

Spiritual Ecology: -1

There was a king. As he grew old he expressed his desire to enthrone his son as his successor. His minister insisted that the prince should be first sent to their Guru to check his abilities. Although maintaining that the prince was already educated in all aspects of governance and war, the king agreed hesitatingly. The prince set out for the ashram of the Guru who lived in a deep forest. Prince paid his obeisance and explained to the Guru all details of the education he had got and requested for his blessings to go back and succeed his father. The Guru simply asked him to stay in the ashram for some time. The Prince had to clean up the ashram, bring flowers and fruits, and fetch water for the Guru. He hesitatingly did these for a few days but complained that as a king he never would be required to do such works. Ok, the Guru said, I give you a better task. Go into the forests everyday and tell me what all you have heard that day. The prince was baffled but obeyed. First day he reported that he had heard the roar of a tiger, the calls of deer, peacock, monkey, and many birds. The Guru asked him to continue his daily visits. In about a week's time the prince said that as he could hear almost the repeats of sounds of animals each day, his task be considered as completed and he should be allowed to return to his palace. The Guru disagreed and asked him to continue his work of daily visits into the forests as his task was still incomplete. The apparently irritated prince left the ashram to go back but feared that without Guru's approval he might not get the throne. On the way back he just sat under a tree. Days passed by. And one day, he ran back to the ashram, fell at the Guru's feet and exclaimed 'Guru ji, I heard today how the butterflies, ants, fishes, and little insects talk'. The Guru embraced him and said 'My son, now you are fit to become the king because you have heard the voices of those whom no one cares to listen to. Go, be the king and lend your ear first to those who are not heard for they have a meek or no voice.'

Human beings have adopted a position of dominance though man is but one small cog in the giant wheel of life-systems sustained by our Mother earth. We govern and behave with an anthropocentric bias when it comes to Nature and environment. Nature's intricately balanced components that make the environment suitable for the survival of each one of us are, more often than not, not cared for by mankind in its mad rush for the so called 'development'. Gandhiji had asked us to recall the face of the poorest and weakest man and ask ourselves whether our contemplated step is going to be of any use to him. Spiritual ecology exhorts us, whenever we think of exploiting Nature for 'development', to listen to all apparently voiceless species positioned at the farthest ends of the life-web. Can we not adopt spiritual ecology to save mankind along with all life-forms on our planet?

Dr Arvind Kumar Jha.