

In Praise of the Gift of Water

Praised be to you, my Lord, through Sister Water
which is very useful, humble, precious and chaste.

St. Francis of Assisi

Interfaith prayer

Let us listen to the voices of faith from the Alliance of Religions and Conservation

What does Baha'ism teach about ecology?

Read by Sr. Eileen O'Connor, RSM

One World 'The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.' These words of Baha'u'llah summarize the Baha'i sense of world citizenship and commitment to stewardship of the earth. The oneness of humanity is, for Baha'is, the fundamental spiritual and social truth of this age. It implies a major restructuring of the world's educational, social, agricultural, industrial, economic, legal and political systems. Baha'is believe this restructuring will enable the emergence of a sustainable, just and prosperous world civilization that will exist on this planet for half a million years.



A tree planting project undertaken by students at the Rabbani Baha'i School near Gwalior in India.

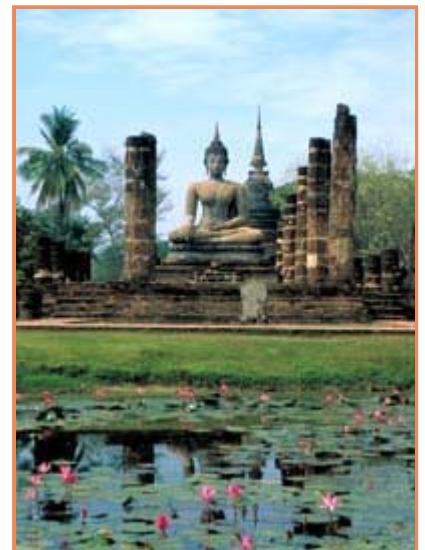
Nature reflects God: The world reflects the qualities and attributes of God, and should therefore be greatly respected and cherished. Baha'i Scriptures describe nature as an emanation of God's will.

What does Buddhism teach about ecology?

Read by Bhante Revata

All beings are connected: Buddhism teaches that the idea of separateness is an illusion. The health of the whole is inseparably linked to the health of the parts, and the health of the parts is inseparably linked to the health of the whole. This means that caring for the environment begins with caring for oneself: 'When our hearts are good, the sky will be good to us,' says Venerable Maha Ghosananda of Cambodia, a founding patron of ARC.

Respect for life: Buddhist practice makes one feel one's existence is no more important than anyone else's. If one treats nature as a friend and teacher, one can be in harmony with other creatures and appreciate the interconnectedness of all that lives.



The Buddha gazes over a lotus pond in Thailand

What does Christianity teach us about ecology?

Read by Sister Ann Lyons, FSSJ

Speaking for the Catholic Church in 1990, the Pope John Paul II said, 'Christians realize their responsibility within creation and their duty towards nature and the Creator are an essential part of their faith.'

Pope Francis tells us in *Laudato Si'* that "Fresh drinking water is an issue of primary importance, since it is indispensable for human life and for supporting terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. It is a basic and universal human right. One particularly serious problem is the quality of water available to the poor. Every day, unsafe water results in many deaths and the spread of water related diseases."

For the Orthodox Church, the Ecumenical Patriarchate taught in 1990 that humanity ought to perceive the natural order as a sign and sacrament of God, and that to respect nature is to recognize that all creatures and objects have a unique place in God's creation. The Orthodox Church teaches that it is the destiny of humanity to restore the proper relationship between God and the world as it was in Eden.

The Christian Churches, speaking through the World Council of Churches in 1990, committed themselves to conserve and work for the integrity of creation both for its inherent value to God and in order that justice may be achieved and sustained.



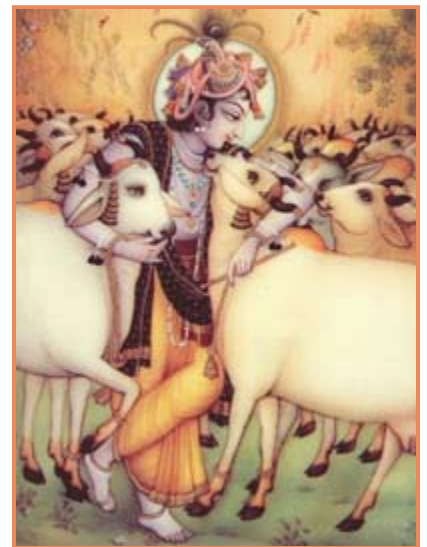
St Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology.

What does Hinduism teach us about ecology?

Read by Dr. Dilip Sinha

Life is sacred: All living beings are sacred because they are parts of God, and should be treated with respect and compassion. This is because the soul can be reincarnated into any form of life. Hinduism is full of stories that treat animals as divine, such as how Krishna used to herd cows, or how the monkey Hanuman was a faithful servant of the Rama. Most Hindus are vegetarian because of this belief in the sanctity of life. Even trees, rivers and mountains are believed to have souls, and should be honoured and cared for.

Simple living: The virtue of a simple life has always been prized in Hindu society. Teachers, or brahmanas, are advised to live on the charity of others and not accumulate too much wealth. The most highly respected person in Hindu society is the sadhu, or sage who lives outside normal society, in forests or caves, or travels on foot from one town to another. Sadhus take pride in living simply and consuming as little as possible.



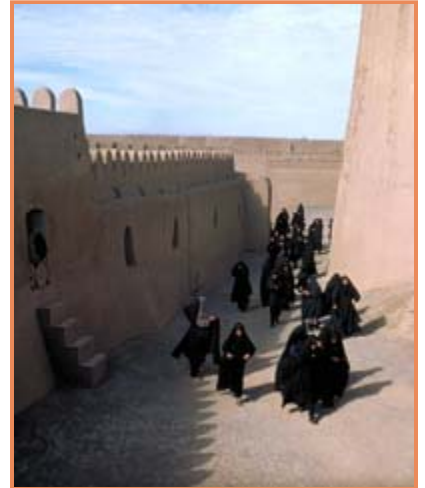
Krishna, who lived in the forest and herded cows, represents the highest expression of love in Hinduism.

What does Islam teach about ecology?
Read by Dr. Othman Shibly

Khalifa – trusteeship: Islam teaches that Allah created humans to be guardians of His creation. In other words, nature does not belong to us to do with as we wish, but is entrusted by Allah to our safe-keeping.

'The world is green and beautiful, and Allah has appointed you his guardian over it,' taught the prophet Muhammad.

Tawheed – unity: The central concept of Islam is tawheed, or unity. Allah is unity, and His unity is reflected in the unity of humanity and nature. We must therefore maintain the integrity of the Earth, its flora and fauna, its wildlife and environment. Our responsibility is to keep balance and harmony in Allah's creation.



Women go to prayers in a mosque built with sun-baked earth in the Sudan.

What does Judaism teach about ecology?
Read by Sister Fran Gangloff, OSF

Humanity and Creation: The Jewish attitude to nature is based on the belief that the universe is the work of the Creator. Love of God includes love of all His creations: the inanimate, plants, animals and humans. Nature in all its beauty is created for us, and our connection to nature restores us to our original state of happiness and joy.

The Bible informs us that the earth is given to man 'to use and protect'. But the 'dominion' mentioned in the Bible is not the dominion of a tyrant. God's mercy extends to all He has created, as is written, 'the earth is founded upon mercy'.



Fruit picking at Kibbutz Lotan in Israel

What does Sikhism teach us about ecology?
Read by Judy Fitzgerald Dolan

Inner truth: Sikhs teach that humans create their surroundings as a reflection of their inner state, and hence the increasing barrenness of the earth reflects a spiritual emptiness within humans. The solution according to Sikhism can be found in prayer and the spirit of humility before the divine will of God.

Sanctity of nature

Sikhs cultivate an awareness and respect for the dignity of all life, human or otherwise. Such respect is fostered where one first recognises and nurtures the divine inner spark within oneself, then sees it and cherishes it in others.



The Gurdwara is often sited beside water

Litany of Water: After each invocation, respond **(R.)** "We give you thanks"

Water of the seas, vast and deep,
regenerating essence of our planet's vigor, **R.**

Water of the rivers, creeks, and flowing streams,
strong carriers of life, steady currents of movement, **R.**

Water of aquifers and irrigation systems,
soothing arid lands, nourishing hungry seeds, **R.**

Water of human tears,
cleansing drops of grief, dancing drops of joy, **R.**

Water of baptismal fonts, ritual cleansings and other
Faith-filled gifts of water, inviting humanity into the
circle of community, **R.**

Water of secret springs and ancient holy places,
providing sources of healing and transformation, **R.**

Water of raindrops and snowflakes,
caressing the land with needed moisture, **R.**

Water of wells, springs and reservoirs,
life-giving dwellings of health and vitality, **R.**

Water of clouds, vapors, mists and fog,
numinous vessels of wetness and silent mystery, **R.**

Water of the human body,
purifying, transporting, energizing, restoring, **R.**

Water of the womb, cradling precious life,
vital wetness recycled from oceans and sky, **R.**

Water! Water! Wonderful Water!

By Samuel Tovend



A prayer for our Earth



All-powerful Holy One, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O Protector of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this Earth, so precious in your eyes. Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the Earth.

Loving and Merciful God, teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light. We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace. Amen.



**Web sites to learn more about
our use of water,**

***Laudato Si, Care for Our Common Home* and what various faiths are doing to care for creation**

National Geographic Water Footprint Calculator:

<http://environment.nationalgeographic.com/environment/freshwater/change-the-course/water-footprint-calculator/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TzyYPJLhZjc&feature=youtu.be> An excellent series of lectures on Laudato Si by Fr. Dan Horan, OFM

www.catholicclimatecovenant.org Videos, including the *Top 10 Things You Need to Know About Pope Francis' Laudato Si* from America Media, and *Laudato Si* from the Vatican and also has individual and Group Study Guides

<https://catholicclimatemovement.global>

This website has prayer, information on Catholic Social Teaching and facts about climate change as well as advocacy opportunity to sign petitions.

<https://www.chausa.org/environment/environment-encyclical>

This website has some good resources, including beautiful prayer cards which are free.

www.usccb.org website of the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops

Click Issues and Actions at the top, Click Human Life and Dignity, on left hand side Click Environment, Environmental Justice Program. You will find:

- Video – a 6 minute video from the Vatican – very inspirational
- Copy of encyclical, *Laudato Si*

<http://www.thewaterpage.com/religion.htm> This page has brief explanations of the place of water in different religions. Water In Religion: <http://www.hcswny.net> Hindu Cultural Society of Western New York

http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/deep_ecology.pdf A Manual for Buddhism and Deep Ecology by Daniel H. Henning, Ph.D.

<http://www.dharmaseed.org/teacher/271/talk/16156/> Buddhism and Ecology, dharma talk given by David Loy at Spirit Rock Meditation Center.

<http://www.buddhistpeacefellowship.org/> The mission of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship (BPF),

www.BuffaloDharma.org has good information about meditation in general. While some of our members are Buddhist, our meditation group is non-secular and we encourage all to participate.

<http://www.greenfaith.org/> GreenFaith's mission is to inspire, educate and mobilize people of diverse religious backgrounds for environmental leadership.