



PROUT and Permaculture

Like permaculture, PROUT is a solution-oriented approach to creating sustainability through applying design principles that model the way nature works. The difference between them lies in the realm of application of their respective sets of design principles.

Permaculture design principles were originally developed for application to resource management (though much has been done to extend their application into wider social realms).

PROUT's design principles were developed for application to the holistic and equitable development of human potentials. Because the human society is their central concern, they serve different objectives than do permaculture principles. For example, they give explicit attention to development in the mental and spiritual realms of life.

So permaculture and PROUT design principles have their distinctive (though overlapping) realms of focus. But because both apply design principles toward ends that promote deep sustainability, they naturally compliment each other.

Those who have a theory grounding in permaculture more readily appreciate PROUT's holistic design principle approach to sustainable socio-economic development.

PROUT is based on the fundamental objective that all people should have equitable scope to develop, and to progressively express, their physical, mental and spiritual potentials, while maintaining balance between individual and collective interests, and while maintaining a sustainable equilibrium with the rest of life on the planet, The PROUT design principles set out below are intended to actualize this fundamental objective.

1. Diversity, not sameness, is the law of nature.

Diversity is the innate characteristic of nature. Social policy should not strive to create social equality, but to bring unity and equity amidst human diversity.

Social unity should be based on coordinated cooperation between peoples, not subordinated cooperation. (Thus, cooperatives are privileged in the PROUT system.)

The objective of equity should be to give all people access to their due share of the resources required for their healthy existence and for the balanced development of their potentialities.

2. The minimum requirements of life should be guaranteed to all.

Earth's resources are the common inheritance of humanity, so all people have a fundamental right to the basic necessities that they require to maintain their existence and to support their development.

This right to guaranteed basic necessities should be constitutionally established.

Basic necessities include food, shelter, clothing, education, and medical care.

The standard of minimum requirements should be established according to the age and place in which people live. This standard should be progressively adjusted with changing conditions.

Access to basic necessities should come through providing adequate purchasing capacity to all. For those able to work, purchasing capacity should be acquired through meaningful and dignified labor. Those not able to work should receive it through family or social assistance.

3. Maximum amenities should be guaranteed to all as per social conditions.

In addition to the guarantee of the basic necessities, society should also see that all its members can acquire the common amenities – the commodities and services – of the time and place in which they live.

Not only should these common amenities be available to all, but they should become available in increasing measure. So the amenities that are at one time considered special goods only available to a few should come to be within the standard of living accessible to all.

The purpose of increasing access to amenities is not to promote consumption or clutter people's lives with material possessions. It is increase social equity and to give all people a sound material base for their all round development.

4. Incentives should be distributed to meritorious people according to the degree of their merit to society.

The prosperity of society depends on the productivity and creativity of its individual members. Incentives are essential to motivate people to fully develop and utilize their capacities. Without adequate incentives, the standard of living of the society as a whole suffers, and the least well-off suffer the most.

A portion of the wealth created by society should be allocated for incentives to meritorious people, so that these people may have greater opportunity and motivation to serve the society.

The amount of incentives given to meritorious individuals should depend on the

value of their work to society, whether through their hard labor or their special talents.

While the reward of talent is essential for the well-being of the society, incentives should not be so large as to disrupt social unity. Therefore, constant effort should be made to lessen the difference between minimum and maximum incomes, while insuring that incentives are sufficient to motivate those who are industrious or have special abilities.

5. Increase in the quality of living is the indication of the vitality of a society.

Growth of per capita income is not an adequate indicator of social vitality. Money may lose value through inflation; taxation may rise disproportionately with rise in income; or people may become burdened by expenditures that do not benefit them.

A proper measure of social vitality is increase in people's standard of living.

Increase in the standard of living is not the same as an increase in quantity of consumption. Improved standard of living results in an improvement in the quality of people's lives. This may be reflected in an advances in the quality of goods and services, improved access to skill acquisition and human development, and refinement in the aesthetic milieu of their existence.

Addictive consumption occurs when people's spiritual development is not well-supported. In a society that promotes the balanced development of its members, material consumption will be naturally redirected toward human maintenance, development and upliftment.

A society's standard of living cannot increase in a genuine and enduring way if economic development is not sustainably managed.

6. There should be no accumulation of physical wealth by individuals that is in excess of their needs without special permission from the society.

The excess accumulation of physical wealth by a few results in deprivation for many. A healthy society cannot allow this to occur.

All have a right to the physical wealth that they need for their necessities and their development. But they have no legitimate right to accumulate in excess, unless they are given special permission by the society for a legitimate cause.

This principle only applies to forms of wealth in which excess accumulation by one will take from others. So there should be no restriction on the accumulating spiritual wealth, or on accumulating knowledge. However, acquisition of social status or power at the expense of others should be curtailed.

7. There should be humanistic and rational distribution, and maximum utilization, of resources in all areas of manifestation.

Humanity has available to it various mundane, supramundane, and spiritual resources. Mundane resources are the useable materials and goods that come from

nature or are manufactured. Supramundane resources are ideas, information, inspiration, and feelings. And spiritual resources include love, compassion, knowledge of Self, inner peace, and reverence for the sacred.

All of these resources should be properly distributed and utilized for the welfare of all. Distribution should be rationally undertaken so as to insure the sustainable development of society and to insure their equitable distribution throughout the planet. No one should experience discriminatory restriction on their access to resources because they belong to a certain social group or live in a certain region.

Resources should also be maximally utilized. There should be no waste; and resources be used for purposes that optimize their value.

8. The physical, mental, and spiritual capabilities of every person should be allowed to develop fully; and the potentialities of society should be maximally developed in all spheres.

Society should neither stress individual welfare nor collective welfare. Instead, there should be the full development of both individuals and the collective, recognizing that individual and collective development are interdependent and that neither can develop fully without having a balanced relationship with the other.

The development of individuals and society should be in physical, mental, and spiritual spheres of life. There should not be suppression or lack of support for development in any of these three spheres.

The development of material amenities and services will provide a healthy and secure base for individuals to engage in subtler pursuits, such as creativity and spirituality.

The development of mental potentialities must include acquisition of social and ecological awareness; people should appreciate the value of serving society and of their interdependence with the greater fabric of life.

The development of spiritual potentialities will establish a strong moral base to the society and will nurture universal identification with all peoples and all living beings.

9. There should be a well-balanced approach to the distribution and utilization of physical, mental, and spiritual resources so that there is balanced development in all spheres.

Resources should be allocated and utilized in a way that provides for the balanced and holistic development of individuals in physical, mental, and spiritual spheres. But while supporting balanced development, society should also encourage greater development and expression of those capacities that are more subtle.

So if an individual has strong intellectual potential, then their mental abilities should be given greater opportunity for expression than their physical abilities. And if they are endowed with spiritual wisdom, then their scope for rendering spiritual service should be given priority.

At the same time that mental and spiritual service is being encouraged on the part of those well-developed in these capacities, society should also make efforts to nurture and bring into use the subtler capacities of all its members.

10. The utilization of potentialities and resources should be progressively adjusted according to the time, location, and people involved.

Change is a constant, so social policies and practices must be progressively adjusted according to changes in time, place, and person. The standard of basic necessities of an agrarian society will not be that of a post-industrial society. The customs, social institutions, and governing systems that were suitable when humans lived in clans will not be well-suited to people living in the information age.

Society must not become stagnant in response to changing conditions, but should be guided by progressive policies that make use of modern ideas, technologies, and social structuring.

When seeking progressive adjustments to new conditions, society must maintain balance and sustainability in all spheres of life.

If progressive adjustments are made by the society, the naturally occurring cycles of collapse will be greatly attenuated.

The ability to make progressive adjustments requires, in part, sensitivity to local conditions and empowerment at local levels. So a decentralized approach to socio-economic development is necessary.

11. The excellence of the social structure and culture of a community depends on the degree of balance that community attains in its individual and collective life.

Human society should strive for balance in physical, mental, and spiritual spheres of life. This balance should be established in both individuals and the collective. Balance must not be maintained in a static way, but as dynamic equilibrium.

Within the physical sphere, there should be balance within each sector of social and economic development; then each of these sectors should be brought into an overall balance.

In the economic realm, balanced development will ensure sustainable development. The methodology for obtaining sustainable development must take into account, among other things, the present and future demand for resources, and the present and future supply of those resources.

In addition to creating balance in each sphere of life, there should also be an overall balancing of physical, mental, and spiritual development. Giving excessive importance to material or psychic or spiritual spheres creates limitations in social progress.

When there is all-around balance in all spheres, and between all spheres, in both individual and collective life, and in relationship to the environment, then the welfare of all can be achieved, progress will be properly directed, peace will be enduring,

humans will live harmoniously with nature, and culture will vitalize the human spirit.