

**National Seminar**  
**on**  
**Indian Culture and Sustainable Development for Solving Human Problems**  
**March 27-29, 2018**

**Summary**

The focus of the Seminar organized under the patronage of Indian Council of Philosophical Research was on Indian Culture and Sustainable Development for Solving Human Problems. It was dedicated to take a critical look and an examination of human problems, issue of Sustainable Development and seek out solutions from Indian culture. For this experts examined alternatives towards sustainable development keeping the new mandate of the United Nations (UN) i.e. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, 2016-2030). Indian Culture needs to be reexamined keeping these goals in mind as its philosophy and values have emphasized a sustainable way of life. The principle of aparigraha (non-possession), following simple and frugal lifestyle which had been the core philosophy of Indian culture can provide a framework for attaining the much talked about Sustainable Development Goals.

The **inaugural session** of the seminar was graced by **Padma Bhushan Prof. V. S. Vyas**, Professor Emeritus, Former Director, IIM Ahmedabad. **Swami Hariprasad Ji**, Head, Sri Vishnu Mohan Foundation, Chennai; **Swami Padmaprakash Ji**, Incharge, Santhigiri Ashram, New Delhi and **Prof. Uday Kumar R Y**, Director, MNIT, Jaipur. Eminent Economist, **Prof. L. N. Nathuramka** delivered the keynote address. **Prof. S. R. Bhatt**, Chairman, ICPR gave his Presidential Remarks on the Power of Indian Culture to Solve the Human Problems.

The **valedictory address** was delivered by Padma Bhushan Dr D. R. Mehta and **presided over** by **Ms. Gurjot Kaur-IAS**, Director General, HCM RIPA, Jaipur.

The Seminar witnessed a galaxy of eminent scholars and experts from the field of Indian culture, philosophy, economics and religion. Some of the prominent dignitaries who deliberated are - **Dr. Devarshi Kala Nath Shastry** (Sanskrit Scholar), **Prof. Dayanand Bhargava** (National Professor & well-known Vedic Scholar), **Prof. Suraj Jacob** (Economist & CEO, Vidya Bhawan Society, Udaipur), **Dr. Narayan Hegde** (Managing Trustee, Nature Cure Ashram; Trustee, Bhartiya Agro Industries Foundation-BAIF), **Prof. Aruna Gopinath** (President, SHE (Saluting Her Endeavor); President, All Malaysia Malayalee Association (AMMA) Foundation), **Prof. K.B. Kothari** (former Senior Adviser, UNICEF, New York; Managing Trustee of Pratham Rajasthan), **Kamal Singh** (Executive Director, UN Global Compact Network India).

The three days of the Seminar had 12 Plenary Sessions where 30 papers were presented:

- Plenary Session I:** In a Globalized World Indian Culture provides Inclusive & Sustainable Solution for Human Problems
- Plenary Session II:** Leveraging Indian Culture of Non-violence in Business Organizations for Achieving Sustainable Development
- Plenary Session III:** Peace, Sustainable Development, Well Being & Innovation
- Plenary Session IV:** Sustainable Development through a Moral Code of Conduct for Society
- Plenary Session V:** Yoga
- Plenary Session VI:** Responsible Consumption and Production
- Plenary Session VII:** Spirituality and Indian Culture for Ensuring Sustainable Development, Integral Humanism
- Plenary Session VIII:** Is the Modern Science Converging towards Spiritualism?

**Plenary Session IX:** Quality Education

**Plenary Session X:** Role of Indian Culture in Environment Conservation

**Plenary Session XI:** Redefining Concept of Development to Have Sustainable Development

**Plenary Session XII:** Beyond Sustainable Development

The consensus of the entire proceedings and papers may be summed up as follows:

It is universally felt that all is not well with the present day thoughts and practices in the sphere of economies engulfing the entire world. The current growth models has failed the test of sustainable economic growth due to some erroneous assumptions and premises:

- that human being is essentially an economic being,
- economic growth is panacea for all economic and social evils
- trickle-down effect
- Optimum allocation of resources through the invisible hand of market forces.

With the philosophical superiority of Aparigraha, Anekantavada as the guiding principle of in organizing economic conduct, it requires more intensive thinking and analysis to suggest a pathway for its implementation. Responsible production and consumption shall not come on its own. Curbing Consumerism shall require transcending from Economic Growth to Eco Spiritual Growth Model. The Eco Spiritual Model for Sustainable Development focuses to optimize development within ecological boundaries by attaining high Spiritual Quotient (SQ). It does not overlook the development needs in the less developed countries but looks for de growth of the developed world where increasing consumerism is marching towards a garbage economy. Individuals will have to be warned, alarmed of its consequences and of course at a larger level we will have to “stop counting the consumption of natural capital as income; tax labour and income less, and resource extraction more; maximize the productivity of natural capital in the short run and invest in increasing its supply in the long run.”

A few concerns that have been highlighted for paying special attention in the coming years is as follows:

Concerted efforts were made by nations to address the Millennium Development Goals-MDG's, 2000-2015 set by UN but noticeable achievement (within India and Universal) is far from sight. Probably, efforts made centered around academic debates, discussions, discourses and practical and concrete holistic action by individual initiative, social network and state control was lacking. Broadening the base spectrum, UN has now come forth with Sustainable Development Goals-SDG's, 2016-2030. The practical adaptability and acceptability of Indian Culture to address SDG's is, though, rich but coupled with severe reservations. The Indian concept of spirituality and modern economics are surviving side by side. Acceptability of the first is fast becoming 'commercial' with new fashionable (?) entrants; while 'materialism' is growing leaps and bounds. Science and technology are offering little to bridge the gap between the two - if not assisting to widen the gulf. The concerns are:

1. Why and how Indian Culture has eroded, over times, that 'greed' is overtaking 'need'.
2. Religions which preach 'aparigraha' have in practice more preachers than practitioners.
3. Individual, society and state extensively contribute in exploitations of Nature - contrary to vedic ethos. Why?
4. In practical life, ethical and moral values are fast disappearing, despite their strength. Is this not a handicap in achievement of SDG's.
5. State is becoming a partner in destruction of fulfillment of SDG's (case of USA backing out of Paris Agreement on Climate).

The recently published SDG Index by Bertelsmann Stiftung and Sustainable Development Solutions Network (2017) to track SDG achievements are far beyond sustainability. The countries ranked high on SDGs are also high on Ecological Footprint and vice versa implying that SDGs which increase resource dependence *outweighs* the goals which decrease resource dependence. Thus, SDGs shall further increase our demand for resources magnifying the

ecological deficit. SDGs are directed towards unsustainability, which is really a matter of great concern. Majority of the countries have become ecologically bankrupt and the rest are in the process of becoming so.

**The crux lies in acknowledging and implementing the core Indian philosophy for the betterment of humanity. An amalgam of modernism and traditionalism is the need of the hour for sustainable and long lasting peace and happiness for mankind.**

Spiritual principles/cultural heritage needs to be promoted by governments, schools, media and institutions at large. It is when government, institutions, social norms at global level redress the social and economic logic of consumerism, monitors the innovation and creative destruction of products, reward altruistic behaviors and taxes the conspicuous consumption quite heavily, promotes value based education, it can help foster sustainable development.