

UNIT - V

Universal Human Values: Understanding Values through Participation

Values: A Result of Participation in the Larger Order

Based on our understanding of harmony at various levels of human existence, our **values** emerge from our participation in the larger order of life. This participation takes the form of specific actions and behaviour rooted in realization and understanding.

Human participation in the larger order can be viewed through two lenses:

1. **Behaviour:** This includes aspects like trust, respect, affection, care, guidance, reverence, glory and love (discussed in detail previously).
2. **Work:** This involves interaction with material things and involves two primary values:

Utility Value

This refers to the human role in ensuring that physical facilities or objects nurture, protect, and serve the needs of the body.

- **Example:** A pen's utility lies in its ability to aid writing, thereby serving a physical need.

Artistic Value

This relates to ensuring that the role of physical facilities helps preserve their utility and enhance their usage.

- **Example:** Designing a pen cap to prevent ink spills, providing a comfortable grip, or creating aesthetically pleasing features, while maintaining its functionality as a writing instrument.

Let's elaborate through examples:

- **Shirt:** Utility value – it protects the body. Artistic value – designing it with buttons, tailoring the size to fit comfortably.
- **Food:** Utility value – it nourishes the body. Artistic value – cooking, presenting it in an appealing way.
- **Book:** Utility value – printing content on paper to save time and energy needed to memorize. Artistic value – choosing an appropriate font size for readability, designing a compact and easy-to-carry format.

Universal Human Values: Incultation, Innateness & Ethical Conduct

Incultation of Universal Values: A Natural Outcome of Right Understanding

The universe operates based on an inherent harmony and order. Human beings simply need to understand this existing order rather than trying to create one. Our innate desire for happiness and prosperity stems from a deep-seated longing to comprehend this inherent harmony and align ourselves with it.

Universal Human Values act as guiding principles that illustrate this harmony across various levels of human interaction and reveal the universal purpose of understanding it. Essentially, they are the reflections of the truth of existence – the underlying harmony and interconnectedness – in the

context of our participation in the larger order. These values are inherently acceptable to all humans and promote happiness.

However, our ignorance, faulty preconceived notions, illusions about ourselves and the world, and misconceptions regarding our interactions with the sensory world and relationships contribute to difficulties and confusion in understanding and implementing universal values.

Self-observation and exploration of existence allow us to grasp this fundamental truth. Through this process, we come to appreciate the inherent and universal nature of our being. This realization brings fulfilment at all levels of life.

By shedding our incorrect pre-conditionings and embracing our natural acceptance, the inculcation of universal human values becomes natural and spontaneous, valid for all individuals and time periods. It's a fundamental human aspiration that we inherently possess the ability to achieve.

This understanding provides comfort, relief, and confidence to all of humanity.

Crucially, these universal values are not to be enforced:

- **Not through fear (bhaya):** Values should not be imposed through threat or intimidation.
- **Not through greed (pralobhana):** Enticing or bribing people to accept them is also detrimental.
- **Not through blind faith/belief (āsthā):** Imposing values based on dogmatic beliefs or without a basis in reality hinders genuine understanding and acceptance.

Values, as we've seen, are naturally acceptable, so forceful imposition isn't required. **Right understanding, fostered through self-exploration, is the only path towards societal and organizational harmony.** Any attempt to enforce values through manipulative means is unsustainable and detrimental to true harmony.

Innateness of Human Beings: Defining Humaneness

Just as we identify a tree, element, or animal by its defining characteristics, we must seek to identify the innate nature of human beings. As a mango tree has "mango-ness", iron possesses "iron-ness," and a cow embodies "cow-ness," let's uncover the essence of our **humaneness**.

Right understanding gained through self-exploration unveils the definitive nature of ethical human conduct, which is universally consistent for all humans. This recognition establishes a basis for universal ethical principles, negating any arguments that suggest different ethical codes for different groups.

Understanding Ethical Human Conduct

Though we inherently aim for ethical behavior, our current actions may not reflect this, as we're largely driven by incorrect preconceived notions that are out of alignment with true understanding. This approach isn't fulfilling for ourselves or others. People continually seek a clear path towards right conduct, demonstrating a wide range of behaviors. However, without a proper grasp of reality, ethical human conduct remains unclear. It can be understood through the lens of:

1. **Values (Mūlya):** Values arise from genuine realization and understanding, which are consistently definitive. When we understand the harmony of existence at all levels, we begin

to perceive universal values as integral to reality. Our thoughts align with this understanding and reflect our engagement with fulfilling universal values.

2. **Policy (Nīti):** Once convinced about values and the inherent harmony of existence, we develop an ethical lens in our actions. Our thoughts, behaviors, and work contribute to nurturing this harmony. It leads us to adopt policies that support human well-being – fostering enrichment, protection, and responsible utilization of our mind, body, and material resources. These policies result from clear desires, thoughts, and informed decisions guided by true understanding.
3. **Character (Charitra):** The decisiveness of our desires, thoughts, and actions gives our life clarity. A defined character arises from consistent behaviour and actions. This can be characterized by:
 - **Chastity:** Adhering to principles of fidelity within marital relationships.
 - **Rightful acquisition and use of wealth:** Acting responsibly in matters of financial matters.
 - **Humane behaviour:** Treating others with kindness in actions and interactions.

This wholistic view of values, policy, and character is referred to as **Ethics**.

Through this, we get a firm understanding of ethics, enabling us to judge actions as ethical or unethical. Furthermore, we get a clear way to cultivate ethical conduct in life and professions. Ethical living is achieved only through integrating values, policy, and character—possible by developing genuine understanding through self-exploration.

In this framework, ethical conduct exhibits the following:

- It is inherently satisfying for the individual and doesn't create internal conflict.
- It aligns with a truthful understanding of reality and harmony at all levels.
- It fosters mutual fulfilment and enriching interactions with other individuals and the wider natural environment.

Hence, ethical conduct is **self-fulfilling, people-friendly, environment-friendly, and universally applicable**.

Svatva, Svatantratā, and Svarājya: A Natural Journey Towards Self-Organized Living

The concepts of Svātva (our inherent nature), Svatantratā (self-determination or freedom), and Svarājya (self-governance) interrelate and offer a roadmap towards fulfilling lives.

By pursuing right understanding, we develop a deeper awareness of our Svātva (natural acceptance) at different life levels. This process of self-reflection liberates us from internal and external limitations like misconceptions, conflicts, and compulsions. The deeper understanding of Svātva cultivates self-organised living. This transition towards Svatantra fosters a harmonious co-existence with others and empowers us to support them in achieving their self-organized states, a natural step towards collective Svarājya. This journey is self-driven without requiring external coercion.

A significant message emerges here: **building order within society is reliant on and sustained by the development of order within ourselves.** Any social change should build upon this principle. This is a core principle to follow when making policies for nations and global communities.

Transforming Consciousness: From Animal Consciousness to Human Consciousness

Our path towards genuine understanding promotes a transformation from "animal consciousness" to "human consciousness." The process of self-exploration catalyzes our consciousness, which leads to a shift in priorities and the way we perceive opportunities.

In "animal consciousness", we give prominence to physical gratification, sensory pleasure, and wealth accumulation. Our evolutionary aspirations are rooted in physical comfort and maximal enjoyment. As mentioned before, this inclination ultimately traps human beings in dissatisfaction and contributes to widespread individual and global problems.

Through transformation towards "human consciousness", we anchor our thoughts and actions on a foundation of right understanding. Relationships become paramount, with the careful recognition and satisfaction of our fundamental needs within an ecological production and utilization framework.

Implications of Value-Based Living

Here's a concise illustration of the impact of value-based living:

1. Individual Level:

- Happiness and prosperity.
- Reduction of internal conflicts and contradictions, fostering self-discovery.
- Eliminating tension, frustration, depression, and unnecessary competitiveness.
- Development of a defined and consistent behaviour.
- Enhancing self-confidence and contentment.
- Reduced anxieties and uncertainties relating to financial security and health.

2. Family Level:

- Promotion of peace, harmony, and a sense of fulfilment within families.
- Strengthened family bonds, encouraging nurturing relationships.
- Minimizing familial disagreements.
- Curbing materialistic and excessive spending habits associated with celebratory events.

3. Societal Level:

- Increased prioritization of relationships over materialistic pursuits, promoting fearlessness and mutual trust.
- Reducing distinctions based on gender, race, social status, and beliefs.

- Resolving conflicts between communities and nations through understanding and peaceful collaboration, curbing harmful tendencies such as terrorism and extremist ideologies.
- Increased awareness of universal interconnectedness and shared goals, moving towards a globally united humanity rooted in trustful relationships.

4. **Natural World Level:**

- Greater understanding and harmony in relationships with other elements in nature.
- Solving ecological issues such as pollution and resource depletion by managing physical needs efficiently in a regenerative way that matches natural processes.
- Sustainable methods of production that reduce detrimental environmental impacts like greenhouse gas emissions and ozone depletion.
- Protection of species and biodiversity through thoughtful human interventions.

Universal Human Values: Achieving Human Welfare through a Holistic Vision

The Core Idea: Right understanding is key to identifying universal human values and achieving sustainable human welfare. It helps us see that happiness is closely linked to living ethically, which is a natural part of our being.

Shifting from a Narrow View: Currently, we often think of human welfare mainly as having more stuff (physical facilities). But right understanding reveals a **more complete vision**:

- **A Holistic Goal:** True welfare benefits everyone, always, and considers:
 - **Individual well-being:** Harmony within oneself (freedom from inner conflicts).
 - **Family prosperity:** Supporting healthy, thriving families across generations.
 - **Social harmony:** Creating safe and trusting societies.
 - **Environmental balance:** Living in a way that doesn't harm nature, but supports its health.
- **A Holistic Alternative:** This vision allows for the development of better systems:
 - Education
 - Healthcare
 - Technology
 - Economy
 - Governance

Evaluating Current Systems: With a complete understanding of human welfare, we can better assess existing systems like:

- Education
- Justice

- Government
- Economy

...and ask, are these systems actually working towards the benefit of all?

Towards a More Sustainable Way of Life: Holistic Alternatives

The Key Shift: We can work towards a "Holistic Alternative"—a way of living that:

- Is good for everyone.
- Respects nature and the environment.
- Provides genuine fulfilment for each person.

We can use human ingenuity (creativity, knowledge, skills) to create such a future.

The Importance of Education:

- **Humanistic Education:** A reformed education that teaches us to understand harmony within ourselves and our world is a foundational aspect of this journey.
- **Beyond Basics:** It's not just about reading, writing, and math, but also understanding our values, connecting to the natural world, and using our skills for everyone's benefit.
- **Focus on Values and Skills:** A humanistic education helps us:
 - Identify our needs correctly.
 - Find responsible ways to meet those needs (eco-friendly, people-friendly).
 - Develop our ability to explore ourselves and grow continuously.

The Importance of a Humanistic Constitution

Toward a More Unified Humanity: We can also design a "**Humanistic Constitution**": a guiding document that establishes frameworks for a better society and world.

Addressing Our Differences:

- Society today is often divided (castes, religions, nations) causing conflict.
- Humanistic principles, however, can unite us through shared goals and values that naturally work for everyone.
- Stopping conflict with violence will never really work – it just creates more harm.
- A better path is building awareness and understanding so that conflict resolves spontaneously and naturally, from a place of compassion and concern for all of existence.

What might a humanistic constitution include? Things like:

- Rights and duties that benefit everyone.
- Clearer and more just ways of managing societies.
- Methods for creating a peaceful world where all beings flourish.

Building Towards a Universal Human Order

Understanding Harmony: Our recognition of harmony in the universe, especially when seen in contrast to the ways humans often operate, enables a shared understanding of creating an inclusive, well-being-oriented society.

Key Features of a Universal Human Order:

- The core dimensions of human effort: Education, healthcare, technology, economic models, and judicial processes are reformed to align with this overall goal.
- **Organizational Structures:** Our understanding of the inter-connectivity and our role as part of a greater 'web of life' drives community organization that extends organically outward from family units to connect the whole world.

Important to Remember: All of humanity's knowledge, tools, and inventions should be used in a way that is consistent with this principle. It is humans who need to embrace these insights so that humanity becomes part of the larger order of nature, a harmonious part of an intelligent, connected universe that sustains us all.

By understanding and implementing the universal values, we can contribute to creating a future that is both sustainable and fulfilling for all beings.

Professional Ethics: Understanding the Role and Challenges

Profession: A Channel for Participation and Service

Core Idea: Profession is a vital way for humans to contribute to society and nature, supporting the larger order that sustains us all. It's a meaningful activity related to one or more of the five domains of human endeavour that promote a healthy and harmonious society (e.g., education, health, production, exchange, justice).

The Importance of Professional Skills and Ethics:

- Through professional training, we develop the necessary knowledge and skills to make our contributions.
- **Ethical conduct** involves utilizing these skills to achieve a holistic goal (the well-being of all and the environment).
- Competent professionals act with:
 - Right understanding.
 - Skill (dexterity).
 - Dedication (commitment).

The Need for Value Competence:

- Focusing only on skill development isn't enough; we need **ethical competence**—which is built through value-based education.

- Without this focus on ethical competence, ethical guidelines or codes of conduct can feel superficial.

Challenges to Professional Ethics in the Modern World

The Current Emphasis: In today's world, many professions prioritize "economic development," often translating into:

- Wealth accumulation (profit maximization).
- Focusing on having more physical facilities.

The Problem: These tendencies generate several negative impacts:

- Global challenges related to ecological issues.
- Dilemmas and conflicts at multiple levels within the society.

Addressing the Issue: Developing right understanding is the most effective path to change our actions towards better decision making and living.

Our Goals in This Chapter:

1. Understand professions in a wider perspective that encompasses all facets of life (beyond materialistic outcomes).
2. Recognize how we can build ethical competence for improved performance of our professional roles.
3. Understand current challenges to ethics within various professions.
4. Evaluate different approaches taken to address the decline in ethical professional conduct.
5. Realize how the current worldview can often contradict our understanding of what ethical professional conduct should look like.

Right Understanding of Profession: Service and Contribution

Purpose: Each profession offers us the ability to serve our families and participate in the larger social and natural order.

Core Aspects:

- **Contribution:** It allows us to play a role in the functioning of society and ensure wellbeing for all.
- **Skill Requirement:** Most professions need skills.
- **Holistic Focus:** For a profession to be genuinely beneficial, its purpose should align with comprehensive human welfare—it should be about more than earning a livelihood.

Excellence in a Profession: It is evaluated not simply based on monetary gains, but also on whether it enhances wellbeing and helps build a more sustainable future for society and the natural world.

Contrast with Current Viewpoint:

- Often, a profession is valued only in terms of potential earning power, power over others, and physical comforts.

- This can conflict with our ideals for ethical practices in our jobs.
- A true foundation for ethical behavior requires an understanding of profession as service.
- Value education cultivates the correct perspective of professional activities and their purpose.

Ethical Competence: Cultivating Right Actions in Profession

Ethical Competence is Crucial: Ethical competence—being equipped to behave and act ethically within the framework of professional practices—is critical to fostering ethical conduct. Otherwise, rules, codes, and oaths remain formalities that can easily be bypassed by those focused on self-interest and self-gain.

Why Unethical Behavior Happens: Individuals often behave unethically due to:

- Lack of clear understanding of true happiness.
- Belief that happiness stems primarily from material comforts and wealth accumulation.

Building Ethical Competence:

This process is a long-term endeavor that requires appropriate value education. Here are core elements that define a person with strong ethical competence:

1. **Clarity on Comprehensive Goals:** Understanding the core goals for holistic well-being (inner peace, family prosperity, societal trust, ecological balance) and that working towards them, in a universally inclusive way, will create lasting happiness for everyone.
2. **Confidence and Harmony:** Possessing both self-confidence and a profound belief in the interconnected harmony, self-regulation, and stability of the universe.
3. **Mutually Fulfilling Behaviour:** Developing a clear and sure understanding of ethical behavior and acknowledging that such action will contribute to lasting personal and communal happiness and prosperity.
4. **Environmentally Responsible Interaction:** Engaging with nature in a mutually beneficial way, recognizing the limitations that impact human-centric projects and implementing plans accordingly.
5. **Real-World Application:** Having the ability to incorporate understanding into daily activities within any given role or project.

Current Issues and Approaches to Professional Ethics

Increase in Unethical Practices:

- Unethical activities in professions have increased with rapid technological advancement.
- Corruption spreads across multiple industries like a disease.
- People believe that money can manipulate people and systems.

Manifestations of Unethical Behaviour:

- Serious financial scandals and fraud, often enabled through complex financial and legal methods
- Exploitation of workers and/or customers
- Large-scale environmental destruction or health issues
- The formation of powerful 'mafias' influencing political power through manipulation and misinformation campaigns.

Examples of Unethical Behavior in Various Industries:

- **Business:** Taking advantage of supply issues by raising prices for needed products. Adulterating or producing counterfeit products.
- **Medicine:** Taking advantage of others' medical situations through financial manipulation and disregard for care and wellbeing.

Methods to Curb Unethical Behaviour (Limitations):

Various attempts to limit unethical professional conduct frequently have minimal effectiveness. Common attempts include:

- Professional ethics courses, training programs, and discussions
- Codes of conduct or ethical oaths
- Rigorous auditing or oversight procedures
- Strengthened laws and increased punishment
- Public transparency initiatives (e.g., Right to Information laws)
- Media 'sting operations'
- Whistleblower programs
- Regulatory agencies (e.g., vigilance commissions or consumer protection boards)
- Lawsuits or civil action

These approaches are usually only superficial as they address consequences rather than the root cause, often focused on mitigating damage instead of resolving the foundational belief system driving such behavior.

Addressing the Root Cause: Developing the ethical competence of individuals and professionals through proper value education is the only truly effective approach to preserving the standards of ethical professional conduct.

Resolving the Contradictions through Right Understanding

The Core Problem: Many issues in the domain of professional ethics emerge due to a worldview prioritizing wealth and material accumulation. This can lead to 'win-lose' scenarios where one person's gain leads to another's loss. It creates the feeling that everyone is inherently competitive, instead of understanding how we can improve outcomes for all. Furthermore, it suggests that environmental limits don't apply to certain projects.

Resolving the contradictions: The inherent difficulties arise from a conflict between the perceived notion of happiness tied to wealth accumulation and a genuine desire for wellbeing for all—a common good. Only when we foster genuine, transformative understanding of the nature of reality will it become possible to establish lasting ethical practices and to address those inconsistencies or contradictions within a particular belief framework.

Appropriate Technologies, Production Systems, and Management Models

The Vision for a Holistic Alternative

Core Idea: Right understanding helps us see the need for a better future - a "**Holistic Alternative**" – which means developing a way of life that is genuinely good for everyone and respectful of the environment. It's the vision for "**Mānavīya Vyavasthā**"—a human-centric order that builds harmony at a global level.

The Holistic Alternative's Key Features:

- Meeting the fundamental needs of all people.
- Living in a way that respects and enhances the natural world.
- Promoting global social harmony and peace.

Moving Beyond Materialism: The technologies and systems that we develop must be designed to support human welfare, not just economic growth. They must prioritize the holistic goals of "samādhana, samruddhi, abhaya, and sah-astitva" – peace of mind, prosperity, freedom from fear, and co-existence.

Principles of Sustainable Technology: Appropriate technology should be developed by understanding the principles inherent in the natural world.

Incorporating Traditional Wisdom:

We should learn from:

- **Nature's systems:** They're interconnected, self-sustaining, and efficient.
- **Traditional practices:** They've helped communities thrive for centuries in a more eco-friendly way.
- **Existing science and technology:** We have a wealth of knowledge to utilize that can contribute towards improving sustainable, environmentally aware practices and methods that create value for everyone.

This chapter will discuss how we can develop better, more sustainable approaches in three areas:

1. **Technology**
2. **Production systems**
3. **Management**

Criteria for Developing Appropriate Technologies

Existing Technology & Worldviews: Today's technologies are largely products of a worldview that prioritizes materialism. They have evolved to satisfy human needs through an approach centered around rapid material consumption and expansion.

Creating New Solutions: In order to create more helpful technologies that promote sustainability and true welfare, we must consider new aspects of human wellbeing that don't exist within the previously dominant mindset.

Three Key Principles for Better Technology:

- **Addressing Real Needs:** We must create systems that support our true needs, and move away from a mindset that perpetuates and generates artificial or 'forced' needs.
- **People-Friendly:** We should focus on making technology safe and easy to use, accessible to a wide array of users in diverse environments and promoting health and wellbeing rather than technology centered only on material gain.
- **Environmentally Friendly:** The design, usage, and consequences of technologies should integrate naturally and contribute towards a healthier planet (not add to pollution or the destruction of nature).
- **Locally Driven:** Support local sustainability by promoting local innovation and materials.

More Specific Criteria for Technology:

- Meet real needs
- Align with nature's patterns and processes.
- Facilitate efficient and human-centred usage of resources and resources.
- Promote health and wellbeing in a universal manner (e.g., promoting physical and emotional health, safety in technology designs, consideration for individual abilities in design and deployment of resources and technology, respect for human needs).
- Utilized available local resources and knowledge where possible and appropriate.
- Depend on renewable energy sources.
- Cost-effective and low energy demands.
- Promote positive human relationships and cooperation.
- Encourages local management of and decision-making regarding technological tools and innovations.
- Durable and capable of being easily recycled.

Creating Appropriate Production Systems

Production Principles: Developing sustainable and inclusive production models depends on considering the following factors:

- What to make?

- How to make it?
- Who needs the items we produce?
- How much do we really need to produce?

Answers depend on a range of interconnected components:

- The needs of local populations, considering overall wellbeing for everyone within any given region, location or society.
- The resources readily available in the environment and locale within which a project exists.

Criteria for a Better Production Systems:

- Optimize the use of local resources and skill sets that currently exist within a given society or region.
- Focus on sustainable economic and environmentally sound practices that don't negatively affect those with which humans share the world (e.g., wildlife, natural environments).
- Prioritize fulfilling local consumption and needs of the population with the understanding that needs differ from region to region.
- Align the kind and amount of items we create with resources, production capabilities, and actual requirements for daily and seasonal necessities.
- Implement practices that offer many diverse options and projects that promote employment for individuals within a local or societal context
- Foster approaches to creating things that enable a high-level of localized support and production instead of over-reliance on centralized facilities
- Support personal creative growth and development, giving many options for people to use their skills and participate in fulfilling roles that are meaningful.
- Leverage people and environmentally friendly technologies (that are gentle in their effects on the environment and accessible in a broader context within a specific location and society).
- Guarantee production that maintains integrity in quality for all that is created.
- Keep health and safety top-of-mind for both those working to make the product and those using the items and considering everyone that interacts with any specific project.

A New Approach to Management

Key Aspect: Management focuses on nurturing and meeting the needs of all involved (employees and end-users of items and systems, e.g., consumer-producers, citizens) instead of purely economic and financial gain. The primary focus on and through management must always be driven by wellbeing for the individual and broader humanity, prioritizing social and personal growth through work instead of viewing employees as only being useful when contributing towards profit margins.

Key Criteria for a Humanistic Management Model:

- Treat a workplace as if it is a tightly-knit family group.

- Instill the practice of cooperation and offering incentives that build towards fulfilling work for those engaged within any role or area of focus within an organization.
- Create the most positive and most honest approach to evaluating the efforts of individual team members and employees in meaningful and honest ways that benefit both employee and broader social benefit.
- Concentrate on fostering job satisfaction for everyone involved, acknowledging and valuing a diverse range of roles and perspectives (both employees and those outside of the company who purchase goods and/or services).
- Instill shared responsibilities and methods for managing business practices in participatory ways that include and welcome contributions from team members at every level and create inclusive processes.
- Value the development of skill sets and understanding among every employee in continuous ways.
- Engage in integrative decision-making that includes a wide array of considerations and that takes into account diversity within an organization.

Evaluating Present-Day Systems

The Limitations of Current Technologies and Production Methods

- Current models heavily rely on fossil fuels and resources that can become rapidly depleted, or cannot be replaced and lead to harmful environmental damage and imbalances in various locales.
- Many systems prioritize mass production (and tend towards being quite large and often require tremendous input of both material goods and labor).
- Overly complicated designs requiring huge financial costs and leading to difficulties or complexities in accessing and/or modifying technology for personal uses.
- Over-reliance on sophisticated machines (automation), replacing individuals in a given role and leading to displacement and unemployment in localized contexts.
- Many practices alienate individuals and produce antagonism and disagreements between employees and managerial staff.

The Issue of Exploitation:

Despite tremendous progress, contemporary technologies and practices can exacerbate ecological damage, inequality, and social alienation within local areas, as well as creating problems in areas far outside of the impact zone for a project.

Learning from Nature and Traditional Practices

Beyond Exploitation: We must change our mindset. Rather than assuming that nature exists only to be exploited by humans, we need to appreciate its remarkable interconnectedness, resourcefulness, and ability to renew itself and sustain life. Many systems in nature can act as role models that guide more environmentally-centered methods.

Shifting away from Material-Centric Worldviews: Many contemporary cultures hold to views about traditions suggesting a narrative in which traditional ways are believed to be inferior to current practices.

Realizing Traditional Wisdom: Traditional techniques (from many regions) offer much wisdom on sustainable living. There are many ways in which people in the past understood natural processes that remain quite useful and valid today. We need to examine those ideas with careful and respect consideration to acknowledge the validity of prior learning from previous societies and human efforts and innovations that pre-dated the current world-view of material development.

Gaining a New Perspective: The natural world and traditional wisdom, offer models for living in balance with the larger ecosystem of human interactions and relationships. When we analyze these ideas and insights thoughtfully, it becomes clear how a change in thinking (worldview) will inevitably change how technology and social structures develop and are integrated in positive ways that create genuine and long-lasting wellbeing and opportunities for all.

Examples: Eco-friendly agriculture techniques, water harvesting methods (and/or watershed management), soil/ecological regeneration and repair, healing with medicinal plants, food storage strategies, traditional crafting approaches, and many more provide helpful blueprints. It's not a matter of "going backward" but of using knowledge that was developed through prior experience to build towards a more supportive and healthy way of life that recognizes and values diversity.

Through learning from nature and revisiting older methods alongside the knowledge that currently exists, we can build towards the "**holistic alternative**".

Grāma-Svārājya & Renewable Technologies:

Grāma-Svārājya: A Self-Reliant Village Model

The Big Idea: Imagine a village (or small town) that can take care of most of its own needs without relying too much on outside sources. This is **Grāma-Svārājya** - a self-sufficient and harmonious community where people live in balance with nature.

Key Features:

- **Self-sufficiency:** The village has ways to produce its food, goods, and energy locally.
- **Well-being:** Prioritizes the health and happiness of all residents (mental, physical, and spiritual) while also encouraging local self-governance and localized responsibility and management.
- **Harmony with nature:** Practices that benefit the environment are important.
- **Renewable resources:** Using natural and endlessly replenishing resources (like sunlight, wind, and water) for energy.

What would Grāma-Svārājya look like?

- Local Farming (with natural methods): growing diverse crops for food.
- Artisan Crafts: using local resources to create goods.
- Small-scale Industries: processing food or creating useful items, using people's skills.

- **Careful Planning:** Matching the resources available with the needs of the village to foster efficient local practices and avoid depletion of vital materials and the damage of localized habitats and other ecosystem elements.

Renewable Technologies: Replacing Harmful Methods

Why are they important? The widespread use of fossil fuels (like coal and oil) is causing damage to our planet. We need to move toward using renewable energy and resources.

Types of Renewable Technologies:

These technologies can provide energy and resources in sustainable ways, focusing on long-term viability and local resilience:

- **Biomass Energy:** Turning organic waste (food scraps, manure) into fuels like biogas or producing heat through bio-burn processes, often producing valuable byproducts (e.g., manure or nutrient-rich composted soils)
- **Human and Animal Power:** Using human effort or animal labor for work (e.g., with farming or agriculture tools).
- **Solar Power:** Capturing the energy from sunlight for heating, electricity, and cooling with distributed or decentralized approaches (e.g., through installing local solar systems, modifying agriculture to integrate sunlight and maximize local resource sustainability).
- **Wind Power:** Using wind to pump water or make electricity through wind turbines with distributed or decentralized designs (e.g., by integrating water pumping and energy creation and/or generation through integrating elements that are located throughout a particular locale, landscape or region, to diversify approaches to energy infrastructure)
- **Hydropower (Water Energy):** Small-scale hydropower to generate energy for irrigation, homes and industrial activities.
- **Water Management:** Collecting rainwater and efficiently managing it for drinking and farming using innovative or historically-established water and sanitation infrastructure.
- **Eco-friendly Building:** Using sustainable materials for houses (like compressed earth or bamboo) and designs that are environmentally sound.
- **Natural Farming:** Practicing methods to grow crops without relying on chemicals (using organic or local, ecologically sensitive materials in production and food cultivation).
- **Waste Recycling (Eco-sanitation):** Handling sewage and waste using methods that minimize environmental damage.

Benefits of using renewable technologies:

- Protecting the environment.
- Creating energy independence and diversity.
- Promoting local economic activity (through increasing local job markets and fulfilling work within local contexts and through locally tailored agricultural projects).
- Creating greater self-reliance within villages and creating more inclusive opportunities.