

Buddhist Beliefs about Nature

“Life is as dear to the mute animal as it is to any human being; even the simplest insect strives for protection from dangers that threaten its life. Just as each one of us wants to live and does not wish to die, so it is with all other creatures in the universe.” His Holiness, the XIVth Dalai Lama

A Buddhist Resolution to protect the environment

In the words of Maha Ghosananda: 'When we respect the environment, then nature will be good to us. When our hearts are good, then the sky will be good to us. The trees are like our mother and father, they feed us, nourish us, and provide us with everything; the fruit, leaves, the branches, the trunk. They give us food and satisfy many of our needs. So we spread the dharma (truth) of protecting ourselves and protecting our environment, which is the dharma of Buddha.'

Buddhist teaching about Simpler Living

Living in the fast and furious pace of the twentieth century our true nature is often dulled by the massive sensory impact unavoidable in modern urbanized living. Living close to nature is a very healing experience to have few activities, few distractions. Learning to trust yourself and being more of a friend than a judge one develops a lightness of being, a light confidence. One realizes the truth of the notion of impermanence the sound of animals, the texture of trees, the subtle changes in the forest and land, the subtle changes in your own mind. (Ven. Asabho)

See ARC's website www.arcworld.org for full references to the original sources. And contact us on info@arcworld.org more details about the UN program or any others.

Question:
**Who were the first
environmental campaigners?**

Answer:
The religions of the world.

The world's religions own about seven percent of the habitable surface of the planet. They founded, manage, or are involved in running half of all schools. They are among the largest and most powerful investors. They own many forests. They have huge media networks. All religions have environmental teachings. Yet most of them have been left out of the environment debate, while being criticised for not doing more, more quickly.

The following quotations, readings and meditations from four of the faith traditions present on Bali are offered here as sources for meditation and reflection for delegates to the Bali Conference of Parties this week - to aid you in your important deliberations, and to encourage you to remember the potential role of faiths in the world's future. Of the world's six billion people, some four billion profess belief in these four religions.

The readings have been compiled by the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) in collaboration with Conservation International. ARC has just entered into a partnership with the UNDP in a three and a half-year program on Climate Change, the Environment and the Faiths. The aim is to help the faiths extend their existing environmental work, as well as create new and equal partnerships with secular bodies like the UN.

Note: We have placed the faiths in the order of their importance in Indonesia: Islam (88%) Christian (9%) Hindu (2%) Buddhist (1%)

Law, kindly and pleasant is she. May we ever dwell on her bosom, passing to and fro.” (Hymn to the Earth, Atharva Veda)

A Hindu Resolution to halt Climate Change

“Let us declare our determination to halt the present slide towards destruction, to rediscover the ancient tradition of reverence for all life and, even at this late hour, to reverse the suicidal course upon which we have embarked. Let us recall the ancient Hindu dictum: “The Earth is our mother, and we are all her children”. (The Hindu Declaration on Nature).

Hinduism on Simpler Living

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 (Sri Isopanishad, Mantra I)

BUDDHISM

A Buddhist Fable about Nature

“Long ago, Brahman Dhamika, Rajah Koranya, had a king banyan and the shade of its widespread branches was cool and lovely. Its shelter broadened to twelve leagues. None guarded its fruit, and none hurt another for its fruit. Then came a man who ate his fill of fruit, broke down a branch, and went his way. The spirit dwelling in that tree then thought: “How amazing, how astonishing it is, that a man should be so evil as to break off a branch of the tree, after eating his fill. Suppose the tree were to bear no more fruit”.... And the tree bore no more fruit.”

flock, so human beings may need to forego part of their wants and needs in order that the survival of the natural world can be assured. This is a new situation a new challenge." (Statement by the Orthodox Church)

"Future generations should not be robbed or left with extra burdens. Those who are to come have a claim to a just administration of the world's resources by this generation." (Statement on Climate Change by the Catholic Bishops of Australia.)

HINDUISM

A Hindu Prayer about Nature

"Let there be peace in the heavens, the Earth, the atmosphere, the water, the herbs, the vegetation, among the divine beings and in Brahman, the absolute reality. Let everything be at peace and in peace. Only then will we find peace." (Shrivatsa Goswami)

Hindu Beliefs about Nature

Hindus believe that although the human race is currently at the top of the evolutionary pyramid, we are very much part of the earth and its multitudinous life forms.

"All creatures, born from you, move round upon you. You carry all that has two legs, three or four. To you, O Earth, belong the five human races... May the creatures of earth, united together, let flow for me the honey of speech.... Mother of plants and begetter of all things, firm far-flung Earth, sustained by Heavenly

ISLAM

Muslim Teaching about Nature

"The world is sweet and verdant green, and Allah appoints you to be His regents in it, and will see how you acquit yourselves..." (Sunnah of the Prophet.)

Muslim Beliefs about Nature

Unity, trusteeship and accountability (or 'tawheed', 'khalifa' and 'akhrah', the three central concepts of Islam) are also the pillars of the environmental ethics of Islam. They constitute the basic values taught by the Qur'an. It is these values which led Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, to say: "whoever plants a tree and diligently looks after it until it matures and bears fruit is rewarded", and "If a Muslim plants a tree or sows a field and men and beasts and birds eat from it, all of it is charity on his part"... Environmental consciousness is born when such values are adopted and become an intrinsic part of our mental and physical makeup. (Islamic Declaration on Nature)

A Muslim Resolution to Halt Climate Change

"If biologists believe that humans are the greatest agents of ecological change on the surface of the earth, is it not humans who, drawn from the brink, will abandon Mammon - for their own good - and listen to the prescriptions of God on the conservation of their environment and the environment of all the creatures on earth? The Islamic answer to this question is decisively in the affirmative." (The Islamic Declaration on Nature)

Muslim Calls to Simpler Living

O children of Adam! ... eat and drink: but waste not by excess for Allah loveth not the wasters. (Qur'an)

After the Earth had become stable, the angels asked God if there was anything more durable than the mountains. God replied that iron was more durable. Then they asked whether anything was more durable than iron and God replied "wind". Then they asked whether anything was more durable than wind and God replied "human beings when they give in charity in such humility that their right hands do not know what their left hands are doing". This tradition indicates that human responsibility is more important than material gain and is the only way to produce balance on earth. (Ibn al-Qayyim, Miftah)

CHRISTIANITY

A Christian Prayer about Nature

May the blessing of light be on you,
Light without light and light within.
And may the blessing of the great rains be upon you
That they may beat upon your spirit
And wash it fair and clean
And leave there many a shining pool
Where the blue of heaven shines,
And sometimes a star....
And may the blessing of the earth be on you.
(From a Celtic Prayer)

Christian Beliefs about Nature

"Humanity's dominion cannot be understood as licence to abuse, spoil, squander or destroy what God has made to manifest his glory. That dominion cannot be anything but a stewardship in symbiosis with all creatures." (World Council of Churches)

A Christian Resolution to act on Climate Change

"In the past two decades, thanks to exemplary collaboration between politicians, scientists and economists within the international community, important results have been obtained with positive repercussions on present and future generations. I desire that, on the part of everyone, cooperation intensify to the end of promoting the common good, development, and the safeguarding of creation, returning to the alliance between man and the environment, which must be a mirror of God the Creator, from whom we come and toward whom we are journeying." (Pope Benedict XVI 2007, on the 20th anniversary of the Montreal Protocol.)

"We will resist the claim that anything in creation is merely a resource for human exploitation. We will resist species extinction for human benefit; consumerism and harmful mass production; pollution of land, air and waters; all human activities which are now leading to probable rapid climate change; and the policies and plans which contribute to the disintegration of creation". (World Council of Churches)

A Christian Call to Simpler Living

"We must attempt to return to a proper relationship with the Creator AND the creation. This may well mean that just as a shepherd will in times of greatest hazard, lay down his life for his