



Hindu statement on wildlife conservation

In the Isa Upanishad we are reminded that everything belongs to the Supreme. We are each given our quota and are asked to not encroach on the lives and property of others:

isavasyam idam sarvam
yat kinca jagatyam jagat
tena tyaktena bhunjitha
ma gridhah kasya svid dhanam

Everything animate or inanimate that is within the universe is controlled and owned by the Lord. One should therefore accept only those things necessary for himself, which are set aside as his quota, and one should not accept other things, knowing well to whom they belong.

— Isa Upanishad, Text 1

In the Bhagavad Gita Krishna says the wise see all living beings equally. This equality is based on the understanding of the true self, atma. this understanding is that we are all eternal by nature. In this spiritual state we are full of knowledge and bliss. Wherever we see life, be it human, animal or plant, we see atma, an eternal being. We do not discriminate between species. For Hindus, all life is sacred.

Hindus are guided to act according to dharma, striving to do the right thing in the most responsible way. As a pathway to dharma, Hindus are encouraged to always act in goodness, sattva. Aspiring for the highest, purest and most excellent form of action. An essential principle of goodness is ahimsa, non-cruelty to others. The practice of ahimsa inspires us to avoid harm to any living being, to offer respect to all and to develop the virtue of compassion in our hearts.

Animals, wildlife and the natural world feature prominently in Hindu scripture. Most of the metaphors we find in the Upanishads are drawn from nature. In the Ramayan, the story of Rama and Sita, some of the central characters have an animal form. Many Hindu deities have animal companions and friends.

All Hindus are encouraged to be respectful of all life on earth and to protect those who are under threat from exploitation, poaching and extinction. We particularly encourage Hindus to defend the most endangered, including the elephants and rhinos of Africa and the tigers of India.

The beauty and diversity of life are sparks of God's splendour to be cared for in a mood of service.

Hindu American Foundation

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Sincerely,

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