

Today, however our natural environment is in danger because of our neglect and abuse. The air, water, oceans and trees were generously given to us from Allah; all these are essential provisions we require to survive. Abusing this generosity is neglect and betrayal to our Creator. Erosion and destruction of our land is causing global imbalances in nature.

In a hadith our prophet says, "Near the day of judgment whoever has a seedling should plant it. Whoever neglects this responsibility of preserving what Allah has given to us, will be answerable to it on the Day of Judgment. It is a civil duty as well as a religious duty to protect our environment."

Sathya Sai Baba

The lesson is learned by man when he studies nature, analysing and trying to understand it. Break the laws of Nature and she boxes you in the ear; obey her commands and listen to her warnings and she will pass on to you your heritage of immortality.

Nature is the best teacher. A tree gives shade to others and takes nothing for itself. It gives fruits to others but does not partake of them. A plant sprouts beautiful flowers and gives joy to others but does not enjoy the beauty by itself. The sun is constant, giving life, light and energy to the world, not asking anything in return. It performs action without desire for reward. These are some examples of the selflessness of Nature and are perfect lessons to the selfishness of man. If only man watches and studies Nature carefully, he can imbibe a lot of philosophy from it helping to make him a better person.

Sikh

There are many compositions in Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh Holy Scriptures, which pertain to the description of the environment and nature, the changing seasons and the great diversity of life on earth. Man's duty towards nature is implicit in Sikh teachings. Humankind has a responsibility to care for, and serve the Lord's creation selflessly. Sikhism condemns a self-centred life style of overindulgence which uses up the mother earth's resources, or which upsets the fine balance in nature and

As Sikhs we feel morally impelled to pitch in this tremendous task of preservation and enrichment of environment in reverence to the Creator. We worship to bring harmony between man and nature, and to pass this legacy to generations unborn. As always, we pray for welfare of the whole Universe (Sarbat da Bhalla).

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Interfaith Annual Gathering 2006

Year of Deserts & Desertification

"Living with the Land"



Baha'i

The importance of maintaining balance in the system:

"... For every part of the universe is connected with every other part by ties that are very powerful and admit of no imbalance, nor any slackening whatever ..."

For Baha'is the goal of existence is to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization. Such a civilization can only be built on an earth that can sustain itself.

While the world of nature stands in need of development, man's approach to such must be tempered by moderation, a commitment to protecting the "heritage [of] future generations", and an awareness of the sanctity of nature.

Blessed is the spot, and the house, and the place, and the city, and the heart, and the mountain, and the refuge, and the cave, and the valley, and the land, and the sea, and the island, and the meadow where mention of God hath been made, and His praise glorified.

Brahma Kumaris

Om Shanti.

The human family shares trusteeship of the Earth. Her well being is linked to our well-being. Disturbance to the environment, water, air, and land results in disturbance to everyone.

No doubt this "outer" state of our environment, this decimation of our lands, reflects our "inner" state, our mind, heart, and soul, has become weak and insensitive. Technology has enabled us to amplify the cries of the world's people, but has not helped us to listen to our spiritual self, the part of us that recognizes and knows God.

When we make this contact we awaken to the source of our power and insight, and our vision of the world expands. We can see the world community and be guided by the universal principles that govern the seen and unseen world.

Any change in the world environment must start with change to our 'inner' spiritual world.

Om Shanti

Buddhist

Land, in Buddhism, is one of the four main elementary substances (*land, water, fire* and *air*) that sustain life in order to generate all species. There are two types of land: the inside and the outside of human body.

According to Buddhist philosophy, the human body consists of twenty elements of land: bones, heart, teeth, skin and livers. These substances are from the 'inside land'. Buddha teaches us to focus on these components of the land as these could have a big impact on the world society. Human beings are very powerful; we require constant monitoring and re-assessing of our actions and behaviors. Whereas, the 'outside land' is an important part that holds equilibrium, that is, middle ground.

Buddhism *teaches that respect of land means respect for life*. This should happen four ways: *Meta, Karuna, Muteta* and *Upekkha*, which can be translated as different kinds of well-wishes for all existence including the spiritual and natural world.

Christian

For Christians the desert experience can be a place of contrasts: of peace where one can be alone with God or a negative experience of fearfulness and anxiety.

For some, a time of withdrawal is important to reflect and be attentive to God. Going away on retreat or into ourselves to pray, refreshes us to return and face the 'real world'.

For others, this desert experience is a time of upheaval, of being lost, alone and afraid. Our human experience was also Jesus' wilderness experience when the Holy Spirit led him into the desert and he faced temptation.

Jesus' trust in God sustained him and gave him the courage to overcome temptation and fulfill his mission. When at our lowest, fearful and tempted to lose heart, faithful trust in God's unconditional love, which we call faith, helps us to understand that we will rise from this struggle and start again. Belief in the Risen Christ gives us this hope and assurance.

Hindu

Salutations to Brahman. Salutations to God in fire. Salutations to God in plants. Salutations to God in speech. Salutations to the God of speech. My Salutations to the Supreme Being, the all pervading Spirit.

Thou art the deep blue butterfly, Thou art the parrot, green with red eyes, Thou art the source of lightening, Thou art the seasons and the oceans. Unborn Thou art everywhere and all that is, is born from Thee.

The Hindu epic Ramayana tells us of the ten headed demon Ravana, who desires Rama's wife Seetha and the untold misery that follows. Ramayana tells us: Seetha is nature, the daughter of earth found in a furrow. Ravana's ten heads is symbolic of us with our five organs of action and five sensory organs, all driving us to exploit nature, abducting Seetha.

"Conquer the desire to conquer the world. Whoever subdues desire, which continuously and boundlessly grows, soon attains the unchanging and stable state of liberation" (Sri Thiruvalluvar).

Jewish

Jewish people have traditionally interpreted their scriptural canon as exhibited by Jewish laws, writing and traditions.

In Judaism the belief is that God is omnipotent and omniscient, his word in the Torah eternal. Therefore it is common that the Jewish scripture deals with even the most contemporary of environment problems. The origins of the terms for "thou shall not destroy" or "you will not wantonly destroy" are in the Bible.

One cannot fulfil oneself spiritually unless one walks in harmony with the Earth. Planet Earth has much to teach us, nourishing us physically and spiritually. Within traditional Jewish canon are answers to questions modern Jews might ask when pondering the modern environmental and desertification crises. This is part of God's laws for the Jews.

Jewish religious schools and synagogue educational units are now studying environmental topics.

"The land is given us as an inheritance."

"The profit of the earth is for all."

Muslim

Allah has created all existing beauty in this world for a purpose. He created a flawless system with delicate balances to prevent danger from harming the planet and its occupants, and humans have the responsibility to maintain it.