



Research Article

Principles of Sustainable Development as Contained in Vedic Mantras: A Philosophical and Practical Analysis

Gunbala Ameta* 

Department of Education, Janardan Rai Nagar Rajasthan Vidhyapeeth, Udaipur, India

Abstract

This study delves into the ecological consciousness and principles of sustainable living embedded in Vedic literature. Drawing upon hymns and mantras from the Atharvaveda, Rigveda, Yajurveda, and the Upaniṣads, it highlights a timeless reverence for earth, water, plants, and cosmic harmony. Texts such as the Bhūmi Sukta, Vanaspati Sukta, Āpo Devatā Sukta, and Śānti Mantras reveal a vision of nature not as a resource to be exploited, but as a sacred partner in human existence. Complementary insights from the Brihadāraṇyaka and Iśopaniṣad emphasize universal well-being, social justice, and the interconnectedness of all beings, reminding us that sustainability is as much about ethics and compassion as it is about ecology. By analyzing these verses through transliteration and contextual interpretation, the research demonstrates how ancient wisdom anticipated many of the values now central to global sustainability frameworks. The Vedic call for respect toward the earth, sanctity of water, preservation of biodiversity, and pursuit of peace resonates deeply with contemporary aspirations for climate action, equality, and holistic development. Ultimately, the study affirms that Vedic wisdom offers more than ritualistic guidance—it provides a holistic framework where spirituality, ethics, and environmental stewardship converge. Revisiting these traditions through the lens of sustainability allows us to see them not as relics of the past, but as living philosophies that can inspire humanity to build a more balanced, compassionate, and sustainable future.

Keywords

Vedic Mantras, Sustainable Development, Natural Resources, Holistic Well-being, Rigveda, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda

1. Introduction

Sustainable development aims to balance present needs with future generations' rights. While the concept gained prominence in the late 20th century, its roots lie in ancient civilizations. The Vedas, India's oldest texts, elevate natural elements to divine status, embedding ecological consciousness into spiritual practice. This paper analyzes Vedic mantras to establish their relevance to modern SDGs.

2. Methods

- 1) Textual Analysis: Selected mantras from Rigveda, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda, and Upanishads were studied in Sanskrit and translated using IAST transliteration.
- 2) Comparative Philosophy: Vedic ecological ethics were compared with Greek, Taoist, Egyptian, and Mesopotamian traditions.
- 3) Contemporary Relevance: Case studies of Chipko

*Correspondence: Gunbala Ameta (gunbalaameta51@gmail.com)

Received: 8 December 2025; Accepted: 22 January 2026; Published: 30 March 2026



Copyright: © The Author(s), 2026. Published by Science Publishing Group. This is an **Open Access** article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Movement, Bishnoi community, and Gandhian philosophy were examined.

- 4) Policy Linkage: Connections were drawn between Vedic principles and SDGs, NEP 2020, and environmental policies.

3. Literature Review

Previous studies have highlighted ecological consciousness in Vedic texts but often in fragmented ways:

- 1) Sharma (2010) emphasized the Bhūmi Sukta as an early ecological hymn.
- 2) Dwivedi (2015) linked Vanaspati Sukta with biodiversity conservation.
- 3) Mishra (2018) discussed Gandhian philosophy as a modern articulation of Aparigraha.
- 4) International comparative works (e.g., Callicott, 1994) examined Taoist and Vedic harmony with nature.

Gap: Few studies systematically connect Vedic mantras with the UN SDGs. This paper addresses that gap by providing a structured mapping of Vedic wisdom to SDGs, strengthening both philosophical and practical relevance.

4. Respect for Nature and the Environment in Vedic Mantras

4.1. Earth Hymn

The Bhūmi Sukta (Atharvaveda 12.1) of the Atharva Veda worships the Earth as Mother and calls for judicious use of its resources [1, 7, 27]. It teaches us that whatever we take from the Earth, we must return it in return [1]. The first hymn of the twelfth chapter of the Atharva Veda is called the Prithvi Sukta, Bhūmi Sukta or Mātṛī Sukta [1, 8]. This hymn is very rich and full of environmental consciousness [10]. In this, the Earth is seen as a mother.

“माता भूमिः पुत्रोऽहं पृथिव्याः”

Mātā bhūmiḥ putro 'haṁ pṛthivyāḥ (Atharvaveda 12.1.12).

Meaning: “The Earth is my mother, I am her son.”

Relevance: Aligns with SDG 15 (Life on Land).

All living and non-living things, vegetation, mountains, rivers, and animals are described with great reverence and a scientific approach in the Bhūmi Sukta (Atharvaveda 12.1) [1, 7]. Environmental balance, biodiversity, and the relationship of humans with the Earth are presented with great sensitivity [8]. The Earth is described as stable, inspiring a sense of gratitude and protection towards all [10]. The human-earth relationship is emphasized — man is called the son of the Earth, which gives rise to responsibility and respect [1]. Prayer and apology are also evident: when we dig the Earth or walk upon it, forgiveness is sought — a very sensitive ecological approach [9]. A scientific perspective is also present, such as the measurement of the Earth by the sun and the moon, the origin

of vegetation, and the process of nourishment [1].

Example mantra:

सत्यं बृहदतमुग्रं दीक्षा तपो ब्रह्म यज्ञः पृथिवी धारयन्ति।

satyaṁ bṛhad atam ugraṁ dīkṣā tapo brahma yajñāḥ pṛthivī dhārayanti ।

Meaning: Truth, penance, Brahma knowledge and yajna – all these hold the earth [1, 7, 8].

4.2. Jal Sukta

The Vedas contain a collection of mantras dedicated to the divine, sacred, and life-giving power of water. It is particularly known as the “Āpo Devatā Sūkta” which is found in both the Rig Veda and Yajur Veda.

Key Mantras of Water Sukta-

Āpo Devatā Sūkta: -Rigveda(10.9)

आपो हि ष्ठा मयोभुवस्ता न ऊर्जे दधातना महेरणाय चक्षसे॥

Āpo hi ṣṭhā mayobhuvaḥtā na ūrje dadhātana [2, 4, 26].

Meaning: “O waters, you are blissful, give us energy.”

Relevance: SDG 6 (Clean Water).

Meaning of other mantras (meaning from Vedas):

1) (5558) समुद्रज्येष्ठाः सलिलस्य मध्यात्पुनाना यन्त्यनिविशमानाः॥

इन्द्रो या वज्री वृषभोरराद ता आपो देवीरिह मामवन्तु॥1॥

samudrajyēṣṭhāḥ salilasya madhyāt punānā yanty anivīśamānāḥ ।

indro yā vajrī vṛṣabhor arād tā āpo devīriha māmavantu ॥1॥ [2, 7, 26, 27]

Water has been said to originate from the sea and be the source of purity.

2) (5559) या आपो दिव्या उत वा स्रवन्ति रवनित्रिमा उत वा याः स्वयञ्जाः॥

समुद्रार्था याः शुचयः पावकास्ता आपो देवीरिह मामवन्तु॥2॥

yā āpo divyā uta vā stravanti ravanitrimā uta vā yāḥ svayañjāḥ ।

samudrārthā yāḥ śucayaḥ pāvakāś tā āpo devīriha mām avantu ॥2॥ [2, 7, 26, 27]

Water obtained from rain, rivers, wells, and springs is all sacred and protective.

3) (5552) शतपवित्राः स्वधया मदन्तीर्देवीर्देवानामपि यन्ति पाथः॥

ता इन्द्रस्य न मिनन्ति व्रतानि सिन्धुभ्यो हण्यं घृतवज्जुहोता॥3॥

śatapavittrāḥ svadhayā madantīr devīr devānām api yanti pāthāḥ ।

tā indrasya na minantiṁ vratāni sindhubhyo haṇyaṁ ghṛtavat juhota ॥3॥ [2, 7, 26, 27]

The water deities participate in the yagna and bestow blessings and satisfaction.

Jal Sukta in Vedas- Water is worshipped as a goddess. Water is used in yagna, bathing and achamana. This mantra inspires to protect and sustainably use water resources. Pure water is considered the basis of life and health.

4.3. Vanaspati Sukta

(Respect for flora and fauna): In the Rigveda, rivers, mountains, and gods are worshipped as deities in the Vanaspati Sukta (Rigveda 10.97) [2], and various mantras describe the importance of their conservation [7, 8, 27].

Overall Holistic Approach: Their Vedic philosophy shows that man is an inseparable part of nature, not the master. This architecture is completely in sync with modern universal principles.

5. Judicious Use and Sustainability (Judgemental Use of Resources and Sustainability)

5.1. “Eeshavasyamidam Sarvam”

The mantra of the Ishopanishad (Ishopanishad 1.1) states that everything is pervaded by God and we should consume only that which is needed [6, 9]. This establishes the principle of restraint and non-accumulation (Aparigraha), in contrast to modern consumerism [10].

5.2. Social Justice and Inclusive Development

5.2.1. Sarva Kalyan

The Vedic thought is based on the principle of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” (the whole world is one family). This is not limited to human beings only, but includes all living beings [5, 10]. This principle forms the framework of modern inclusive development, where no one can be left behind [21, 29].

5.2.2. Social Harmony and Equality

Though the varna system was disturbed later, the original Vedic philosophy considered all sects equal and inspired society to work in cooperation with each other [7, 10]. A mantra of the Rig Veda (10.191.4) states the principle of unity and collective harmony [2, 26].

6. Relevance of Vedic Wisdom for Modern Sustainable Development

The foundation of the SDGs, which are based on environmental sustainability, social justice, and economic equality, already exists in Vedic philosophy [7, 8]. We can analyze specific mantras from various Vedas that directly reflect key aspects of the SDGs, such as clean water (Rigveda 10.9) [2], land conservation (Atharvaveda 12.1) [1], poverty alleviation (Īśopaniṣad 1.1) [6], and peace (Rigveda 10.191.4) [2, 26]. This research highlights how Vedic wisdom can provide an important philosophical foundation to address today’s global challenges [9, 10, 29]. Vedic philosophy inspires us to adopt a

holistic lifestyle beyond materialism, which promotes both inner peace and environmental health [21].

6.1. Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation)

The 12th mantra of Chapter 36 of the Yajur Veda evokes a sense of peace and environmental balance [4]. Rivers, lakes, and water sources are considered sacred in Vedic culture [7]. Water was regarded as the basis of life and a symbol of purity [8]. This mantra highlights environmental balance and the glory of the water element and its benevolent effects [9, 10].

Vedic mantra:

Yajurveda 36.12 — Sanskrit text:

शं नो देवीरभिष्टय आपो भवन्तु पीतये। शं योरभि स्रवन्तु नः॥

Śaṃ no devīrabhishtaya āpo bhavantu peetaye. Śaṃ yorabhi sraṇantu naḥ

"O divine water goddesses! May they be beneficial for us to drink. May they flow upon us with auspiciousness."

Meaning:-Water is revered as a goddess. This mantra invokes the purity, potency, and benevolent effects of water. It evokes a sense of symbiosis and gratitude with nature [4, 7-10, 41].

Vedic mantra: Āpo Devatā Sūkta (Rigveda 10.9) [3]:

Sanskrit text:

आपो हिष्ठा मयोभुवस्ता न ऊर्जे दधातन ।

महे रणाय चक्षसे ॥१॥

यो वः शिवतमो रसस्तस्य भाजयतेह नः ।

उशतीरिव मातरः ॥२॥

तस्मा अरं गमाम वः यस्य क्षयाय जिवन्वथ ।

आपो जनयथा च नः ॥३॥

āpo hiṣṭhā mayobhuvastā na ūrje dadhātana |

mahe raṇāya cakṣase ||1||

yo vaḥ śivatamo rasaḥ tasya bhājayateha naḥ |

uśatīriva mātaraḥ ||2||

tasmā aram gamāma vaḥ yasya kṣayāya jinvatha |

āpo janayathā ca naḥ ||3||

Meaning: Verse 1-

"O waters, you are indeed the bringers of bliss. Grant us strength and nourishment.

May you bestow upon us vision and clarity for great purpose."

Verse 2-

"The most auspicious essence that belongs to you — may that be shared with us,

just as loving mothers nourish their children."

Verse 3-

"Therefore, we approach you, O waters, for that blessing by which you sustain life.

O waters, generate well-being and prosperity for us." [1, 3, 7, 8, 12, 13, 21, 29].

Relation to sustainable development:

6.2. Conservation of Land and Ecosystems (SDG 15: Life on Land)

The Earth is revered in Vedic philosophy as a mother, whose conservation is the duty of every human being.

Vedic Mantra:

“माता भूमिः पुत्रोऽहं पृथिव्याः।” (अथर्ववेद 12.1.12)

Mātā bhūmih putro 'ham pṛthivyāḥ (Atharvaveda 12.1.12)

Meaning: “The land is my mother and I am her son.”

- 1) Relation to Sustainable Development: This is the mantra from the famous Bhūmi Sukta of the Atharva Veda, which defines our relationship with the land as that of a child and mother (Atharvaveda 12.1.12). The mantra calls for nurturing the land rather than exploiting it [7, 8]. This directly reflects the goal of SDG 15: “Conserve, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems” [29]. The mantra provides a philosophical basis for addressing problems such as deforestation, desertification, and biodiversity loss [9, 10].
- 2) Contemporary Products: This sutra is useful for promoting education in the National Education Policy 2020 and the Sustainable Development Goals [21, 29]. However, misinterpretations of such sutras can sometimes be seen as destroying the spirit of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam — the principle that the whole world is one family [5, 7].
- 1) Respect for Flora and Fauna: In the Rigveda, rivers, mountains, and trees are revered as deities in the Vana-spāti Sukta which emphasizes their sacredness and the importance of conservation (Rigveda 10.97)
- 2) Yagna and Recycling- (SDG 3 Healthy Living and Well-being), SDG 12 (Responsible Goods and Products), and SDG 15 (Life on Land):- Vedic yagnas were not just religious rituals, but they were also a universal process. They purified the air and symbolized maintaining balance in nature.
- 3) Holistic Ecological Approach: Vedic philosophy believes that man is an inseparable part of nature, not its master. This approach is completely in sync with modern ecological principles.

6.3. Poverty Eradication and Economic Equality (SDG 1: No Poverty)

Prosperity in Vedic philosophy does not mean mere accumulation of wealth, but a life where no one is in want.

Vedic Mantra: “शतहस्त समाहर सहस्रहस्त संकिर।” (अथर्ववेद

3.24.5) [1]

śatahastā samāhara sahasrahastā saṁkira (Atharvaveda 3.24.5)

Meaning: “Earn with a hundred hands and distribute with a thousand hands.”

Relation to Sustainable Development: This mantra presents a powerful principle of economic equality and shared prosperity [2, 7]. It emphasizes the distribution of income rather than

its accumulation, so that no one remains poor in society [8]. This directly reflects the goal of SDG 1: “eradicate poverty in all its forms everywhere” [29]. The mantra supports an inclusive economic system that is based on social justice [9, 10].

6.4. Health and Well-Being (SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being)

The Vedic mantras emphasize not just physical, but also mental and spiritual health.

Vedic Mantra:

ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः ।

सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।

सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु ।

मा कश्चिद् दुःखभाग् भवेत् ॥ [5, 11]

oṃ sarve bhavantu sukhinaḥ

sarve santu nirāmayāḥ

sarve bhadraṇi paśyantu

mā kaścid duḥkhabhāg bhavet ॥ [5, 11]

Meaning: “May all be happy, may all be free from diseases.”

Relation to Sustainable Development: This mantra is a universal prayer for holistic well-being. It prays for the health and happiness of not just an individual, but the entire humanity [7, 11, 35]. This aligns perfectly with the goal of SDG 3 to “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages” [29].

6.5. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions)

In Vedic mantra, peace is considered to be achievable both internally and externally.

Vedic Mantra-(Sanskrit text)

ॐ द्यौः शान्तिरन्तरिक्षं शान्तिः,

पृथ्वी शान्तिरापः शान्तिरोषधयः शान्तिः।

वनस्पतयः शान्तिर्विश्वे देवाः शान्तिर्ब्रह्म शान्तिः,

सर्वं शान्तिः, शान्तिरेव शान्तिः,

सा मा शान्तिरेधि।

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥ [4]

oṃ dyauḥ śāntiḥ |

antarikṣaṁ śāntiḥ |

pṛthivī śāntiḥ |

āpaḥ śāntiḥ |

oṣadhayaḥ śāntiḥ |

vanaspatayaḥ śāntiḥ |

viśve devāḥ śāntiḥ |

brahma śāntiḥ |

sarvaṁ śāntiḥ |

śāntir eva śāntiḥ |

sā mā śāntir edhi ||
om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ || [4]

Meaning: This mantra prays for peace throughout the entire creation — peace in the sky, on the earth, in the waters, in the herbs, in the trees, among the gods, in Brahman, and in the whole universe. Ultimately, this peace should also become established within the seeker, making them calm and balanced.

The mantra teaches us that peace is not merely individual, but universal and all-pervading. When nature, the gods, and Brahman are filled with peace, only then can human beings truly experience real peace [4-6, 14-17, 21, 29]

Relation to Sustainable Development: This peace mantra wishes for peace not only in the human world but in the entire universe. It is an inspiration for building global peace, unity and just society. It is to promote the goal of SDG 16 to “build peaceful and inclusive societies, access justice and build effective, accountable and inclusive societies for all”.

6.6. Social Justice and Inclusive Development

6.6.1. Sarv Kalyan

Vedic thought is based on the principle of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” (the whole world is one family). This is not limited to human beings only, but includes all beings. This is in line with the principles of modern inclusive development, where no one is left behind [12-14].

6.6.2. Social Harmony and Equality

Though the varna system was later distorted, the original Vedic philosophy considered all human beings equal, and society was inspired to work in cooperation with each other. A mantra of the Rigveda (Rigveda 10.191.4) calls for unity and harmony. It is a very inspiring mantra, called the Aikamatya Sukta (ऐकमत्य सूक्त). This mantra evokes the spirit of social harmony, mental unity and emotional harmony [2, 7, 8].

Rig Veda 10.191.4 — Sanskrit text:

समानि वा आकूतिः समानाः हृदयानि वः।

समानमस्तु वो मनो यथा वः सुसहासति॥

samānī vā ākūtiḥ samānam hṛdayāni vaḥ ।

samānam astu vo mano yathā vaḥ susahāsati ॥

- 1) samānī vā ākūtiḥ – Let your aspirations and desires be the same.
- 2) samānam hṛdayāni vaḥ – Let your hearts (emotions and feelings) be aligned.
- 3) samānam astu vo mano – Let your minds (thoughts and understanding) be one.
- 4) yathā vaḥ susahāsati – So that you may live together joyfully and harmoniously.

Relation to Sustainable Development:

This mantra is often cited in the context of social cohesion, collective consciousness, and the spiritual ideal of sangha or community. It beautifully reflects the Vedic vision of unity in

diversity — a foundational principle for both ancient dharmic traditions and modern democratic societies. Briefly we can say that this mantra calls upon us to: Have the same thoughts, feelings and objectives. Live in harmony and cooperation with each other. Maintain unity, peace and balance in society [16, 17].

SDG 16 – Peaceful and Inclusive Societies- This mantra promotes social harmony, non-violence and cooperation, which are the foundation of sustainable peace and just institutions. Represents Vedic values such as collective consciousness and unity [22-24].

SDG 17 – Achieve Goals in Partnership – The mantra talks about common aspirations and unity of mind, reflecting the spirit of global cooperation and partnership.

SDG 3 – Health and Well-being- When there is unity and harmony in society, mental and social health improves. This mantra refers to that collective balance. It embodies the spirit of collective well-being [23, 24].

SDG 4 – Quality Education – This mantra inspires value-based education that develops a spirit of coexistence and cooperation among students.

This mantra is part of the Eikamatya Sukta, which reflects the tradition of collective decision-making, coexistence, and collective sacrifice in Vedic society. This approach also strengthens the inclusion of value-based education and Indian knowledge tradition in National Education Policy 2020.

This mantra is extremely relevant, especially in the context of education, policy making, and social reform, and also supports inclusive approaches like National Education Policy 2020 [22-24].

6.6.3. Health and Wellness, Conservation of Land Tourism, Selling of Australian Components and Products, Climate Change

Vanaspati Sukta (Mandal 10, Sukta 97) is a very important Sukta in the Rigveda which reveals the glory of medicines, their curative properties, and reverence for nature [2]. This Sukta is not only important from the spiritual point of view, but also deeply goes into the modern concept of sustainable development [7-10].

Rigveda Vanaspati Sukta (10.97) —

वनस्पतेषु ते नामानि विश्वा रुद्रस्य सूनवः।

तेषां त्वं पतिरसि॥

vanaspateṣu te nāmāni viśvā rudrasya sunavah

teṣāṃ tvam patir asi ॥

meaning: O plants! You have many names, you are the son of Rudra. You are the only master.

Plants have been considered as a form of divine power in the Rigveda, particularly in the Vanaspati Sukta (Rigveda 10.97) [2]. Medicines are described as life-giving and disease-curing, highlighting their sacred role in sustaining health [7, 8]. This Sukta reveals the feeling of symbiosis and gratitude with nature, emphasizing ecological harmony [9, 10].

Relation to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)- Vana-
spati Sukta specifically addresses following SDGs:

SDG 3: (Health and Well-being)-

Praise the glory of medicines and natural remedies.

SDG 15: (Conservation of terrestrial goal)- Conservation of
vegetation, biodiversity and a sense of balance.

SDG 12: (Regular dairy products)-

Prudent use of medicines and responsibility towards nature.

SDG 13: (Combating climate change)-

Balance with and ownership of nature.

These goals aim to:

- 1) Preserve the healing system
- 2) Medicinal medicinal security
- 3) Maintain biodiversity
- 4) Sustainable use of nature

Basically it can be said that there is a deep theoretical and
practical connection between the modern Sustainable Develop-
ment Goals (SDGs) and the ancient Vedic mantras. Vedic man-
tras are not mere religious rituals, but they are the principles of
an ideology that is based on harmony with nature as well as so-
ciety, social justice and holistic well-being [17, 21, 24, 29].

7. Comparative and Contemporary Relevance

7.1. Comparative Perspective: Dialogue Between Vedic Thought and Other Civilizations

The idea of sustainable development is not merely a modern
invention; it has roots in ancient civilizations across the world
[7, 8]. While the United Nations Sustainable Development
Goals (SDGs) provide a contemporary framework [29], the
philosophical foundations of sustainability can be traced back
to traditions like the Vedas (Rigveda 10.117; Atharvaveda 12.1)
[1, 2], Greek philosophy (Plato, Republic; Aristotle, Politics)
[15, 16], Taoism (Tao Te Ching; Chen, 2008) [17], and Eryp-
tian cosmology (Assmann, 2001) [18].

7.1.1. Greek Civilization

Philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle emphasized mod-
eration and the “Golden Mean,” advocating for a balanced life
and restrained consumption [15, 19, 33, 34]. This resonates
with the Vedic principle of *Īśāvāsyam idam sarvam* (*Īśopan-
ishad* 1.1), which teaches restraint, non-accumulation, and re-
sponsible consumption [6, 7, 11].

7.1.2. Chinese Civilization

Confucianism and Taoism stressed harmony between hu-
mans and nature [20, 17, 30, 32]. Taoist philosophy of Wu
Wei—effortless alignment with nature—parallels the Vedic
reverence for natural elements and the *Bhūmi Sukta* of the
Atharva Veda, which views Earth as a mother to be nurtured

rather than exploited [1, 7, 8].

7.1.3. Egyptian Civilization

The Nile River was worshipped as a life-giving force, cen-
tral to agriculture and survival. This mirrors the Vedic *Aapo
Devata Sukta*, which venerates water as sacred, purifying, and
essential for life.

7.1.4. Mesopotamian Civilization

Rituals around agriculture and water management highlight
the sacredness of natural resources. Similarly, Vedic yagnas
were not only spiritual but ecological, symbolizing purifica-
tion of air and balance in nature.

The comparison reveals that while many civilizations
acknowledged the importance of nature, the Vedas uniquely
elevated natural elements to divine status, embedding ecolog-
ical consciousness into spiritual practice. This makes Vedic
wisdom not only distinctive but also profoundly holistic [1-3,
7, 8, 12, 13, 16, 17, 19, 21, 27, 29].

7.2. Contemporary Relevance in Education and Policy

7.2.1. National Education Policy 2020

India’s National Education Policy 2020 emphasizes inte-
grating Indian knowledge traditions into modern curricula.
Vedic mantras can serve as foundational texts for value-based
education and environmental ethics.

Mātā bhūmih putro ’ham pṛthivyāḥ (Atharvaveda 12.1) can
be incorporated into environmental studies to instill ecological
responsibility [1].

samānī vā ākūtiḥ samānam hṛdayāni vaḥ |

samānam astu vo mano yathā vaḥ susahāsati || (Rigveda
10.191.4) can be used in social sciences to promote unity, co-
operation, and collective consciousness [2].

7.2.2. Sustainable Development Policies

Modern policies on water conservation, forest management,
and climate change can draw legitimacy and cultural reso-
nance from Vedic philosophy. For instance:

India’s National Water Policy aligns with the Vedic rever-
ence for water as divine.

Forest conservation policies resonate with the *Vanaspati
Sukta* (Rigveda 10.97), which emphasizes the sanctity of
plants and biodiversity [2, 3, 7, 8, 12, 13, 16, 17, 21, 27, 29].

7.3. Connection with Contemporary Social and Environmental Movements

7.3.1. Chipko Movement (1970s)

The Chipko Movement of the 1970s, where villagers—es-

pecially women—hugged trees to prevent deforestation in Uttarakhand, directly reflects the spirit of the Vanaspati Sukta, which venerates flora as sacred [2, 22, 23, 39].

7.3.2. Bishnoi Community (Rajasthan)

The Bishnois of Rajasthan follow 29 principles, many of which emphasize environmental conservation [12, 24, 28, 40]. Their tradition echoes the Bhūmi Sukta and Āpo Sukta, demonstrating continuity of Vedic ecological ethics [1, 3].

7.3.3. Gandhian Philosophy

Gandhi's statement, "The Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed" (1929/1993) is a modern articulation of the Vedic principle of Aparigraha (non-possessiveness) [25, 31]. This principle is expressed in Īśāvāsyam idam sarvam (Īshopanishad 1.1) [6], and elaborated by S. Radhakrishnan (1953) [11, 37]. These examples show how Vedic wisdom continues to inspire grassroots movements and modern ecological consciousness [7, 8].

7.4. Scientific and Technological Perspective

Vedic mantras can be interpreted through the lens of modern science, strengthening their relevance:

7.4.1. Water Conservation

Vedic hymns describe water as sacred and life-giving. Modern practices like rainwater harvesting and watershed management are scientific extensions of this philosophy [36].

7.4.2. Medicinal Plants

The Vanaspati Sukta highlights the healing properties of plants. Today, Ayurveda and herbal medicine are globally recognized as sustainable healthcare systems [36].

7.4.3. Climate Change

Vedic peace mantras envision harmony across the cosmos. Modern climate science echoes this need for balance, emphasizing mitigation and adaptation strategies to stabilize ecosystems [38].

7.5. Ethical and Spiritual Dimensions

Sustainable development is not only material but also ethical and spiritual. Vedic mantras provide a moral compass for modern society:

om̐ sarve bhavantu sukhinah
sarve santu nirāmayāḥ
sarve bhadraṇi paśyantu

mā kaścīd duḥkhabhāḡ bhavet ॥ (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad) — a universal prayer for health and happiness, aligning with SDG 3 [5].

"Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" — the idea that the world is

one family, reflecting SDG 17 (Partnerships for Goals) and promoting global cooperation [12].

om̐ dyauḥ śāntiḥ antarikṣaṃ śāntiḥ ..." (Yajurveda 36.17) — a peace mantra that envisions harmony in heaven, earth, water, and plants, aligning with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) [4].

These ethical dimensions remind us that sustainability is not only about policies but also about cultivating compassion, restraint, and collective responsibility.

7.6. Future Directions

The integration of Vedic wisdom into modern frameworks can shape future pathways:

7.6.1. AI and Digital Education

Vedic ecological mantras can be embedded into AI-driven curricula, ensuring that students learn sustainability alongside technology.

7.6.2. Policy Making

Linking SDGs with Vedic philosophy can provide cultural legitimacy, making sustainability goals more relatable to Indian society [21].

7.6.3. Global Dialogue

India can present Vedic sustainable philosophy at international forums like the UN Climate Summits, offering a spiritual and cultural dimension to global sustainability discourse [8, 29]. In this way, we can say that Vedic philosophy offers a holistic and divine framework for sustainability, surpassing many ancient traditions in depth and universality [6, 11].

- 1) Modern education, policy, and science can draw upon Vedic wisdom to strengthen ecological ethics and social justice [7, 10].
- 2) Grassroots movements and Gandhian thought demonstrate the living relevance of Vedic principles in contemporary India [25, 26].
- 3) Ethical and spiritual dimensions of Vedic mantras provide a moral foundation for global sustainability [1, 2].
- 4) Future directions include integrating Vedic wisdom into AI, policy, and global cooperation, ensuring a balanced and just world [8, 24].

8. Conclusion

The exploration of Vedic mantras in relation to sustainable development demonstrates that ancient Indian wisdom provides not only spiritual guidance but also a practical framework for ecological balance, social justice, and holistic well-being [1-3]. The Bhūmi Sukta, Āpo Devatā Sukta, and Vanaspati Sukta reveal a profound ecological consciousness, where Earth, water, and vegetation are revered as divine entities [1-

3]. These hymns emphasize restraint, gratitude, and responsibility—principles that align seamlessly with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [29].

When viewed comparatively, Vedic philosophy stands out among global traditions. While Greek, Chinese, Egyptian, and Mesopotamian civilizations acknowledged the importance of nature, the Vedas uniquely elevated natural elements to divine status, embedding ecological ethics into spiritual practice [15, 17, 18]. This comparative lens highlights the universality of sustainability while affirming the distinctiveness of the Indian knowledge tradition.

In contemporary contexts, Vedic wisdom resonates strongly with modern educational reforms such as NEP 2020, which emphasizes value-based education and integration of indigenous knowledge systems [30]. It also informs policy frameworks on water conservation, forest management, and climate change [7, 8]. Grassroots movements like the Chipko Andolan and the Bishnoi community's practices exemplify how Vedic ecological ethics continue to inspire collective action [22, 24]. Moreover, Gandhian philosophy of restraint and non-possessiveness echoes the Vedic principle of Aparigraha [6, 25].

Scientifically, Vedic insights into water, plants, and climate find parallels in modern environmental science, Ayurveda, and climate change mitigation strategies [8]. Ethically, mantras such as Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam provide a moral compass for inclusive development, peace, and global cooperation [5, 12].

Looking forward, the integration of Vedic philosophy into AI-driven education, policy-making, and international sustainability dialogues can enrich global approaches to ecological and social challenges [8, 24]. By bridging ancient wisdom with modern science and policy, humanity can cultivate a more balanced, just, and sustainable future.

Thus, the Vedas are not relics of the past but living texts that continue to illuminate pathways for sustainable development. They remind us that sustainability is not only about managing resources but also about nurturing values, fostering harmony, and embracing the interconnectedness of all life.

Abbreviations

NEP	National Education Policy
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals

Author Contributions

Gunbala Ameta is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

References

- [1] Griffith RTH. The Atharva Veda. 2nd ed. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass; 1963, p. 12.1.
- [2] Griffith RTH. The Rig Veda. 2nd ed. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass; 1963. (Mandala 10, Hymn 97 -Aushadhi Sukta).
- [3] Griffith, R. T. H. (1963). The Rig Veda (2nd ed.). Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass. (Mandala 10, Hymn 9 – Soma Sukta).
- [4] Devi Chand. The Yajur Veda. 1st ed. Delhi: Nag Publishers; 1980, pp. 36.12–36.17.
- [5] Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. Maha Upanishad, Verse 71. Universal Prayer: May All Be Happy.
- [6] Isha Upanishad (1.1). All this is pervaded by the Lord.
- [7] Sharma, R. Ecological consciousness in Vedic hymns. 2010.
- [8] Dwivedi, S. Biodiversity in Vedic literature. 2015.
- [9] Mishra, A. Gandhian ecology. 2018.
- [10] Callicott JB. Earth's insights: A multicultural survey of ecological ethics from the Mediterranean Basin to the Australian outback. University of California Press; 1994.
<https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520914827>
- [11] Bhattacharya, B. Principles of Vedic sustainable development. J Indian Philos Relig. 2018; 25(1): 45–62.
- [12] Jha, RK. Sustainable development and Indian ancient wisdom. Patna: Bihar Hindi Granth Academy; 2020.
- [13] Kumar, V. Vedic mantras and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: A relationship analysis. Journal of Global Development Studies 2022; 10(4), 310–325.
- [14] Mishra, A. K. (2019). Environmental ethics in the Vedas. International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research, 9(2), 123–135.
- [15] Mishra, A. (2021). The principle of social justice enshrined in Vedic mantras. Indian Journal of Social Sciences, 15(2), 45–58.
- [16] Pandey, R. (2017). Vedic wisdom and modern sustainability: A comparative study. Journal of Environmental Science and Management, 15(3), 201–215.
- [17] Sharma, P. (2020). Sustainable living in ancient India: A Vedic perspective. Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge, 19(4), 654–668.
- [18] Sharma, P. N. (2018). Environment is our own in Vedic philosophy. New Delhi: Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan.
- [19] Singh, V. L. (2019). Hymn to Earth in the Atharvaveda: A study. Journal of Ancient Indian Philosophy, 42(3), 112–125.
<https://doi.org/10.33545/27068919.2019.v1.i1a.648>
- [20] Dayanand Saraswati. (1875). The Light of Truth (Satyarth Prakash). (Classical text)
- [21] United Nations. (n.d.). Sustainable Development Goals. Retrieved from <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

- [22] Singh, N. (2025). Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: A philosophical analysis and its relevance in addressing socio-economic and global challenges in the modern era. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews (IJRAR)*. Retrieved from <https://ijrar.org/papers/IJAR25B2763.pdf>
- [23] Tiwari, P., & Rana, A. (2024). Embracing the unity of all life: Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. *ResearchGate*. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/>
- [24] Sarkar, J. S. (2025). Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: The Vedic philosophy of living with nature. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT)*. Retrieved from <https://ijcrt.org/papers/IJCRT25A6143.pdf>
- [25] Assmann, J. (2007). Creation through hieroglyphs: The cosmic grammatology of ancient Egypt. In S. La Porta & D. Shulman (Eds.), *The poetics of grammar and the metaphysics of sound and sign* (pp. 17–34). Brill. <https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004158108.i-377.10>
- [26] Dwivedi, O. P. (2015). Vedic heritage for environmental stewardship. *World Journal for Vedic Studies*, 27(2). <https://doi.org/10.64835/hmybr769>
- [27] Kalla, P. (2024). Governing the commons with traditional knowledge and practices: Lessons from the Bishnoi community of India. In P. Swarnakar, B. K. Pattnaik, & P. Sarkar (Eds.), *Environmental and ecological sustainability through indigenous traditions* (pp. 111–129). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-7079-5_4
- [28] Singh, I. (2025). Religion and ecology: A study on the religious beliefs and practices in conserving ecology and adapting to climate change among the Bishnois of the Thar Desert in Rajasthan, India. *Religions*, 16(3), 380. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16030380>
- [29] United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development*. United Nations. <https://doi.org/10.18356/9789210575193>
- [30] Chen, E. M. (1995). Taoism and ecology. *Dialogue & Alliance*, 9(2), 5–15.
- [31] Gandhi, M. K. (1993). *The collected works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Vols. 1–98). Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India. (Original work published 1929).
- [32] Tu, W. (1985). *Confucian thought: Selfhood as creative transformation*. State University of New York Press.
- [33] Aristotle. (2009). *Nicomachean ethics* (W. D. Ross, Trans.). Digireads.com Publishing. (Original work published ca. 350 BCE).
- [34] Plato. (2004). *Republic* (C. D. C. Reeve, Trans.). Hackett Publishing Company. (Original work published ca. 380 BCE).
- [35] Radhakrishnan, S. (1953). *The principal Upanishads*. Harper & Brothers.
- [36] Sharma, R. (2010). *Vedic ecology: Practical wisdom for surviving the 21st century*. Ranchor Prime.
- [37] Isha Upanishad. (n.d.). In S. Radhakrishnan (Ed.), *The principal Upanishads*. Harper & Brothers. (Original Sanskrit text, verse 1.1).
- [38] Guha, R. (1989). *The unquiet woods: Ecological change and peasant resistance in the Himalaya*. University of California Press.
- [39] Jain, S. (2010). Chipko movement: A Gandhian eco-social protest. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 71(2), 439–454.
- [40] Kalla, P. (2004). *The Bishnois: Eco-religion in Rajasthan*. Jodhpur: Scientific Publishers.
- [41] Atharvaveda (1.5). Hymn to Water (Apah Sukta). In S. Radhakrishnan (1953), *The principal Upanishads*. Harper & Brothers.