

### **Spiritual ecology: Treat Nature with respect.**

A Guru was walking through the forests with his disciple. The typical serenity of the forest was intermittently broken by the noise from the dry leaves under their feet and their voice as the disciple asked questions and the Guru replied to him with great patience. They kept walking over the pathway often overcast with trees and criss-crossed by a number of small water channels. The disciple was agitated on the issue of people ceaselessly disturbing the environment despite being aware of its consequences. We have no choice but to draw resources from the Nature to survive and develop but if we cannot re create and maintain the forests and environment in the form that is done by Nature, what should be the strategy to deal with the issue, he repeatedly asked. There was no immediate reply from the Guru. He kept watching all around as both moved ahead quietly. The Guru's continued silence and mystifying smile as he occasionally looked at the disciple made him feel agitated. He however quietly walked behind the Guru.

The sun was up and very hot and they were perspiring. Just after they crossed a rivulet, the Guru sat under a tree. He asked the disciple to get some water for him to drink. The disciple quickly went to the rivulet with a small earthen pot to fetch water. He found the water full of silt and soil as they had just walked through the same. He tried to remove the dirt by hand but the more he tried, more and more turbid became the water. The Guru called him to get the water fast but every effort by the disciple to remove the silt and soil was proving to be futile. Finally he collected the turbid water, came running to the Guru and said 'I can't get water cleaner than this Guruji since every effort of mine to clean the water is creating more of turbidity'. The Guru Laughed and said 'My son, give the water some time. Just don't touch it and it will become clear. After that you can collect the clean water'. The disciple said 'ok' and started going towards the rivulet. The Guru stopped him and said : "I am not that thirsty my son. This task was given just to provide you with the answer to your question. Look, we overexploit Nature day in and day out and then try to take measures that are no good and are basically 'quick fix solutions' as per human being's understanding of Nature seen as a conglomerate of Natural resources. We quite often disturb the Nature more in our effort to improve the situation due to our limited understanding of Nature. The strategy has to be first to respect Nature and avoid disturbing it beyond a limit, and second to allow it some time to heal herself while we consciously support the recuperative processes. The reverence towards our mother Earth is depicted in a Sanskrit *shloka* '*samudra vasane devi parvatstan mandite! Vishnu patni namastubhyam paadsparsh kshamaswa mey !!*' which says 'O Mother Earth, the consort of Vishnu, who has the ocean as clothes and is adorned by mountains and forests, I bow to you to forgive me for touching you with my feet'. I hope you got the answer". The disciple touched the feet of the Guru, went to the rivulet, finding that the silt and soil had settled down, came back with clean water in the earthen pot.

We, the human beings have considered the natural resources as infinite and are constantly and consistently over drafting on the same at an unprecedented pace with an extreme anthropogenic bias. The wounded susceptibilities are often lost sight of because of our limited understanding of the almost unfathomable multiplicity of structural and functional relationships that Nature contains and nurtures in its womb. It is high time we have respect for Nature duly recognizing that our life is nothing but a gift of Nature. Let us keep a check on the degree of disturbance we create to the natural systems and provide Nature the chance to recover and rejuvenate the life support systems which, undoubtedly, is in the interest of our own survival.

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