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The Nation Can Learn Lessons On Sustainability From Marginalised Tribal Communities



The systematic methods of locality drainage systems, crop rotational farming, rainwater harvesting, usage of earthen utensils and other rational methods have been practised in every tribal household for thousands of years. They have only conveniently, yet, sustainably updated themselves without causing much harm to the world's ecological balance.

For several years, tribal communities of the country have co-lived and protected nature and it is high time the world takes note of sustainability from them.

The Santhals of West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh; the Garo Khasi tribes of North East India; the Kamar tribe of Madhya Pradesh; the Kadar, Karumba tribes of Kerala and Tamil Nadu

have all left a steady trail of reference of how-to-live in peace with nature dexterously.

Santhals, till date, use earthen utensils, live in mud huts which are cooler than concrete houses, are pantheists and have nature involved in every minute cultural expression, from their dance to marriages. They use organic elements like fresh flowers and leaves to adorn themselves with.

“We hold nature at the highest, our life revolves around trees, crops; our festivals, religion everything is related to nature; we cannot dare to harm it,” said Shefali Hasda, a dancer from Bolpur, from the Santhal Community.

Ethnic groups in northeastern states have incorporated methods of farming, infrastructure building, re-using of resources in the most effective way. Their crop rotation and step farming methods prevent soil erosion and degradation. They re-use residues of wasted crops as dry ingredients for earthen ovens, which is a financially feasible option, especially in poorer areas.

Tribal communities in central India use hay to construct houses, shacks which are easily degradable. They also have effective ways of rainwater harvesting, especially during dry seasons.

For the longest time, one was under the presumption that civilisation wouldn't run out of water, but a NITI Aayog report released in 2018 predicted Day Zero for 21 Indian cities by the end of a couple of years. Day Zero refers to the day when a place is likely to have no drinking water of its own.

Communities in southern India use banana leaves very commonly for cooking and other household purposes. This usage of banana leaves is now gaining popularity in northern states as

well, especially during occasions for feeding guests. *“Wedding business in our country is undeniably a capitalist concept and we as planners are glad that some couples are aiming for sustainable décor, not just sourcing locally but employing locally as well,”* says Nikhil Roy, a Wedding Planner based in Durgapur.

The country faces multiple ecological problems at the moment, be it the breaking up of the Nanda Devi Glacier in Uttarakhand’s Chamoli district or the earthquakes happening spasmodically; what the country needs right now is an extensive understanding and usage of alternatives in the most sustainable way possible.

The awareness of living a more conscious, kind and greener life is what the world needs right now.