

Technology Guided by Spirituality Can Produce a Sustainable and Happy World

Keynote lecture at DDA 26, Houston, USA, June 5-7, 2026

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Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I am delighted to be here attending the [DDA 26](#) in this campus of University of Houston. Long ago in 1975 I visited this campus [during my student days](#) when I interacted with some well-known solar energy experts. It has changed like everything else in the last 50 years.

I must thank Shrikant Palkar ji for inviting me to deliver the keynote address and providing gracious hospitality for me and my wife [Dr. Nandini Nimbkar](#).

I believe this is the 3rd year of DDA but with Palkar ji's energy and vision I am sure it will thrive and become a beacon of hope for spreading the message of Dharma in U.S.

I believe these are tough times for everybody in the world, especially in US and feel that if we can cap our greed for resources then it can help produce a sustainable and happy society. And greed can be capped by spirituality. That is theme of my talk and feel it could be new paradigm of development.

I am also happy to note that the various themes of the conference mirrors what I have been [writing and talking](#) about in the last 25 years.

But the overriding theme of the conference is [Dharma](#). Dharma as most of you know has various meanings and connotations. – the most common

being “right way of living” and “path of righteousness”. However, the question can be asked who defines “right way of living and the path”.

And the answer is that the right or the correct path is automatically shown when we search for truth. This search helps us become spiritual and ultimately all such searches lead us to one answer and that is how this marvelous world or the universe is structured, sustained and functions. Thus, all great thinkers and scientists were spiritual in nature. Examples of Einstein, Gandhi, Newton and other great thinkers come to my mind.

So, all of us who search for truth in the deepest and most honest way come to the same conclusion and that to my mind is the real Dharma! And when we practice Dharma properly and become spiritual in our lives it gives us great joy and happiness and, in the process, makes us and this world a sustainable place to live in.

I will now discuss the building blocks of my thesis – spirituality and technology and how together they can produce sustainability and happiness. So, what is spirituality the main source of Dharma?

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 spirit remains. This process is called [*Sanyam by Patanjali*](#) in his yoga sutras and is a combination of *Dhyan (focus)*, *Dharan (contemplation)* and *samadhi (immersion)*. *Sanyam* done on anything results in complete knowledge of that idea or the object. This is the mechanism by which [all great ideas and discoveries of the world have been made.](#)

In the modern times we discuss, debate and write about the process of discovery and here was Sage Patanjali born in India almost 3000 years ago who wrote and discussed about it.

This deep thinking on anything also helps us evaluate and resolve various issues and hence removes the clutter from the brain and gives us a sense of peace and happiness.

Naturally deep thinking and concentration requires 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.

Since the development of powerful brain should start from childhood, it is 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 world over. 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. Making them interested in reading will also help. It is not an easy task but with dedication and effort on our part it is doable goal. I therefore feel that each one of us should become teachers and spreaders of this idea. Slowly and surely, we can inspire the youngsters.

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. I feel that all great thought leaders of the world were spiritual. After all they were searching for truth. It was their later disciples who converted their thoughts into religion to control and create

havoc in the world. It is a sad fact that some of the [largest killings in the history of mankind have been because of religious strife.](#)

Spirituality is therefore 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 makes us look deeper into ourselves and helps us connect to the marvels of nature in a deep way and subsequently to the Universal Consciousness.

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. Since it is the search for truth and not concerned about control of anybody 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 and for each other is preached and the maxim of simple living and high thinking is ingrained in their teachings.

Spirituality also helps us become fearless since deep thinking helps to resolve the issues which are the cause of anxiety. This removes insecurity from our minds. Fearlessness allows us to chart new paths and helps us become creative and innovative. *This is also the genesis of wisdom.*

With vivek and wisdom we can resolve most of the issues and have a proper perspective in life. This helps us to reduce greed impulse and is the first step towards sustainability and happiness.

Cause of world crisis – Excessive greed

The world is going through tremendous crisis. This includes:

- Large scale conflicts and wars, and threat of bigger conflict has never been greater than was 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;
- Tremendous 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.

Genesis 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 exercise of power.

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 has evolutionary roots. All life forms want to maximize possession since it helps them to overcome shortage of resources for a rainy-day scenario! This is what gives the desire to become rich. *However, it is my belief that richness is not having too many materials or luxurious goods but lots of time at hand.* That allows one to do meaningful work which gives us joy and happiness.

Possession also helps the mind in maximization of experience. 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. A powerful brain evaluates the situations and is able to resolve the desire issue. This resolution helps us in releasing the “possessions” and reducing greed and brings in the feeling of detachment and happiness as taught in Gita and Patanjali yoga Sutras.

When the brain cannot resolve these issues it leads to unfulfilled desires, frustration and increased possessiveness. This leads eventually to more

control and greed, which is the major cause of misery and corruption in the world.

Nature of Desire

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. Our big brains allow us this luxury.

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 many cars? 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.

A powerful mind therefore can help us lead a sustainable lifestyle. While on the other hand a weaker brain produces insecurity which makes us want to possess a lot more things for fulfillment of desires and this leads to greed. Greedy people are very insecure human beings. The world is full of examples of such insecure human beings.

Spirituality is needed more for rich and powerful

Rich and powerful of the world are characterized by their greed and insecurity. They are increasing their wealth and power, and this is increasing the chasm between rich and poor. With power, richer people help create unreasonable laws and through corrupt practices further increases their wealth. Thus, ill-gotten wealth and corruption go hand in hand.

Unfortunately, their unsustainable lifestyle becomes a role model for the 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.](#)

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 make their lives better and less stressful and learned how to husband resources, energy and materials.

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 as we see in today's world.

Yet I feel that technology and wisdom have 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 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. As we advance spiritually and technologically, we will stop waging wars since the wisdom will guide us to use available resources more efficiently to provide 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.

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 God.

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 could also be 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.

Putting it all together and conclusions

We have discussed the building blocks (spirituality and technology) of this new paradigm of development. I now come to my concluding remarks on how they can produce sustainability and 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 and that is; *Technology guided by spirituality can lead to sustainability and happiness* - The central theme of this talk. This can be a new paradigm of development for the world. And briefly 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 to 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. With the wisdom gained through spirituality we will use technology judiciously to use nature's resources wisely and live sustainably.
5. Living sustainably and in tune with nature will give us peace and happiness.
6. Technology not only helps us to have a comfortable life but allows us to explore the wonders of nature and the Universe and helps with the expansion of our horizon. This helps us connect to the Universal Consciousness and [is the genesis of space travel](#).

I am sure in coming days there will be *Manthan* and discussion on these issues.

Thank you.

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