It takes us wherever it wants! We see whatever it sees coloured by its likes and dislikes, its notions and attitudes, and its habits. Consequently, we are unable to know the truth hidden behind these mental layers.

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[1] शृण्वन्तु विश्वे अमृतस्य पुत्रा आये धामानि दिव्यानि तस्थुः ।। २.५ ।। वेदाहमेतं पुरुषं महान्तं आदित्यवर्णं तमसः परस्तात् ।
तमेव विदित्वाऽति मृत्युमेति नान्यः पन्था विद्यतेऽयनेषु ।। ३.८ ।। श्वेतश्वतारोपनिषद् ।।

Mind is an instrument for perceiving, understanding, and transacting with the external world. However, it has become our master, and we, its slaves! Understanding the fact that each one of us is unique, our Ṛṣis suggested broad paths to suit individual natures.

They discovered that activity, emotions, reason, discrimination, and will can be utilised to receive the Truth within. Sage Patanjali's Yoga Darśanam is one such path—the Path of Psychic Control as popularized by Swami Vivekananda. It uses will to gain control over the mind.

During evolution, survival made it necessary to have some instinctive traits like fear, greed, territoriality and defence mechanism—fight or flight. These traits continue in human race in its race for survival and success! But endowed with the power to think and discriminate, man can rise above these instincts and choose to become truly who he is—son of Immortality.

Perception of the external world for each one of us is unique, coloured as it is, by a set pattern of thinking, notions, upbringing, and behaviour. Consequently, such perception gets reflected in our life through our responses—more often, instinctive reactions, that have become habitual. Consequently, we are blind to the Eternal Truth.

These habits are at different levels of consciousness—body, senses, mind, intellect, and ego. Our Ṛṣis never differentiated body from mind as they knew that body is gross mind, and mind, subtle body. Habits are continual repetitions of activity over prolonged periods, at the level of body, senses, and mind and its functions.[2]

Sage Patañjali suggests a practical path to overcome these binding and blinding habits through the discipline—Anuśāsanam of Yoga.[3] It is an ancient path followed by our Ṛ ṣis, Sage Patañjali has presented it as a systematic, practical discipline. The ancient habits can be overcome by sustained and continual practice at all the levels of body, mind, intellect and ego.

It is extremely important to harmonise our life during rest of the day, with the time spent for spiritual practice. If not, the so-called practice will only be another activity without any real growth like the inability to move of a moored boat.

Through Yama-s (don't-s), disciplined inner life and Niyama-s (do-s),[4] disciplined social life, one becomes eligible to traverse this path. When mind is disturbed by speed of negative thoughts, it can be disciplined through positivity, patience, and calmness.

Body is the vehicle; its stable posture (Āsana) helps in indirectly curtailing the mind. Breathing changes according to the states of mind. When excited it is shallow and fast; when calm it is deep and slow. Disciplining it through Prāṇāyāma, helps in making the mind introvertish (Aṅtarmukhi) which in turn, helps to bring senses under control (Pratyāhāra). All distractions are eliminated, for the mind to achieve single pointedness (Dhāraṇā). Nature of the mind is such, that it is difficult for it to sustain the effort continuously. A wonderful attitude of 'Let-Go' is introduced by the sage.

There is an inherent rhythm in the Existence from the macrocosmic level of galaxies to the subatomic level of basic fundamental particles. Even our body has its own rhythms: rhythms of heart that constantly and continually beat throughout our life; so also, respiratory, circulatory, digestive, endocrine, and nervous systems.

Most of these function in tune with the basic rhythm of the Existence. We fall out of this rhythm when we deviate from the basic disciplines as explained in Yama and Niyama. Slowly through practice we understand how we are but infinitesimal and almost insignificant parts of this Existence.

The very nature of Existence is to nurture and care. The acceptance in the Eternal Existence—Divinity, or Reality, leads us to the sense of complete surrender to IT! Sage Patañjali mentions persistent practice—Abhyāsa, and commitment—Vairāgya, as integral parts of the discipline of Yoga.[5] He is aware that continuous practice is difficult so he introduces Īśvarapraṇidhāna—

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[2] Collection and sifting the sense data, analysis and discrimination, remembering, and taking responsibility.

[3] अथ योग अनुशासनम् ।।१.१ ।।

[4] अहिंसासत्यास्तेयब्रह्मचर्यापरिग्रहा यमाः।शौचसंतोषतपःस्वाध्यायेश्वरप्रणिधानानि नियमाः।। २.३०,३२।।

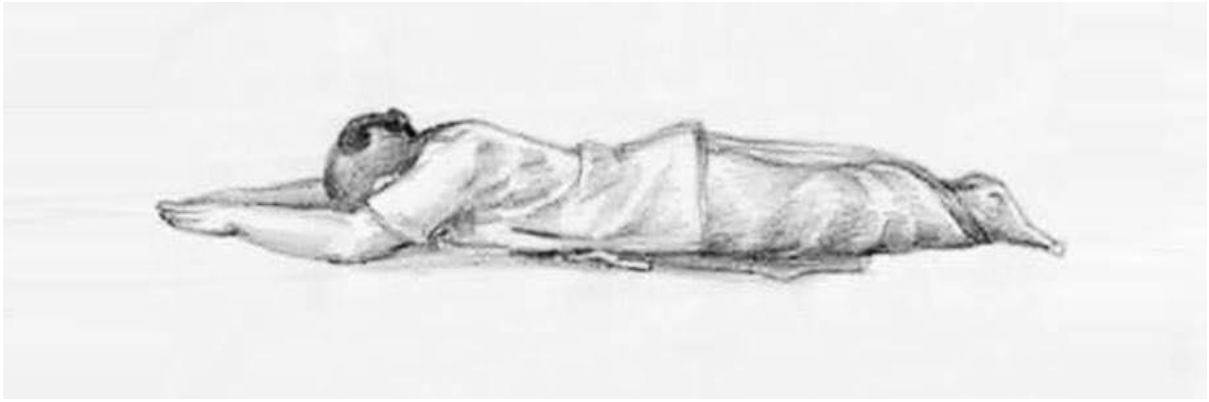
[5] अभ्यास वैराग्याभ्यां तन्निरोधः ।।१.१२ ।। *Vairāgya* can also to be committed to the Goal.

Surrender to the Divine.[6] There are suggestions of this 'Let-Go' in some places. The aphorism on Āsana, says 'The posture is mastered by relaxation of effort, and contemplation on the Endless.'[7]

When the effort in Dhāraṇā, is relaxed the mind settles into Dhyāna. The strain of effort reduces when we surrender the activity to a higher power. We become like children without worry, full of trust in presence of caring parents.

While standing on a sea shore, or looking at the sky, there is relaxation and calmness as the mind identifies with the vastness—nay, the mind becomes expansive and vast. Even when pestered by worry, we naturally get an auto suggestion of hope, "It will be alright" which is a spontaneous act of Letting-Go!

Yoga is a Path of discipline involving constant and persistent practice. The act of surrendering, helps one to avoid strain and more importantly, maintain the mind in a non-involved state of detachment, which is another method of elevating the mind.



Before the holy pilgrimage to Sabari Mala, the pilgrims observe discipline for forty days. The climb to the holy shrine itself is strenuous. All along this period of pilgrimage, every pilgrim—who calls himself and other pilgrims as Swami—one having control over himself, a Maṅtra is chanted "Swāmiye Śaraṇam Aiyyappa" which means Surrender to Lord Aiyyappa! Lakhs of people successfully undertake this pilgrimage. May be, this attitude of surrender helps them to complete this arduous penance. Though it starts with a resolve of will to take up this discipline, and continues with a lot of effort, the completion is contributed by surrender! Similarly, every ritual or chanting concludes with "Īśwarārpaṇam Astu—May this be offered to the Lord!"

Existence is the Parent of this creation, from Whom it manifests, in Whom it lives, and finally in Whom it merges.[8] It is natural for us, who call ourselves evolved, and cultured, to get attracted to It, to seek It—which is like a snow peak of Himalayas. One may aspire to scale It by putting utmost disciplined effort, with an attitude of surrender to the Existence.

Only this Peak is not external, but very much within!

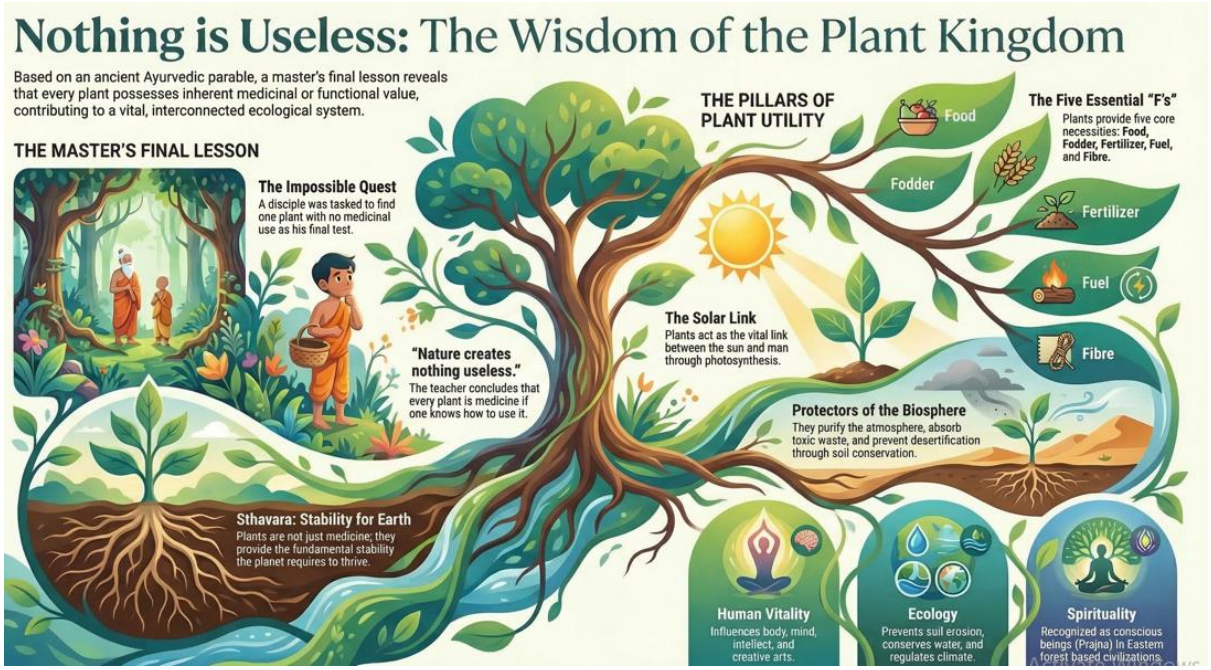
[6] ईश्वरप्रणिधानाद्वा ।।१.२३ ।।

[7] प्रयत्नशैथिल्यानन्तसमापत्तिभ्याम् ।।२.४७ ।।

[8] यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते । येन जातानि जीवन्ति । यत् प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्ति ।तद्विजिज्ञासस्व ।तद् ब्रह्मेति ।।तैत्तिरीयोपनिषद् ३.१ ।।

Noting is Useless: The Wisdom of the Plant Kingdom

N. Krishnamoorti



A renowned **Ayurveda Acharya** of Pataliputra trained his brightest disciple in the medicinal uses of plants for twelve years. At the end of his studies, the teacher gave him a final test.

"Search every garden, grove, forest, and field in Pataliputra," he said, "and bring me a plant that has **no medicinal use**. That will be your *Guru Dakshina*."

The disciple searched all day. He examined leaves, bark, roots, flowers, stems, and fruits. Every plant had some healing value—some for humans, some for animals, some even for other plants.

At dusk he returned and said, "Master, I failed. I could not find a single useless plant."

The Acharya smiled. "Then you have passed. Nature creates nothing useless. Every plant is medicine—if one knows how to use it. The same is true for people and words.

Reflect for Better quality of life:

- Suppose you were the disciple. How would you **document and classify** the usefulness of plants you discovered during the search?
- How can communities revive traditional practices like **herbal knowledge and sacred groves** to protect biodiversity today?
- What lessons does this story offer for solving modern problems such as **climate change, loss of biodiversity, and health issues**?
- What would happen to human life if even a **few key plant species disappeared** from the earth?

BEST PRACTICE

Subhash Palekar's Zero Budget Natural Farming

A. Madhan Kumar

Core Idea: Farming should depend on **local natural resources**, not external chemical inputs.

1. Farm Inputs (Low Cost)

- **Desi cow dung:** ~10 kg per acre
- **Cow urine:** ~5–10 liters per acre
- **Jaggery:** 1–2 kg
- **Pulse flour (besan):** 1–2 kg
- **Handful of local soil**
  These are mixed with water to prepare **Jeevamrutha**, a microbial solution for soil fertility.

2. Four Key Principles

1. **Beejamrutha** – Natural seed treatment using cow dung, urine, lime, and soil to prevent disease.
2. **Jeevamrutha** – Liquid microbial fertilizer applied to soil every 15 days.
3. **Mulching (Acchadana)** – Cover soil with crop residues or leaves to retain moisture and improve soil life.
4. **Whapasa** – Maintain soil moisture–air balance; avoid excessive irrigation.

3. Crop Diversity

- Use **mixed cropping and intercropping** (e.g., cereals + pulses + vegetables).
- Avoid monoculture to maintain biodiversity and pest control.

4. Water Use

- Reduce irrigation by **30–50%** through mulching and soil moisture conservation.

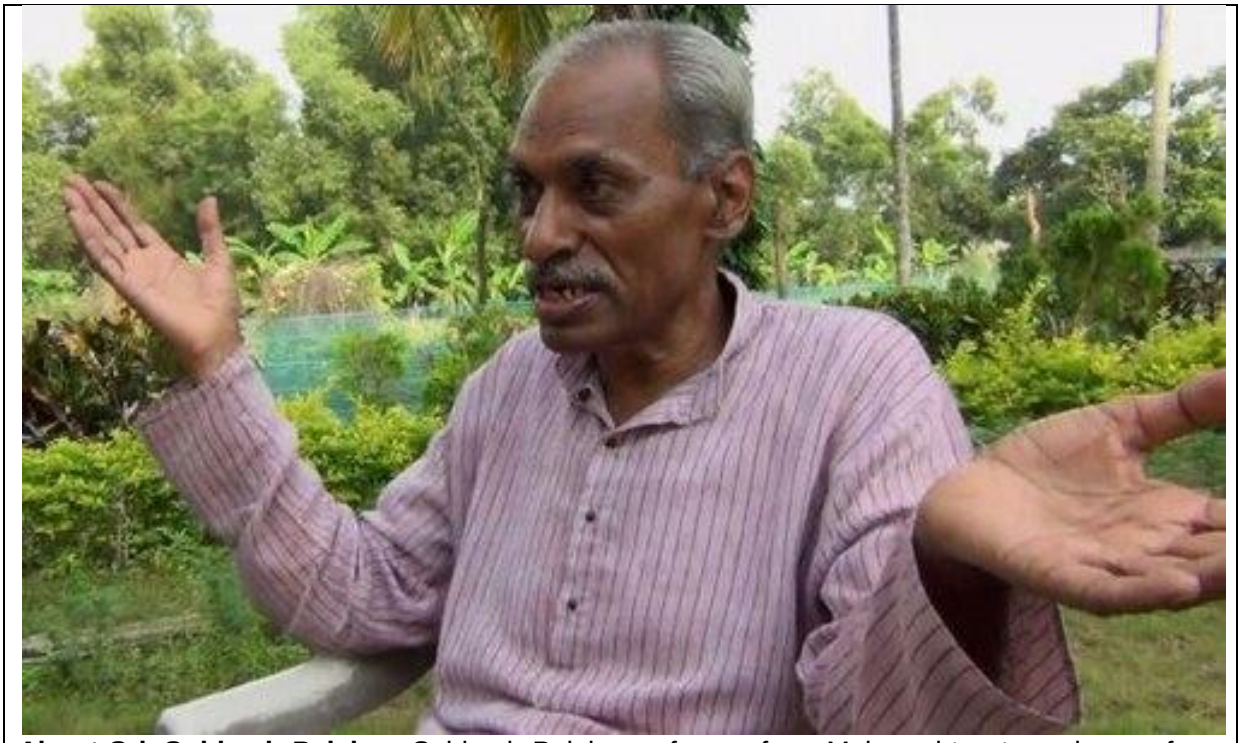
5. Economic Impact

- Farming cost reduced by **70–90%** because no chemical fertilizers or pesticides are purchased.
- Suitable for **small farmers with 1–2 acres**.

6. Ecological Benefits

- Restores **soil microorganisms**
- Improves **soil carbon and fertility**
- Reduces **chemical pollution and climate impact**

Practical Lesson: Use local biological resources, maintain biodiversity, protect soil life, and reduce external dependence—this makes farming sustainable for generations.



About Sri. Subhash Palekar: Subhash Palekar, a farmer from Maharashtra, turned away from chemical farming after seeing its damage to soil and farmers' livelihoods. Drawing on traditional ecological knowledge, he developed **Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF)**, which uses cow dung, cow urine, local microbes, mulching, and crop diversity instead of chemicals. Practicing this on his own farm, he has trained farmers across India. His approach reduces costs, conserves water, restores soil biodiversity, and promotes sustainable agriculture for future generations. His principle is simple: **nature already contains everything needed for healthy crops**.

Growing Forests in the Desert with One Litre of Water: Sundaram Verma

N. Karthikeyan

In the dry, sandy lands of Daanta village in Sikar district, Rajasthan, where water is scarce and the soil is unforgiving, one man has quietly shown that nature can be restored with patience, respect, and a little ingenuity. His name is Sundaram Verma, a farmer turned environmentalist who has planted more than 60,000 trees in one of India's harshest climates — and done so with a method that uses as little as one litre of water per tree.

Sundaram Verma was born in 1950 into a farming family in Daanta. Life in his village revolved around the land, which struggled under long dry seasons and unpredictable rainfall. From an early age, Verma learned to read the soil, understand seasons, and respect every drop of water. These formative years framed his life's work — a work rooted in the belief that scarcity does not mean surrender, but rather invites creativity.

After completing his graduation in 1972, he chose to work on the land rather than take a government job. Verma continued to learn, studying dry land farming at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute in New Delhi through the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) programme. Over time, he developed a low-water technique that enables trees to survive and grow in the arid soil of Rajasthan with minimal irrigation.

At the heart of his method is an understanding of soil moisture. During the monsoon, Verma ploughs the land deeply to allow rainwater to seep into the ground rather than run off. He then plants saplings with deep roots that can tap into this stored moisture. Each sapling receives only about one litre of water at planting — after that, it survives on the natural moisture stored beneath the soil.

This simple but powerful method has been refined over more than three decades. Since around 1985, Verma has planted over 60,000 trees that have survived and grown in conditions where many species struggle to survive. His work has saved millions of litres of water and demonstrated that drylands can become greener without heavy irrigation or expensive technology.

Sundaram Verma's work is significant not only for the number of trees he has planted but also for its impact on people. Farmers from across Rajasthan and other states visit his farm to learn the "one-litre water" technique. Many have adopted these methods in their own fields, leading to increased tree cover, improved soil health, and greater resilience against drought. For many farmers, Verma's guidance has transformed despair into hope.

Verma's work has also extended into seed conservation and crop innovation. Over the years, he has collected and preserved more than 700 varieties of native seeds from 15 major crops adapted to dry conditions. These seeds help farmers grow crops that require less water and are more resilient to erratic rainfall, supporting income and food security in challenging environments.

Despite his enormous contribution, Sundaram Verma's life remains humble and grounded. He continues to live in Daanta village, working alongside his wife Bhagwati Devi, who herself has developed techniques for termite control that have won recognition, and his sons and daughters-in-law, who help with seed monitoring and farm management.

Grassroots innovator

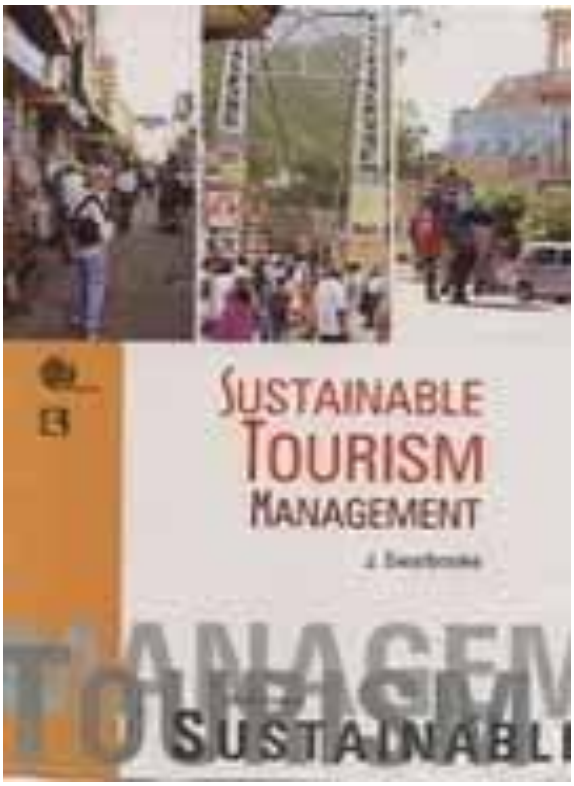
In recognition of his lifelong contribution to water conservation, dry land agro-forestry, and sustainable farming, the Government of India honoured Sundaram Verma with the Padma Shri in 2020, one of the nation's highest civilian awards. He was also awarded a PhD by Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule University in recognition of his field-based contributions to agriculture and sustainability.

Through his work, Verma reminds us that sustainability does not always come from high technology or large budgets. Sometimes, it begins with observing nature carefully, understanding its rhythms, and working *with* it rather than against it. His approach reflects deep respect for natural limits, soil health, and water conservation — lessons that are vital in an era of climate uncertainty.

Sundaram Verma's story is not just about trees. It is about *possibility* — the possibility that even in the driest lands, life can thrive when we listen to the land, respect its limits, and nurture it with care.

Sustainable Tourism Management (John Swarbrooke, 2010)

Ajit Sharad Barje



With government spending heavily on road and airport infrastructure, tourism in India is experiencing a boom, driven primarily by high-volume domestic travel. On one side it helps create employment whereas on the other it is creating unprecedented pressure on nature and environment. This is exactly where the book 'Sustainable Tourism Management' comes in place. It is one of the relevant resources to address this very issue.

Authored by John Swarbrooke, a world-renowned consultant and academician in sustainable tourism, this book is a detailed guide to understanding how tourism can be managed in a way that supports people, protects the environment, and improves local economies. The book explains what sustainable tourism means, why it is important, and how it can be put into practice by planners, businesses, governments, and local communities. The book covers both the theory and the real-world application of sustainable tourism management.

The book begins by explaining what sustainable tourism really is. It is not just about "green travel" or "eco-tourism". Instead, sustainable tourism means planning and managing tourism so that it can continue for many years without harming nature, local culture, or local people's quality of life. Swarbrooke explains that sustainable tourism must balance three key areas: environmental protection, economic growth, and social well-being. All three are equally important. If one is ignored, the whole idea of sustainability fails.

To explain these ideas more clearly, the book is divided into several main parts. The first part introduces the idea of sustainability, including its background in sustainable development and how that idea applies to tourism. Swarbrooke explains that sustainable tourism has many different meanings around the world, so understanding these differences is important before we can manage it effectively.

The next part of the book discusses in depth, the three key areas of sustainable tourism as mentioned above. The environmental dimension focuses on protecting natural resources such as forests, water, and wildlife. Tourism must not destroy the very places that attract visitors. The economic dimension looks at how tourism can support local economies, create jobs, and distribute income fairly rather than only benefitting large international companies. The social dimension covers how tourism affects the lives, cultures, and traditions of local people. It emphasises that the tourism should respect and support local cultures and communities rather than harming them.

Another important section explains the key actors in sustainable tourism. These include governments, businesses, voluntary organizations, local communities, the media, and tourists themselves. Swarbrooke shows that sustainable tourism cannot happen unless all these groups work together.

The book also explores how sustainable tourism must be planned differently in different geographical settings. For example, coastal areas, rural villages, and cities all face different challenges and opportunities when it comes to sustainable tourism. Developing countries also have different needs compared to wealthier nations. Swarbrooke emphasizes that there is no one “best way” to do sustainable tourism; each destination must find solutions that suit its own environment, economy, and culture.

The final part of the book examines how sustainability applies to different sectors of the tourism industry. These include visitor attractions, tour operators, transport services and hotels & hospitality. The author discusses how sustainability principles can be applied in each of these areas, using examples from around the world to show best practices.

At the end, Swarbrooke stresses that sustainability is not just a goal but a continuing process requiring ongoing effort, innovation, and cooperation among all stakeholders. In short, the book is a comprehensive guide that helps readers understand both the ideas behind sustainable tourism and how these ideas can be applied in real life not only for people engaged in the industry but every individual who travels!

Book title: Sustainable Tourism Management

Author – John Swarbrooke I Publisher – Rawat Publishers

First Edition - 2010 I Price : Rs.1300.00 I Pages : 371

“Ajit is a freelance writer. He, along with his wife Manisha, runs Carvi Resource Library & Study Centre and Dnyanjagar Bookstore at Nashik, Maharashtra.”

Film: Modern Times (Charlie Chaplin, 1936)

N. Karthikeyan

Charlie Chaplin's Modern Times is often remembered as a classic comedy. Yet behind its humour lies a powerful critique of industrialisation, consumerism, and the loss of human dignity in a machine-driven world. Even though the film was made in 1936, its message feels strikingly relevant today, when societies everywhere struggle with the pressures of endless production, consumption, and economic growth.

Chaplin plays his famous character, the Tramp, an ordinary worker trying to survive in a rapidly industrialising society. Factories run at high speed, machines dominate the workplace, and workers are treated like small parts of a giant system. The film shows how industrial progress, when driven only by efficiency and profit, can ignore human wellbeing and the natural rhythm of life.

One of the most memorable scenes occurs in the factory assembly line. Chaplin's character is assigned a simple task: tightening bolts on a conveyor belt. The belt moves faster and faster, and he struggles to keep up. Soon, his movements become mechanical. Even during a break, his hands continue to twist imaginary bolts. Eventually he loses control and creates chaos across the factory floor.

This scene is humorous, but it also sends a clear message. When work becomes repetitive and purely mechanical, humans begin to behave like machines. Instead of technology serving people, people begin to serve technology. The scene raises an important question: *What happens to human creativity, dignity, and happiness in such a system?*

Another famous scene shows Chaplin being used in a "feeding machine" experiment. The machine is designed to feed workers automatically so they do not have to stop working for lunch. As the machine spins, food splashes everywhere and Chaplin becomes the unwilling victim of the experiment.

Through this absurd invention, Chaplin criticises a system obsessed with productivity at any cost. Even eating—a natural and social human activity—is reduced to a mechanical function. In sustainable lifestyle thinking, this scene reminds us that efficiency should not destroy the basic human experiences that give life meaning.

The film also shows the social consequences of industrialisation. Workers lose jobs when machines replace them. Poverty spreads, and ordinary people struggle to survive. Chaplin meets a young woman who steals food to feed her hungry family. Together they try to build a simple life, dreaming of a small home, food, and dignity. Their dream is modest, yet deeply meaningful.

In contrast to the harsh industrial world, Chaplin subtly suggests the value of simple living. The characters long for a life with stability, community, and basic needs met. This idea connects closely with the principles of sustainable lifestyles: living within limits, valuing human relationships, and ensuring that technology serves life rather than dominating it.

Even today, many of Chaplin's concerns remain relevant. Modern societies often celebrate endless production, fast consumption, and constant economic growth. Yet these trends also create stress, inequality, environmental damage, and a loss of balance between work and life. Through humour and compassion, *Modern Times* invites us to reflect on whether progress should be measured only by machines and productivity, or by human wellbeing and harmony with nature.

Despite its serious themes, the film ends with hope. In the final scene, Chaplin and the young woman walk down an open road together, uncertain about the future but determined to keep moving forward. The message is simple and uplifting: no matter how difficult the system becomes, human courage and companionship can guide us toward a better life.

For readers interested in sustainable living, *Modern Times* is not just an old film—it is a thoughtful reminder to question systems that place machines and consumption above people and nature.

The film is widely available online and can be watched free on YouTube, as well as on several classic film streaming platforms. Watching it today is both entertaining and thought-provoking—and may inspire us to rethink what true progress really means.

Changing Behaviour for Sustainable Development (SDG Academy / edX)-Online course

Many people today understand that sustainable living is essential for the future of our planet. We talk about saving energy, reducing waste, and protecting nature. Yet an important question remains: why is it often difficult for people to change their habits and behaviour?

To explore this question, the SDG Academy offers an online course titled “Changing Behaviour for Sustainable Development,” available on the edX platform. The course helps learners understand how human behaviour influences environmental and social outcomes, and how behavioural science can support the transition toward more sustainable lifestyles.

Developed by experts from the Monash Sustainable Development Institute, the course explains the factors that shape human actions—such as habits, social norms, incentives, and cultural influences. It shows that sustainability challenges are not only technological or economic issues; they are also deeply connected to how people think, decide, and act in their everyday lives.

Through a series of engaging modules, participants learn how to identify behaviours that contribute to problems like excessive consumption, energy waste, or unsustainable food habits. The course also introduces practical tools to encourage positive change—whether at the level of individuals, communities, or public policy.

One of the key messages of the programme is that small changes in behaviour can lead to large collective impacts. When individuals adopt responsible practices, they influence others and gradually shift social norms toward sustainability.

The course online, and self-paced, making it accessible to learners across the world. Students, teachers, community volunteers, and sustainability enthusiasts can all benefit from this learning opportunity.

For readers of *Vasudha Calling*, this course offers a chance to understand an important dimension of sustainable living: changing behaviour—our own and that of the communities around us. Those interested can enrol through the edX platform and begin their learning journey toward building a more sustainable future.

TESTIMONIALS

In the month of February 14,300 visitors visited the Vasudha exhibition.

Comments on Vasudha

The presentation clearly highlights the challenges before us. We must learn from this moment and take decisive corrective action. As Mother Earth moves steadily toward crisis, the time to act responsibly and restore balance is now.

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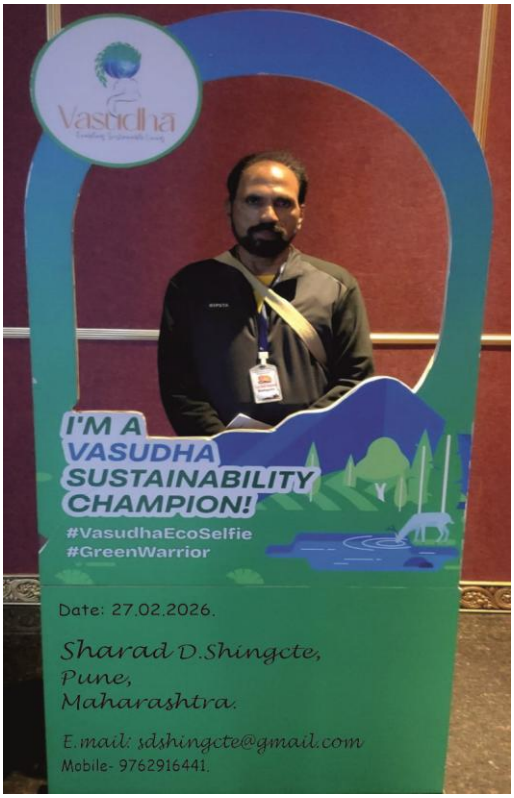

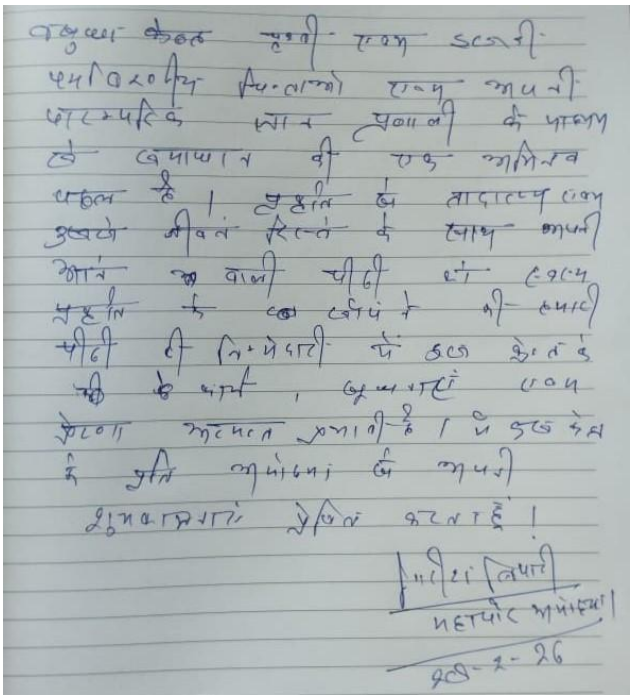

Mayor of Ayodhya, Shri.Girishpathi Tripathi visited Vasudha on 28th February 2026 and appreciated the digital exhibition by writing comments in Hindi.