

Technology Guided by Spirituality Can Lead to Sustainability and Happiness – A New Paradigm of Development

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Introduction

The world is going through tremendous crisis. This includes: [large scale conflicts and wars](#) and threat of bigger conflict has never been greater than in 1945 (may even lead to World War III); [the shortage of food and malnutrition in large number of countries](#); unsustainable [development leading to worsening environment](#); [economic meltdown in many countries](#) leading to unemployment and widespread discontent among youth; and [substantial increase of corruption worldwide](#).

All these are a result of excessive greed among the political and economic leaders of the world who want to control the resources and the narrative. If we can temper our greed impulse the world can become a better place to live.

This article shows how greed can be tempered and reduced by spirituality which can eventually lead to sustainable development and overall happiness.

Throughout the history of mankind, India has periodically given a new thought to the world. Whether it is [Yoga](#), Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Bhakti Yoga or the [Non-violence method of Mahatma Gandhi](#); all have come from India. The world is richer because these lofty ideas and ideals have helped mankind.

I feel another idea can be added to this list; *Technology guided by spirituality can lead to sustainability and happiness.* This essay will detail the thesis behind this idea. But briefly, *spirituality gives us the wisdom to temper our greed for resources and materials and together with the use of high technology can help us lead a sustainable and happy life.*

I wrote my [first article on this subject 22 years ago](#) and since then have [written extensively on it](#) and feel this idea could be a new paradigm of development not only for India but for the world.

What is spirituality?

Spirituality is concerned with matters of spirit. When we think deeply and for a long time about anything whether it is an idea or an object then the brain has a tendency of focusing on it like a laser and in that process the object vanishes from the vision field and only its germ or the spirit remains. Then complete knowledge of that idea or object results and is called [Sanyam by Patanjali](#). This is the [mechanism by which all great discoveries are made](#).

It is this [deep thinking](#) on anything which helps us evaluate and resolve the issues and hence removes the clutter from the brain. This makes us [spiritual and gives us a sense of peace and happiness](#).

Deep thinking and concentration require a [powerful brain which can be cultivated by continuous and sustained practice](#). It is preferable that this is learned in childhood since the brain is pliable at that age and has not been cluttered by memory knots. Nevertheless, this practice can be cultivated at any age.

Spirituality is different from religion. Religion is about control. Religious leaders have used it throughout the history of mankind for their own greed – either for power, wealth or fame. All great thought leaders of the world were spiritual – it was their later disciples who converted their thoughts into religion to control and create havoc in the world. Some of the [largest killings in the history of mankind have been because of religious strife](#).

Spirituality on the other hand is the state of mind that makes it understand that the Truth is beyond the barriers of worldliness, religion, rituals, caste, creed, race or geographical boundaries. It is non-violent and is not concerned about control of anybody but is the search for truth. It makes us look deeper into ourselves and helps us connect to the marvels of nature in a deep way and subsequently to Universal Consciousness.

[Spirituality also helps us become fearless](#) since deep thinking helps to resolve the issues which are the cause of anxiety. *This is also the genesis of wisdom.* Fearlessness allows us to chart new paths and helps us become creative and innovative.

Similarly, spirituality also helps us to have a compassionate view of nature and as we evolve spiritually, we become more tuned to it which helps us in preserving it. Besides it helps us to live in harmony with each other and enables everybody to work together for the common good. *This is the genesis of non-violence.* In all religions the respect for nature is preached and the maxim of simple living and high thinking is ingrained in their teachings.

Finally, spirituality also helps us to reduce greed impulse and is the first step towards sustainability and happiness.

Reduction of Greed

The basis of greed is desire. Desire manifests itself in different forms like lust, aim, ambition, control, goal, etc. However, the driving force is the same – power, fame and money and I think it ultimately boils down to control and hence power.

As our brains develop right from our birth, the fast-expanding neuron numbers [must form memory pathways](#). This process is facilitated by sensory perception where the inputs from the senses help to form the memory. We are therefore hardwired to increase our experience and memories, and this is the basis of desire.

One of the outcomes of desire is possession. We feel a need to possess whatever we desire whether it is a person, object or even an idea. Possession helps in maximization of experience and gives us a sense of security. As we absorb “experience” through our senses, the brain processes this information. It is during this process that we “decide” whether our desires are fulfilled or not. *Fulfillment of desires through the process of wisdom therefore helps us in resolving the memories and releasing the “possessions”.* This results in the [feeling of detachment](#) and hence happiness as taught in Gita and [Patanjali Yoga Sutras](#).

Unfulfilled desires lead to frustration and increased possessiveness. This leads eventually to more control and greed, which is the [major cause of misery and corruption in the world](#). Rich and powerful are increasing their wealth and power and this is increasing the chasm between rich and poor. With power and through corrupt practices, rich people help create unreasonable laws, which further increases their wealth and [their unsustainable lifestyle](#). Thus, ill-gotten wealth accumulated by corruption is the reason of present strife in the world.

Desire is a useful and necessary emotion. It allows us to achieve something and be active. Without desire we will be lifeless, dead or like stones. Desire and fear are primeval emotions and have helped life to survive by garnering resources and protecting itself from predators. However, what we need to do is to satiate or channel our desires so that they get fulfilled without too much taxing of resources, materials and energy.

A powerful processor or the mind can get its desires fulfilled quite easily without physically possessing the objects of desire since it can effectively evaluate all choices and resolve issues regarding consumptive lifestyle. *That is spirituality and it helps us to reduce our greed.*

For example, we can wear only one shirt and one pair of pants at a time so what is the need to have 100 shirts and pants? Similarly, we can live in one house or drive one car at a time. So, what is the need to have many houses and a dozen cars? A powerful mind can resolve these issues and help us

lead a sustainable lifestyle. While on the other hand a weaker brain needs to possess a lot more things for fulfillment of desires, and this leads to greed. *Excessive greed is also the root cause of evil. The killings and lack of empathy by rulers that we often see in the world is because of their excessive greed.*

Technological progress

One of the outcomes of a big brain is that we can modify our surroundings to make our life comfortable. That is the conquest of nature and hallmark of human evolution. *This is also the genesis of technology. The curiosity of how technology works leads to science.*

The history of mankind therefore is the history of technology. Starting from wheel and fire, humans have developed technology to husband resources, energy and materials and to make their lives better and less stressful.

Technology is a double-edged sword. It helps us to live comfortably but at the same time enables us to develop weapons of mass destruction. Technology can be developed and used in whatever way humans want it i.e. either to help with mankind's evolution or to destroy it because of our greed. Excessive greed itself is bad; but when fueled by technology it becomes lethal. It often [leads to wars, monopolies and dictatorships](#).

Yet I feel that technology and wisdom have often gone hand in hand. Though we have developed weapons of mass destruction, the collective wisdom of mankind has stopped us from annihilating each other. The fact also remains that many more people used to be killed in wars when technology was very rudimentary. In today's war fewer human lives are lost.

Most of the wars are resource related and are [driven by greed of politicians and those of corporate-military complex](#). As we advance spiritually and technologically, we will stop waging wars since the wisdom will guide us to use resources available more efficiently to provide creature comforts to all of mankind.

I am sure that as *the level of technological progress increases, we will also use it judiciously to further raise our levels of consciousness and not use it to harm mankind.* The power of technology also teaches and spreads the message of moderation through mass communication.

Technology helps in Spiritual Growth

Technological progress also unravels a lot of hidden areas of nature and shows us how it performs its miracles. In doing this, technology helps us understand the power and greatness of nature. For example, humans felt that they had invented and developed fiber optics. However, scientists have found that the [root systems of plants are excellent optical fibers – something that has existed in nature for millions of years.](#) This knowledge could only come once we had enough technology for creating fiber optics, lasers etc.

Similarly, a new [science of biomimicry or “copy the nature”](#), is developing where we are finding that nature, which has billions of years of head start, has far better answers than we have in almost every aspect of life and hence realization has dawned that our technological progress will take a quantum leap by copying nature’s designs.

In fact, daily we discover that there is nothing new under the sun and all our inventions have been preceded by nature’s designs millions of years ago. For example, our computers and artificial intelligence (AI) are following the working of our brains. As our understanding of the human brain - and the [nature of human thought](#) increases, AI and computing abilities will increase manifold times.

Thus, as we progress ahead in the technological area, we will discover the great laws of nature and ultimately God. *For God is nothing else but this marvelous Universe which follows its own scientific laws.* And science and technology allow us to discover the universe and eventually Universal Consciousness. I also feel that it is the law of evolution that as we [become more spiritual, we will also become a technologically advanced civilization.](#)

This is because when we apply our sharpened brains to any problem, then solutions result. This is the reason why [Patanjali put the conquest of physical nature \(technology\) as the third chapter in his book](#) after a yogi became adept in spirituality and control of mind (chapters 1 and 2). *Therefore, a necessary condition for large-scale technological progress is to have spiritual progress.*

The [nature of the brain](#) is such that as we make it powerful it wants to increase its inputs and experiences, and the mind-expanding process includes peering deep into space and understanding how the world, cosmos and universe are formed. This obviously includes the desire to explore and travel in space and intergalactically. That can only be achieved by very advanced technological progress and is the *genesis of the conquest of space*.

Our technological and spiritual progress can also be explained by giving the example of the [path that particles and molecules take in water heated in a container](#). Each individual particle or molecule darts randomly in the water container depending upon the heat energy given to it but overall, a stream is formed so that the warm water rises, and the cold water comes down to be heated. [These are convection cells](#) commonly seen when water is heated or boiled. Individual particles dart furiously in these streams but are restricted by the convection cell boundaries.

Similarly, as individuals we create technologies for our own selfish needs and depending on our spiritual progress may or may not use them for the betterment of mankind. But collectively spiritual and technological progress follows the natural evolution of humans towards an advanced civilization just like the stream of heated water in a utensil. And all our individual shortcomings are swept away for general good by the *stream of evolution*.

We feel and enjoy this world through the sense organs of our bodies. Getting a human body is the most important gift to the soul. Almost all technological interventions are to enhance this sense-world interaction. In coming years technology will provide us with tools to create a much more hospitable planet on which majority of mankind will be able to live

comfortably. It will help us repair our bodies and produce designer drugs which will make us live longer with less disease and pain.

In fact, the whole basis of [Yoga according to Patanjali](#) is to make the human body fit for spiritual experience and happiness. Our future medicines will allow us to do this. This increased level of physical comfort will allow us a quantum jump in our quest for spirituality and sustainability.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development means different things to different people but one of the most accepted definitions is [“Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”](#). However, an excellent definition is what Mahatma Gandhi gave; “Use resources and materials according to your needs and not for your greed”.

He himself epitomized simple living and high thinking. All evolved and spiritual people live a simple and sustainable life. *That is their most distinguishing feature.* Sustainability results when we curb our greed and is an outcome of spirituality. Modern examples of evolved humans are [Gandhi](#) and [Einstein](#) who lived very simply and yet produced a very high quality of thought since they were very secure human beings

The insecurity of humans comes when they cannot resolve issues and think deeply. Thus, activities such as hoarding of wealth, material goods, binge shopping, etc. are the result of a shallow mind and is driven by fear complex of losing out or not having enough. A mind which is very powerful can resolve issues, removes anxiety and finds enjoyment within itself to make a person self-contented and happy.

It is a sad state of affairs that the super-rich live in a very unsustainable lifestyle. They live in huge mansions, [consume enormous amount of energy](#), resources and materials in a very inefficient manner and fly in their private jets at the drop of the hat. Unfortunately, their unsustainable lifestyle becomes [a role model to the general public](#) since these people also own the

communication networks and mass media. Till these people put a curb on their greed their unsustainable lifestyle will continue. They need to become spiritual more than anybody else.

Nevertheless, one can live an [emotionally satisfying life with few resources](#). I have shown this by living in rural India for more than 40 years. In this small experiment I have been influenced by Mahatma Gandhi's definition of sustainability. Thus, [by consuming one fourth to one fifth the energy of an average American, I live an emotionally happy and fulfilling life](#). This example has shown that high thinking and simple living is possible and is necessary for creating a sustainable and just world.

Sustainable living does not mean that you produce everything yourself. But it means that all of us living sustainably can utilize the resources of earth in an efficient manner for a better world. For example, [if every person on earth consumes the energy of an average American citizen, then we will need 4 earths to sustain us](#). This is totally unsustainable.

A simple example of sustainable living is when we live off the interest of fixed deposit in the bank. But when we start using the deposit itself then it leads to unsustainability.

For example, almost all the energy that we humans consume comes from the sun. Even fossil fuels are solar energy stored deep in the earth long ago. If we use the amount of energy received from the sun for all our daily needs, then that is sustainable development. But when we start using fossil fuels, we are dipping into the fixed deposit leading to unsustainable development.

We get from the [sun about 10,000 times more energy](#) than the whole world consumes, and if its exploitation is made economical then it will lead to sustainable development.

In the Pursuit of Happiness

All of us aspire to have a good life and happiness. There are as many definitions of happiness as there are people. But generally, people want a

decent place to live, mobility, good education for their children, clean environment, a challenging workplace, good and wholesome entertainment and enough money to meet their usual daily requirements. These are the issues around which modern industrial societies have evolved and yet they have created the biggest problem of totally unsustainable lifestyles fueled by greed.

[Happiness is a state of mind.](#) We feel happy and enjoy life through our senses and the mind. The brain processes the information from the senses and our level of happiness is dictated by its processing power. A powerful processor can therefore extract more information from the sensory signals and hence resolve conflicts in mind. [This results in happiness since the mind gets satisfied easily and allows us to be at peace with ourselves.](#) A powerful processor also shifts the priorities in life. Thus, the focus is more on getting mental peace and less on material needs.

A smaller processor obviously needs many more inputs to reach the same enjoyment or satisfaction level. Thus, weaker brains need more resources to occupy them, and this leads to unsustainable lifestyle and unhappiness.

Way forward

How do we create conditions by which this paradigm of development can be propagated?

The most important component in this strategy is to develop a powerful brain. Such a brain allows us to think deeply about everything and this leads to spirituality and search for truth. A powerful brain also helps in technological development.

Development of powerful brain should start from childhood. Thus, it is very important that we teach our children to focus and [inculcate in them the habit of remaining focused on any issue.](#) This will help them get away from [Attention Deficit Syndrome \(ADS\)](#) which afflicts most of the youngsters. Creating such focused youth is an investment in the future of the world.

Naturally this will require very dedicated teachers and school system which will [encourage students to think deeply about any issue and be ethical](#). It is not an easy task but with dedication and effort on our part it is doable. I feel each one of us [should become teachers and spreaders of this idea](#). Slowly and surely, we can inspire the youngsters.

To recapitulate; the central theme of this article is how technology guided by spirituality can produce happiness. We have already discussed the building blocks of this thesis and believe it can happen in the following way:

1. By becoming spiritual we can reduce our greed for resources and materials.
2. Spirituality also helps us be at peace with ourselves and sharpens our brain. Besides it gives us wisdom and perspective in life.
3. With powerful brain and heightened consciousness, we can make rapid technological progress.
4. Technology not only helps us to have a comfortable life but allows us to admire the wonders of nature and the Universe and helps in expansion of our horizon. This is the genesis of space travel.
5. With the wisdom gained through spirituality we will use technology judiciously so as to use nature's resources wisely and live sustainably.
6. Living sustainably and in tune with nature will give us peace and happiness.

This in nutshell can be the new paradigm of development for the world.

[HOME](#) August 2024

This essay is based on my book ["Exploring the Mind of God – How Technology Guided by Spirituality can Lead to Happiness"](#).

[Published in South Asia Monitor](#), 16 August 2024. [A podcast of the article is here](#).