



Wildlife statement

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 and inanimate in the universe is pervaded by the Divine. 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, Lord Krishna says the wise see all living beings equally. This equality is based on the understanding of the true self, atma. The understanding is that we are all eternal by nature and part of the same eternal divinity, just as all drops of water are actually part of the ocean. This spiritual state of awareness and knowledge brings true bliss to our lives. Wherever we see life, be it human, animal or plant, we see atma, an eternal being, part of the Divine. 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, and to

aspire for the highest, purest and most righteous form of action. An essential principle of goodness is ahimsa, non-cruelty to self or 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.

Our peace prayers pray not only for peace to ourselves or to mankind; rather, Hindus pray for peace to the animals, to the plants, to the forests and trees, to the environment and to all of the natural world.

Animals, wildlife and the natural world feature prominently in Hindu scripture. Most of the metaphors we find in the Upanishands are drawn from nature. In the Ramayana, the story of Lord Rama and Sita Ma, some of the central characters have an animal form. Many Hindu deities have animal companions, vehicles, 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 with selflessness and devotional service.

Swami Lakshman
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