



Spirituality and Environment

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Dear Friends,

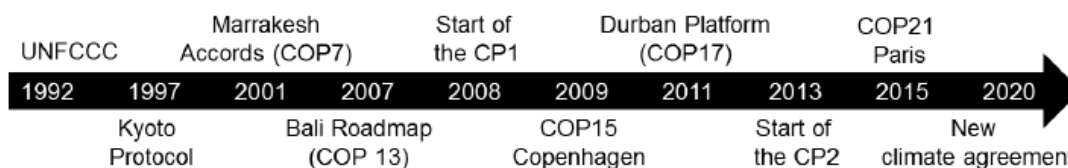
This month, please allow me to share some of my thoughts on spirituality and the environment. It is some kind of a hypothesis that I have in my mind that I am trying to give concrete shape. Therefore, this blog would not be as definitive as the earlier ones, and I am open to suggestions and comments.

Looking back at the movement towards sustainable development, I believe the general consciousness of mankind towards the impacts of development on our environment was drawn by Rachel Carson in her book Silent Springs. That was in the sixties. The early seventies saw the UN initiative for organizing the first conference on Sustainable Development, where the first definition of sustainable development was framed as ‘development that does not compromise the lives of future generations’. Since then, there have been several initiatives towards sustainable development, and the entire domain of sustainable development has been characterized by controversies between several interest groups at local, regional and global levels.

Some important milestones in the history of sustainable Development movement include the Rio meet in 1992, the Kyoto Protocol, The Montreal Protocol, Rio+10 in 2002 and Rio+20 in 2012. As mentioned earlier, the planetary boundary on Climate Change has received significant attention at the global level, and some of the key milestones are indicated below. We can easily note that it has taken more than two decades to reach an agreement, and as we all know, even after the historic Paris Agreement in December 2015, the US has withdrawn itself.



Figure 0-1 – Key milestones in international climate negotiations



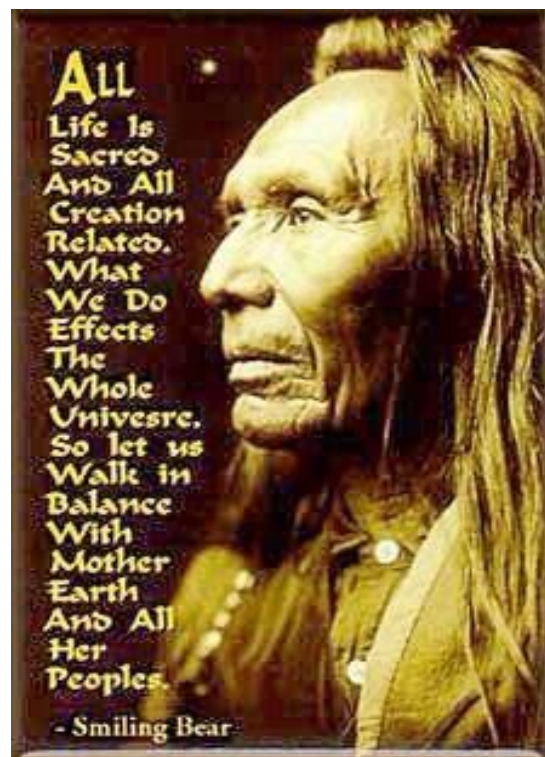
Source: CDC Climat Research.

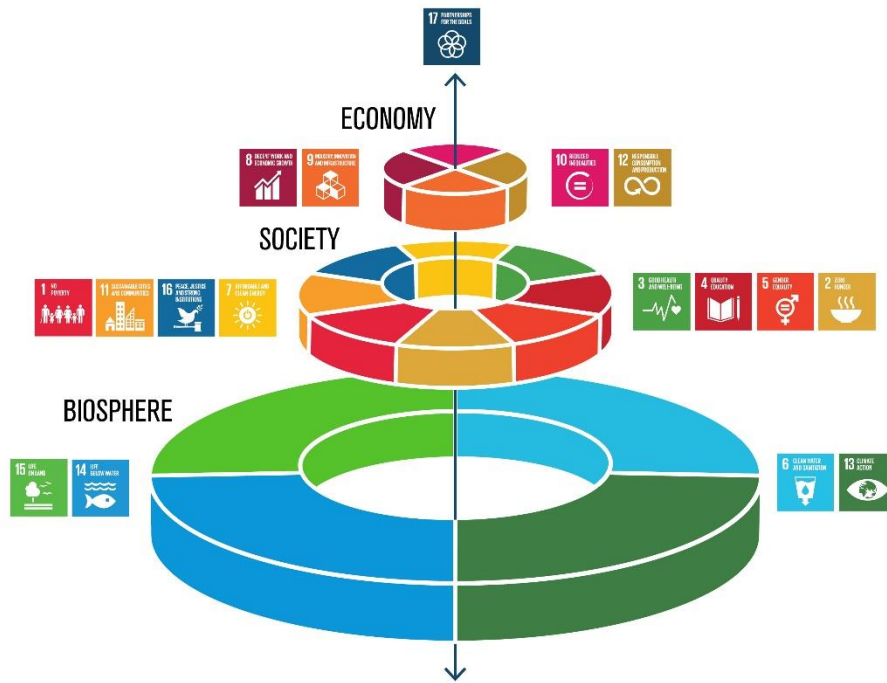
COP# stands for Conference of Parties followed by its number

In between, with the turn of the century the UN adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for the period 2000 through 2015. Reducing global poverty by half, was the first goal of the MDGs; and it was achieved on a global scale. The success of the MDGs and the hurdles faced by the Sustainable Development movement from several quarters, led to the adoption of a policy of extending the MDGs for 15 more years and the ambitious SDGs with 17 goal, 162 targets and 232 indicators have been adopted. By the UN. A major distinguishing feature of the SDGs relative to the MDGs is the importance attached to scientific findings on the nine planetary boundaries. In fact, according to Prof. Johan Rockstrom's 'Birthday Cake' representation of the SDGs show the Planetary Boundaries as the base of the SDGs, with 8 societal goals forming the middle section and the economic targets form the top.

This represents the acceptance of scientific evidence at the global level towards Sustainable Development. Still the road towards implementation of the SDGs is fraught with several obstacles. One of the major hurdles arises from our lifestyle. The lifestyle of the affluent sections of society (roughly 1 billion) places a significantly heavy demand on the environment, and the population of the entire developing nations (roughly 5 billion) are aspiring towards adoption of that lifestyle. This is a very dangerous trend, and here comes my hypothesis that adoption of spiritual principles might help.

Amma (Sri Mata Amritanandamayi Devi) says, "Spirituality is the science that teaches one to understand life in greater depth". In response, [Gar Eoff](#) said, "God has given us many spirits - love, peace, honor, mercy, truth, grace, wisdom, strength, hope, joy, faith, reverence, goodness, kindness... all these are spirits of life which are positive and life-affirming. To be spiritual implies having these qualities, living by them in my life. In turn I value life in all of creation, including the lives of all of humanity, as well as the condition of all plants and animals as well as considerations for retaining all natural habitats.





Graphics by Jerker Lukensathkapan

Source: <https://www.google.com/>

Such a value system would help us to modify our own lifestyles, reducing our demands on the environment. We might be more willing to undergo small inconveniences and use public transport in place of a private transport. We may consciously try to reduce our ecological footprint through reduced consumption of energy, water, and other resources. We may also try to be excellent planetary stewards, spreading awareness of sustainability.

So let us consider turning the Sustainable Development Movement into a mass movement imbining spiritual principles in everyday lives as a way forward to implement the SDGs.

I offer this idea for everybody's considerations.

