

**"Let what I dig from thee, O' Earth, rapidly spring and grow again
O' Purifier, let me not pierce through thy vitals or thy heart. . ."**

ATHARVA VEDA [Book XI, Hymn I]

Ecological balance or a steady state earth system is integral to our survival and well-being. Human beings play a vital role either directly or indirectly in this process. Nature creates and maintains the conditions under which humans can live in productive harmony, also fulfilling the social, economic and other requirements of present and future generations.

Environmental sustainability involves making decisions and taking actions that are in the interests of protecting the natural world, with particular emphasis on preserving the capability of the environment to support human life. It is an important subject in present times, as people are realising the full impact, the businesses and individuals can have on the environment.

Is the Concept of Sustainable Development Flawed?

This is a big question and there are lot of interpretations of Sustainable Development. There are many reasons why one might critique the Sustainable Development Goals and initiatives taken so far. Both 'sustainable' and 'development' are open to huge interpretive difficulties, which can be laden with a range of ideologies, perspectives and priorities.

If development also represents a qualitative improvement in social and environmental needs, then in our view, the idea of development involves a more dynamic interplay between economic, social and environmental goals to achieve desirable lifestyles. Sustainable development is thus not flawed in itself. Rather, it is just a question of striking the right balance between the factors involved.

But such a balance is likely to require a hard-to-imagine cultural shift and a change in the economic and political paradigms. It seems that we have left the environment unaccounted for, for so long that a more drastic rebalance seems difficult to attain, but is the need of the hour.

The current economic system requires continual growth and does not directly account for social and environmental outcomes. Essentially, the economic system seeks to subsume the environment within it, assuming that any degradation or depletion of resources will be avoided and/or technological development trends moves us to other resources in time and reduce material consumption and pollution.

So, is sustainable development flawed because the change in our economic and political system is inconceivable? Well, maybe or may not!

Regardless of where we look for pessimism or optimism on these points, it is hard to maintain sustainable development is flawed in its intentions; surely everyone agrees that we are better off aiming for global equality and healthy ecosystems. It just depends on one's ideas of how we get there. Although overuse of resources may have led to sustainable development losing some of its interpretive value.

We are starting to witness the penalty for unsustainable lifestyles and patterns of production and consumption. As the human population is exploding, resources are shrinking. Concerns loom everywhere, from declining pollinators affecting food security, to air and water pollution affecting the quality of life, and land shortage and degradation affecting both agriculture and biodiversity.

Very simply put, environmental sustainability works on the concept of balance. This balance can be seen in the usage of resources globally, a balance within the economic strata of societies so as to not deprive anybody of basic needs, a balance between development and the need to save the environment simultaneously. Once this balance is achieved, the principles behind the functioning of societies and communities at every level will automatically aim at maintaining that balance or as it is understood today, sustainable development. But the, crucial point that emerges is, why is it taking so long to achieve this balance? Hence, this conference aims to discuss the inevitable question:

“Environmental Sustainability: A Challenge?”