

We Can Make Ourselves Useful as a Species

By CHAITANYA CHARAN DAS

Biologist E O Wilson, as well as other scientists, have studied the complex interdependence among various species in the biosphere. He found that every species makes a constructive contribution — small or great — to the ecology of the planet. For example, if vegetation — grasses and shrubs — decrease, herbivores suffer. And if the number of herbivores decrease, the carnivores are affected. Wilson found that only the human species does not contribute to the ecology. If we became extinct, there would hardly be any problems for other species or for the ecology. In fact, most ecological problems would be solved if humans became extinct.

Arguably humans constitute the most intelligent species on the planet. Yet, science indicates that “intelligent” humans are nothing but a burden for the planet. Normally in a classroom the more intelligent a student, the more potential he has to make a positive contribution. Then why is it that the most intelligent species on the planet is making not a positive but a negative contribution to its biosphere?

All scriptures say that human potential is fully realised when we contribute to the planet at the spiritual level. When we function only at the material level, our potential is underused and even misused. The Bhagavata Maha Purana offers a mission statement: “Humans should function in the material realm only for maintaining existence, not for seeking enjoyment. For they will find real happiness only in spiritual realisation”.

What is spiritual realisation? And what has it got to do with saving the ecology? Spiritual realisation reveals to us that we are all children of God with nature as our mother, as mentioned

in the Bhagavad Gita: “Of all embodied beings that appear in all the species, Arjuna, Nature is the conceiving Mother and I am the seed-giving Father”.

Normally, parents nurture children. Similarly in the cosmic family, God, the divine father, and Nature, the divine mother, maintain all living beings. And just as children live happily when they follow their parents, we too can flourish if we live in harmony with Nature and God. When children shun the protective embrace of their parents, they are open to risk. When

humans reject God’s protection and embrace materialism and consumerism instead, they experience stress, anxiety, violence and ecological disaster.

Materialism and consumerism lead to greed, selfishness and exploitative mentality.

These ideologies replace pure human desires — to find immortal joy in loving and serving God — with the polluted desire to seek flickering pleasure by exploiting nature. This pollution of the heart impels people to knowingly persist with activities that pollute the environment. For example, due to greed, industrialists avoid treating toxic effluents before releasing them into rivers. Therefore, only when people learn to find happiness within can we hope to avoid ecological apocalypse.

The easiest and most effective way of finding inner joy is by chanting the Holy Names of God. When people chant, find inner happiness and become free from pollution of the heart they will desist from activities that pollute the planet. To save ecology there is an alternative to annihilating humanity: annihilate instead the ignorance that misleads humans into materialistic living.



THE SPEAKING TREE