



Treasures of the Earth: Need, Greed, and a Sustainable Future

Saleem Ali

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Would the world be a better place if human societies were somehow able to curb their desires for material goods? Saleem Ali's pioneering book links human wants and needs by providing a natural history of consumption and materialism with scientific detail and humanistic nuance. It argues that simply disavowing consumption of materials is not likely to help in planning for a resource-scarce future, given global inequality, development imperatives, and our goals for a democratic global society. Rather than suppress the creativity and desire to discover that is often embedded in the exploration and production of material goods—which he calls “the treasure impulse”—Ali proposes a new environmental paradigm, one that accepts our need to consume “treasure” for cultural and developmental reasons, but warns of our concomitant need to conserve. In evaluating the impact of treasure consumption on resource-rich countries, he argues that there is a way to consume responsibly and alleviate global poverty.

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