

Vasudhā Calling

A newsletter for enabling sustainable living

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Sustainable Food Systems – For Us and Mother Earth

T. Valliappan

Food is not just something we eat. It is part of our culture, our traditions, and our identity. From ancient times, human societies have developed food systems that suit their environment and way of life. Over generations, people learned what to grow, how to grow, and how to eat. This knowledge was passed on as tradition.



In the Indian context, food has always been seen as something sacred. The word *Aahar* does not mean only physical food. It includes everything we take in through our senses. Food nourishes not just the body, but also the mind. Ancient texts tell us that the quality of food influences our thoughts and behaviour. Pure food leads to a pure mind.

Food is also deeply connected to nature. It depends on soil, water, air, sunlight, and time. All these elements work together to produce food. That is why food is often considered divine. It is not just a product. It is a gift of nature.

However, today the global food system is under stress. Millions of people across the world still suffer from hunger and malnutrition. At the same time, many people suffer from obesity and lifestyle diseases. This shows that the problem is not only about production, but also about distribution and consumption.

Even today, a large number of people cannot afford a healthy diet. Climate change, conflicts, and economic inequality are making the situation worse. Food prices are rising. Supply chains are getting disrupted. The global food system is becoming fragile.

Climate change is another major concern. Changes in temperature and rainfall are affecting crop yields. Extreme weather events like floods and droughts are becoming more frequent. These changes reduce food production and affect farmers the most.



India presents a mixed picture. On one hand, food grain production has increased significantly over the years. On the other hand, malnutrition is still a serious issue. Many children are underweight or stunted. This shows that increasing production alone is not enough. We need better access to nutritious food.

Agriculture also contributes to environmental problems. Excessive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides has damaged soil health. Groundwater levels are falling. Biodiversity is declining. These challenges make the current food system unsustainable.

One of the major turning points in Indian agriculture was the Green Revolution. It increased food production. But it also led to overuse of chemicals, loss of traditional crops, and depletion of natural resources. Many traditional crops like millets were replaced by wheat and rice. Over time, this reduced nutritional diversity in our diets.

Biodiversity loss is another serious issue. Thousands of traditional crop varieties have disappeared. These varieties were well adapted to local conditions. They were also rich in nutrients. Losing them means losing valuable knowledge and resilience.

Millets are a good example. They are nutritious, require less water, and can grow in dry conditions. Today, there is renewed interest in millets because of their health and environmental benefits. They show us that traditional crops can play a key role in sustainable food systems.

Water is another critical factor. Agriculture uses a large amount of groundwater. In many parts of India, groundwater levels are falling rapidly. This affects both farming and drinking water availability. Sustainable water use is essential for future food security.

To address these challenges, the world has adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). One of the key goals is to end hunger and promote sustainable agriculture. This requires a major shift in how we produce, distribute, and consume food.

A sustainable food system must balance three aspects:

- **Economic** – farmers should earn a fair income

- **Social** – everyone should have access to nutritious food
- **Environmental** – farming should protect soil, water, and biodiversity

Traditional farming systems offer valuable lessons. Farmers used crop rotation, natural inputs, and local knowledge. These practices maintained soil fertility and ecological balance. Today, the world is again looking at such approaches.

Natural farming, organic farming, and agro ecology are gaining attention. These methods reduce dependence on chemicals. They work with nature. They are more sustainable in the long run.

Government initiatives in India are also moving in this direction. Programmes on sustainable agriculture, water conservation, and climate resilience are being promoted. These efforts are important, but they need strong implementation.

At the same time, individuals also have a role to play. Sustainable food systems are not created only by policies. They are shaped by our daily choices.



We can start with simple steps:

- Eat local and seasonal food
- Support local farmers and markets
- Grow small amounts of food at home
- Avoid food waste
- Choose diverse and nutritious diets

Food waste is a major issue. A large amount of food is wasted at different stages—from farm to kitchen. This wastes resources like water, energy, and labour. Reducing food waste is one of the simplest ways to improve sustainability.

We must also develop respect for food. Food is not just a commodity. It is the result of effort, time, and natural resources. When we waste food, we waste all these.

Another important aspect is the connection between food and mind. The way food is prepared and consumed also matters. Food cooked with care and mindfulness nourishes better. This idea is deeply rooted in Indian tradition.

Modern lifestyles are changing food habits. Many people prefer processed and outside food. This affects both health and sustainability. Reconnecting with home-cooked, simple food can make a big difference.

Sustainable food systems are not just about agriculture. They are about a way of life. They require us to rethink our relationship with nature.

As Gandhiji said, change begins with the individual. Small actions, when multiplied, can create large change. Each of us can contribute by making conscious food choices.

Food connects us to the earth. It connects us to each other. It connects us to our traditions.

In Indian culture, food is often referred to as “*Annam Brahma*”—Food is divine. This idea reminds us to treat food with respect and gratitude.

Today, there is an urgent need to move towards sustainable food systems. This is not a choice. It is a necessity. The future of humanity depends on it.

If we act wisely, we can create a system that nourishes both people and the planet. A system that is fair, healthy, and sustainable.

The path is clear. We only need the will to walk on it.



S.Valliappan is an IT consultant by profession. He works in providing education to underprivileged students, strongly believes in the concept of healthy society for a healthy living and sustainable human behaviour for a better future. He can be reached valliappant1234@gmail.com



The Impeachment

Raghunandan Trikannad

Mist Atop the foothills of the blue mountains lived a tribe,
Dexterous in apiculture and floriculture, in love with nature.
Worshipping trees as gods and eagles as their brothers with same vibe,
Never knowing any exploitation and in tune with nature.



Once a trekker happened to cross his ways with one of these gentle people,
Wishing to build a bridge of friendship they shared a smile.
And the trekker became another brother of the tribe, shared his love
Till the shadows lengthened in the east, and he decided to stay on.

When the sky became a violet velvet, and the stars appeared hesitantly,
The tribal friend laughed looking at the twinkling wonders.
Asked the reason for his sudden outburst of humour,
This is what he had to say:

“There lived an old man in our tribe, weathered with wisdom.
He had, it seemed, answers for all questions and solutions for
All problems. Even medicines for all ailments had he.
Or perhaps, most of us did not have or did not try to have.

“He had a blanket which none of us could touch, for it had power
Of magic. It could create many medicines and stars every twilight.
At twilight every one of us would gather in his tent to pray,
And he would get up to look towards heaven and raise the blanket.

“At his swirl of the magic blanket at twilight, the stars appeared.
So convinced were we of the power of his blanket that,
We thought that without his swirling there could be no stars,

And there would be no starlight, and dew on the grass and doom!

“It was autumn, the days became shorter, while the nights longer.
And one morning, we do not know how, the blanket was missing.
There was panic, with women wailing and children screaming, and men
With anxiety writ on their brows, most of all the old man.

“He fretted and fumed, shouted and frowned, threatened and warned,
If we did not find the blanket by twilight, he would surely spell doom!
But we knew not how, and who had taken it or misplaced it,
For we searched every tent, tree hollow, but the blanket had vanished.

“By evening when we had accepted our fate, so did the wise old man,
A youth, our own, who went on the other side of the mountain to learn,
Appeared with a smile, and we felt he was hiding his panic behind it,
But he came near the wise-old-tent and asked us all to come and share.

“He made us all sit and to listen to the hoots and the deer.
To allow the blanket of darkness to cover us and spread its calm.
And Lo! we saw the tiny wonders, the twinkling stars appear,
As they had always done and there was joy, jubilation.



“But from the tent we heard a painful cry, a snuffle, a sigh.
When we entered to give the good news to the wise-old-man,
We found him with a dagger in his stomach, but a smile on his lips,
He told us that his time had come with the time of the blanket.
“The world goes on, even without our blankets and swirling!
The ‘I-do-ness’ is swirling, while the pride is our blanket.
When egotism and egoism are impeached, stripped off the power,
We discover our real place in this universe!

“And so, I laugh as I look at these stars.”



Shri.T.Raghuandan, a Chemical Engineer by training who also worked for Vivekananda Kendra in the formative years, managed a 10+2 Senior Secondary School in Rajasthan for thirty-one years with his wife Vasantha and has now settled down in Kerala for sadhana.



Efficiency or Absurdity?

N. Krishnamoorti



Kuppu's mother called out, "Go to the bazaar and bring half a kilogram of salt. Guests are coming, and there is none at home."

Kuppu immediately took his motorcycle, rode to the nearby bazaar, and returned within fifteen minutes. He was sweating, but visibly pleased—efficient, obedient, and proud of having acted quickly.

Professor Srinivas, who was watching, asked: "Where did your motorcycle come from?"

Kuppu replied, "It was manufactured in a town about 500 km away."

The professor continued, "And the petrol?"

Kuppu hesitated, then said, "From Arabia... around 6000 km away."

The professor paused and said: "So, to bring half a kilo of salt from a shop less than a kilometre away, you used a machine made 500 km away and fuel brought from thousands of kilometres across the world."

Kuppu's sense of achievement disappeared. He stood silent, tracing the ground with his foot.

The professor added: "This is not just your mistake. It reflects how the entire world functions today."



Shri.N.Krishnamoorti – a senior worker of Vivekananda Kendra, he is a respected thinker, philosopher, orator and prolific author of more than a hundred books in English, Tamil and Hindi



Vijay Kumar: Building a Farmer-Centred Economy at Scale

A. Madhan Kumar

From Crisis to Collective Action

When **Vijay Kumar** took charge of transforming agriculture in Andhra Pradesh, the situation was already fragile. Farmers were locked into a cycle of **high input costs, mounting debt, and declining soil health**. The response was not another subsidy or technology push, but a structural shift—placing farmers and communities at the centre of the solution.



Scaling Through Networks, Not Inputs

Under the Andhra Pradesh Community Managed Natural Farming (APCNF) initiative, the model expanded rapidly:

- **Over 6 million farmers targeted for transition**
- **More than 1 million farmers already practicing natural farming**
- Spread across **thousands of villages** through women-led self-help groups

Instead of treating farmers as individual units, the programme-built **village-level collectives**. Knowledge was shared locally, risks were distributed, and adoption became a **social process rather than an individual gamble**.

A Different Kind of Scale

Unlike market-driven models, this approach does not rely on premium pricing or branding. Its strength lies in **local resource use, collective learning, and ecological balance**.

The Real Proposition



Vijay Kumar's work demonstrates a critical shift: Sustainable agriculture at scale is not about maximizing output, but about **minimizing vulnerability**.

It may not create overnight prosperity, but it builds something more durable—**resilient, self-reliant rural economies**.

(Source : https://apcnf.in/?utm_source=chatgpt.com&https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQVQsCqUz_A&t=60s)



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Crystal Waters Eco Village – Living with Nature, Not Against It

N. Karthikeyan

In a world where modern life is moving faster and becoming more disconnected from nature, there are a few places that quietly show another way of living. One such place is Crystal Waters Eco Village in Australia—a community that has been practicing sustainable living for more than three decades.



Crystal Waters is located in the countryside of Queensland, spread across nearly 640 acres of natural bush land at the headwaters of the Mary River. It was established in 1987 and is known as the world's first permaculture village, created to demonstrate how humans can live in harmony with nature.

The village is home to around 250 people from different backgrounds and cultures, living together with a shared understanding—respect the land, respect nature, and respect each other. There is no rigid belief system. What binds the community is a common commitment to simple and sustainable living.

Living with the Land

One of the most striking features of Crystal Waters is how the land is used. Only a small portion is privately owned. Nearly 80% of the land is held in common, used for farming, forests, and wildlife protection. This ensures that nature is not fragmented but preserved as a living system.

The village is also recognised as a wildlife sanctuary, where animals like kangaroos, wallabies, birds, and reptiles live freely alongside people. Even pets like cats and dogs are not allowed, so that native wildlife can thrive undisturbed.

Homes here are built using ecological principles. Many use solar energy, rainwater harvesting, and natural materials. Food is grown locally using permaculture methods. Waste is reused. Water is conserved. Every aspect of life is designed to reduce impact on the environment.



There are also music events, community gatherings, and shared activities that bring people together regularly. A small café, bakery, and common spaces serve as meeting points where conversations and ideas flow freely.

This balance between individual space and community life is one of the strengths of the eco village.

A Different Idea of Development

Crystal Waters challenge the idea that development must mean more consumption, more construction, and more speed. Here, development means something different—better relationships, healthier ecosystems, and meaningful living.

Even in a region affected by drought, the village has created systems of water harvesting and land regeneration, turning dry land into a productive and living landscape.

The community shows that sustainability is not about sacrifice. It is about living wisely within limits.

A Message for All of Us

Crystal Waters is not just a village in Australia. It is a reminder. It shows that another way of living is possible—one that is simple, balanced, and respectful of nature.

For the *Vasudha* community, it offers an important lesson: sustainable living does not begin with big technology or large investments. It begins with a change in thinking—seeing ourselves as part of nature, not separate from it.

In a time when environmental challenges are growing, places like Crystal Waters quietly give hope. They show that when people come together with the right values, even a small community can create a lasting impact.

It is not just about building eco-villages. It is about building eco-conscious lives.



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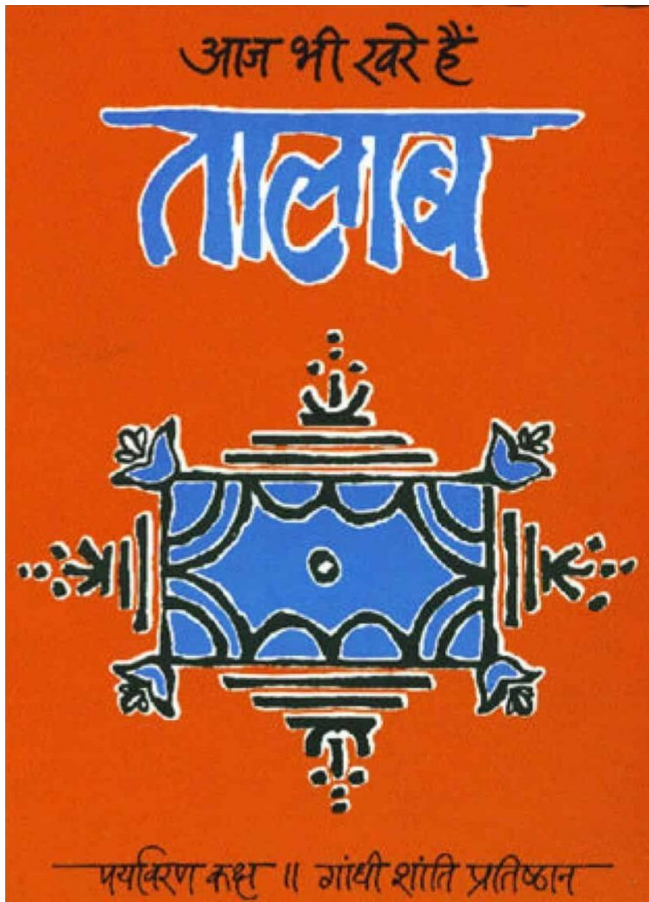


Aaj Bhi Khare Hain Talaab (Author: Anupam Mishra)

Ajit Sharad Barje

'Aaj Bhi Khare Hain Talaab', a Hindi book authored by Anupam Mishra, is a reflective exploration of India's traditional water conservation systems, particularly the construction and management of ponds.

The book is not merely a technical account of water structures but a cultural, historical, and ecological narrative that emphasizes the wisdom embedded in indigenous practices. Through simple yet powerful storytelling, Mishra demonstrates how these age-old systems were not only sustainable but also deeply rooted in community life, making them highly effective in addressing water needs across diverse regions.



At the heart of the book lies the idea that ponds are much more than reservoirs of water; they are expressions of collective knowledge and social cooperation. Mishra explains that for centuries these structures were carefully planned according to local geography, rainfall patterns, and soil conditions.

Unlike modern, centralized water systems, ponds were decentralized and adaptable, ensuring that even remote villages had access to water. The construction of these ponds required a deep understanding of nature, which was passed down through generations in the form of practical knowledge rather than written manuals.

A significant theme in the book is the role of community participation. Mishra highlights how the responsibility for building and maintaining ponds was shared by all members of society. From labourers to skilled artisans, everyone contributed to the process. This collective effort fostered a strong sense of ownership and accountability.

The ponds were treated as common property, and their upkeep was considered a social duty. Festivals, rituals, and local traditions were often linked to these water bodies, reinforcing their importance in everyday life; thus, water management was not just an environmental concern but a cultural practice that united communities.

The book also sheds light on the technical sophistication of traditional pond systems. Mishra describes how these structures were interconnected, forming networks that efficiently captured and stored rainwater. Overflow from one pond would flow into another, ensuring minimal wastage.

This system also helped recharge groundwater, maintaining a balance in the ecosystem. The book explains how the design of ponds often included features such as embankments, spillways,

and catchment areas, all tailored to maximize efficiency. What is remarkable is that these systems achieved sustainability without relying on modern machinery or external resources.

However, Mishra does not romanticize the past without acknowledging the present challenges. A major portion of the book is devoted to examining the decline of these traditional systems. With the advent of modern infrastructure, such as dams, pipelines, and borewells, the reliance on ponds gradually diminished.

Urbanization and changing lifestyles further contributed to their neglect. Many ponds were encroached upon, leading to the loss of valuable water resources. The author argues that this shift has had serious consequences, including groundwater depletion, water scarcity, and ecological imbalance.

Through various examples, the author illustrates that the abandonment of traditional practices has disrupted the natural harmony that once existed between humans and the environment. He emphasizes that modern systems often fail to address local needs effectively.

In contrast, traditional ponds were inherently sustainable because they were designed with a deep understanding of local conditions. Mishra suggests that the current water crisis in many parts of India is not due to a lack of resources but a failure to utilize them wisely.

Importantly, the book is not just a critique but also a source of hope. Mishra documents instances where communities have successfully revived old ponds or constructed new ones using traditional methods, which demonstrate that it is still possible to restore these systems and make them relevant in today's context. He advocates for a balanced approach that combines traditional knowledge with modern technology, rather than completely replacing one with the other.

The book conveys a powerful message to the readers that the answers to many contemporary environmental problems may lie in the wisdom of the past, waiting to be rediscovered and applied with sensitivity and care, just as in the case of the 'talaabs'!

Aaj Bhi Khare Hain Talaab

Author – Anupam Mishra | Publisher – Gandhi Shanti Pratishthan

Third Edition - 1998 | Price : Rs.120.00 | Pages : 120



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



RESEARCH REVIEW

Film: Kadaisi Vivasayi (The Last Farmer)

N. Karthikeyan

A Quiet Story of Soil, Simplicity, and Sustainable Living

Kadaisi Vivasayi, directed by M. Manikandan, is a simple yet powerful film about farming, nature, and life. It moves slowly, like the rhythm of the land. But within that silence, it speaks deeply about sustainability.



At the heart of the film is Mayandi Thevar, played by Nallandi. He is an old farmer who lives alone. He follows traditional farming methods. He trusts seeds, soil, water, and time. He does not believe in chemicals or quick profits. His life is rooted in respect for nature.

The story begins with Mayandi deciding to cultivate his land again. He prepares the field and sows paddy with care. For him, farming is not just work. It is a relationship. Every plant matters.

One important scene is his visit to a pesticide shop. The shopkeeper tries to sell him modern seeds, including seedless tomato varieties. Mayandi refuses. He explains that such seeds make farmers dependent on companies again and again. Then he makes a strong and striking statement. He says the seed company owner will understand the power of nature only if his own child is born without testicles. The comparison is sharp. It shows how deeply he values natural reproduction and self-sustaining systems. For him, seeds are not products. They are life.

This scene clearly questions corporate control over agriculture. It reminds us that sustainability also means freedom and self-reliance.

The story takes a painful turn when Mayandi's crops are damaged due to chemical usage. On hearing that the plants are burnt, he is shattered. The shock almost kills him. This moment shows his deep connection with the land. The loss is not economic. It is emotional. It is like losing a part of himself.

Around this time, a police constable is assigned to take care of his land. At first, the constable is hesitant. Farming is not his world. He sees it as a duty. But slowly, as he works on the field, something changes. He begins to enjoy the work. He connects with the soil. By the end, he finds peace and satisfaction in farming. His transformation shows that anyone can reconnect with nature, if given the chance.

Another powerful scene is in the courtroom. Mayandi is brought before a judge. The setting is formal and serious. But his response is simple and honest. He tells the judge that he needs to go out to irrigate his plants. He says, "*The plants will die. Don't they have a right to live?*"

This moment is very moving. It shifts the focus from law to life. Mayandi does not speak about rights in a human-centred way. He extends that right to plants. It reflects a deep ecological understanding—that all life deserves care and protection.

In the climax, the judge himself intervenes to help revive the farm. This act symbolises hope. It shows that even systems and institutions can recognise the value of nature and support it.

Throughout the film, Mayandi Thevar stands as a symbol of sustainable living. He lives within limits. He respects nature. He avoids harmful practices. He depends on local resources. He values life in all forms.

The film quietly contrasts two worlds. One is the modern world of chemicals, control, and speed. The other is the traditional world of patience, balance, and respect. Without loud arguments, it shows which path is more sustainable.

Kadasi Vivasayi is not just a film about a farmer. It is about a way of life that is slowly disappearing. It reminds us that sustainability is not a new idea. It has always been practiced by people like Mayandi Thevar.

For viewers, the film leaves a simple but powerful message: To care for the earth is to care for life itself.



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TESTIMONIALS

In the month of March 7800 visitors visited the Vasudha exhibition.

We have brought out the following booklets in this month as a part of Vasudha series. Cost Rs.25/- each

- i. Millets – The wonder grains by Dr.Pritam Kumar Sinha
- ii. Akshaya Vikas – Sustainable Development by N.Krishnamoorti
- iii. Dialogue with Nandi by Henryk Skolimowski
- iv. Circular Economy by Dr.Sanjay Banerji



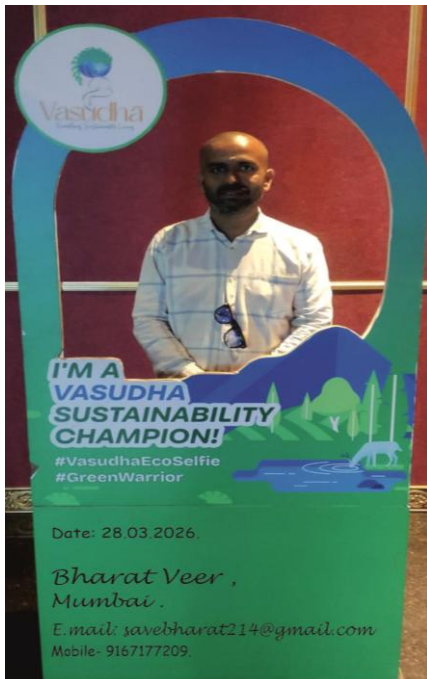
Comments on Reels

The Silent Journey of Plastic

Very nice video, what a pity we continuously use plastics and it is high time that we do what we preach

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Selfie point



Comments on Vasudha

