

Nature Conservation in Communities of Rural India through Perspective of UN SDGs

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Introduction

Purpose

The global community is divided on economic status. The conditions of the poor communities are critical, especially in developing and underdeveloped nations. Most of these nations belong to the Asian, African, and South American continents. The nations from these continents owe rich natural heritage and cultural diversity. The eco-cultural ethos embedded in the indigenous customs and traditions of these nations has global relevance in the modern age of information. It is fact that the solution to any environmental challenge exists in the cultural roots of the nation. India is one of such nations which inhabit diverse eco-culture.

The purpose of this paper is to understand the natural heritage of rural India and the local conservation practices prevalent in the rural communities to achieve the targets of UN SDGs. Undoubtedly, nature conservation and environment protection involve social dimensions connected to the local ecological setup. The eco-centric approach of the Indian culture lies in the concepts of 'Vasudhaiv Kutubkam' (Earth is one family), 'Aranya Sanskriti' (Forest Culture), and the 'Prakriti Purush' (Natural Human) which are deeply embedded in the traditions and the customs of the Indian society. Based on traditional conservation practices, the community manages the local natural heritage. The diversity of customs and traditions results in the vividness of the conservation practices. Thus, the socio-ecological systems could be used for site-specific conservation programs and policies.

Methodology

The author's team initiated the action-oriented

research and the short projects using the traditional knowledge and customary actions in different geographic areas. The primary aim of such action-oriented investigations was to document the conservation practices inherited in the culture of different communities and to discuss the modern relevance of such actions, especially towards SDGs. Using the eco-cultural ethos, the authors tried to inculcate the need for the site-specific models of entrepreneurship from the scientific and social research carried out by the author and his team in different parts of Rajasthan (India) such as Abu Hills (Sirohi), Kumbhalgarh (Udaipur/ Rajsamand), Chak Ramnagar (Bharatpur) and ravine area (Dholpur) in the first decade (the 2000s) and executed in the second decade (the 2010s) of 21st century (2005 to 2018).

Findings

The three pillars with the main focus on the eco-cultural practices linking biodiversity and livelihood through conservation approaches, international networks, and the Indian perspectives on the principle, "Conservation Practices for Sustainable Livelihood". These actions resulted in the site-specific universally applicable Socio-Ecological Models through Enviropreneurship programs.

The globally applicable site-specific models represented the cultural and traditional linkages of community with the components of nature (SDGs 6, 13, 14, 15). These linkages were used for livelihood (SDG 1) generation of the local people especially who have the traditional talent and skills without formal education (SDG 4). The execution of such an approach led to the ownership and the importance of

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every individual and the respective community (SDG 8) to the global community.

The Abu Model linked the protection of habitats & globally important bird species *Amandava formosa* with the livelihood of local youth on the Abu Hills (Sirohi, Rajasthan, India), thus, directly linked with SDGs 15 and 1. The Chak Ramnagar Model linked the revival of the local ecological setup for the livelihood of women artisans, thus, covering the targets of SDGs 1, 3, 5, 8, 10, 13, and 15. The Chambal Model linked traditional agro-practices with the livelihood of the local community, thus, giving an opportunity to contribute towards SDGs 1, 2, 3, 8, etc.

An interesting fact, of the above development models, was the approach undertaken which focused on the challenge/s of the community along with the use of the traditional wisdom and natural skills of beneficiaries for further success. The challenge was mainly water scarcity, therefore, SDG 6 was the main focus. The successful structural (civil) and social interventions for resolving the issue, opened the scope of opportunities for the beneficiaries. Thus, other SDGs (mentioned above) were covered

through follow-up actions.

Conclusions

It was observed that modern conservation actions overlook indigenous eco-centric customs and traditional values, rendering the followers to break the natural bonding and the inter-relationship of the residing population of the humans with their natural setup. Thus, it is time to pay due respect to the customary and indigenous traditions to revive the symbiotic bond of "Nature and Humans" and include them in the National Policy of the respective country through the UN SDGs.

Research Limitations

The scope of this work is limited to a few sites only which need scalability in the rural or urban areas of the world. Further, disrespect to the age-old ancient theories depicted in the '*Vijyanan*' followed mostly by the rural populations by the modern theories of science followed mostly by the urban population is a major hurdle in checking sponsorship or financial assistance to research, investigate and execute for replication.