

## CARING NATURE - CREATING WEALTH

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Ever since genus *Homo* appeared on the planet 2.5 million years ago, he/she was dependent upon nature's wealth for its survival. This of course was the case of the predecessors too. Its daily needs for survival for example "food" had to be obtained from what prevailed in nature at that time. The life of *Homo* through time resulted in a number of species that were successful and or was replaced or went extinct with time. These fluctuations are considered part of the evolutionary process and every one of the species that survived and or did go extinct survived on the bountiful resources of its surrounding - nature.

Along this pathway were *Homo neanderthalensis* of west Eurasia and *Homo erectus* in the more eastern regions of Asia. In scattered locations, especially in some islands were for example *Homo soloensis* (island of Java), *Homo floresiensis* (island of Flores) and *Homo denisova* from Denisova Cave in Siberia were other species of *Homo*. While these species were evolving in Europe and Asia, in East Africa *Homo rudolfensis*, *Homo ergaster*, and *Homo sapiens* – that is we evolved and survived. Thus the planet was home for numerous *Homo* species between 2 million and 10,000 years. Every one of them in their own way dependent on the bounties of nature for their survival.

It's believed that *Homo* was until quite recently in the middle of the food chain. It is *Homo sapiens* that seem to have jumped to the top in a very short time span in comparison to others. It is also believed that this leap is responsible for many historical calamities, from deadly wars to ecological catastrophes. The present situation been one of clear documentation.

Along this pathway the role of fire played an important part. When *Homo* domesticated fire, they gained control of an obedient and potentially limitless force. They were able to use it not just for the purpose of preparing the food but for many other purposes that made life better. It was also a sign of the immense power that destroyed much of nature.

Around 150,000 years ago we were gaining dominance in East Africa. The impact of them was not devastating but visible to the extent of changing landscapes. Somewhere around 70,000 years ago they spread out to the Arabian Peninsula, and subsequently to Eurasia. Either due to "Inbreeding" or "Replacement" the existing *Homo* species were overrun by *Homo sapiens* and by 30,000 years we were the only living species in the mainland. The last non *sapiens*- *H. floresiensis*, reached its end around 12,000 years ago in the shadow of the massive change that took place in the *H sapiens* life style in the continents across the world. By this time *Homo sapiens* was in the Americas (16, 0000 – 12,000 yrs.) and Australia (45,000 yrs.).

This long history, makes a drastic change in around 12,000 years, with the advent of "Agriculture". We who were like any other "animal" and supposedly lived a life of a "Hunter-gatherer" with minimum impact in the surroundings suddenly became different. The new "Agricultural Life style" set in motion changes that without argument has caused grave concern about the survival of *Homo sapiens* as a species. Nature as a resource was now at the mercy of the human species, and with the ever increasing numbers and life style changes at the receiving end.

Humans became "static" and their numbers increased, by 5000 yrs the first kingdom, script and money along with polytheistic religions came to be. In the year of 4,500, the Akkadian Empire of Sargon come to be. By 2,500 invention of coinage – a universal money, is recognized bartering system. By 500 yrs the scientific revolution sets in. and by 200 years the industrial revolution begins. And 70 yrs ago (1950), the sad "environment destructive era begins".

The resulting changes to the planet's resources- nature, has to be seen through this narrative of human transformation since 2.5million years. It is without doubt that we lived for more than 98% of our life as humble "organisms of nature" governed by it own laws. The radical change of 12, 00 years and the system of "money" and values thereof has had a profound impact on the resources of the planet, and the very survival of the future of mankind. Adding to this value system is "Economics", which has enabled us to put "figures/ numbers" to the value that we perceive. Based on this human devise - an artificial theory, we have gone to the extent today to be "slaves of the theory".

To understand the consequences and recognition to make a change require that we see our present "environment "in new light. In 1998 I submitted this theory of the environment and the process to overcome the consequences we have inherited, if we are to continue to survive in this planet. Let me elaborate that theory to emphasis the significance of the theme of this conference.

The environment consists of THREE elements, namely NATURAL, BUILT or STRUCTURED, and THEORETICAL. The natural element is in to which we evolved and lived more than 98% of our lives with minimum impact or change. The structural component of the life was also minimal as there is no evidence of any "built" structure for shelter, or otherwise. Any structural or built element would have been very minor as there are no impact history anywhere. The theoretical element too, according to available knowledge is no different to what we would presently recognized as "natural life" subject to all the natural laws of nature. This life was recognized to have been centered around the nature built "caves", "Hunter-gatherer" and "gypsy" life style - determined by the norms of nature. It is 12,000 yrs ago that we made the major change to this life style and to the environment by changing the landscape for agriculture.

Consequent to the agricultural revolution - the built - structured elements included the changed landscape for cultivation and subsequent resulting changes of the “static” life style. Shelter for protection from the elements of nature - wind, rain and sun, the need to protect the agriculture in the plains all resulted in man becoming static around the fields and away from the caves. It contributed to reducing the “Natural element” and further making humans come away and out of nature. The static society now needed norms for cohesion and order. The elements of “Culture” and “social norms”, “rules and regulations” - which are all human constructs evolved to make us so called “civilized” and “orderly” All of these are ARTIFICIAL mand made constructs.

Man who evolved in to nature and was very much a part of nature, changed gradually to become “align” to nature. Of the three elements, we know that today the NATURAL environment is not were we live, but in the BUILT and STRUCTURED environment according to the THEORETICAL elements that we constructed. This over time gradually brought humans OUT OF NATURE, and became slaves of the THEORETICAL concepts. Among the theories is the single global unifying “ECONOMIC THEORY”, that impacts our thoughts and life directly today. Todays humans, except some very minor tribes in some parts of forests, all live according to these theoretical models of which economics is one.

It is here that the concept of WEALTH and VALUES are embodied. The changing human lost the values and recognition of wealth, of items and process that did not DIRECTLY impact on the so called wellbeing of his life style. Thus the resources extracted out of nature as GOODS became the principle recognized element. This trend picks up radically since the 1950s according to the evidence of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment of 2003. The evidence clearly indicated that we are living in a SICK planet and our future is truly dependent on changing our values and life style. In this the recognition of NATURES WEALTH is a major component. The very economic model that contributed to the disaster has come up with methods to value the natural wealth, so that we may reconsider our strategies and actions for the future. The work of Dr Prasanthi Gunewardena (SJP) has numerous examples, that if we heed to can make “natural wealth” be recognized and conserved for the future.