

Sikh religion and ecology

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Care for ecology and the conservation of natural resources has attracted world attention only recently. It is now common knowledge that destruction of trees and indiscriminate use of fossil fuels is poisoning our atmosphere and is causing the greenhouse effect leading to global warming and irreversible changes in our stratosphere. The rapid decrease of woods in the world is causing consternation in the minds of nature-lovers and friends of the earth. The recent floods in England and elsewhere are simply a reminder that something dangerous is happening on this planet which does not bode well for the living creatures. The impending devastation and doom has so unhinged the minds of the world leaders that they have been holding a conference of 180 world representatives at international which ended day before yesterday at Hague. Man is now seriously seeking remedies against a disaster, which has more or less become a certainty.

Yet it is a fact that only 500 years ago these problems were not as acute as they are today and were not the cause of any international concern. However even at that early age the Sikh Gurus recognised the human responsibility towards conservation and restoration of the Eco-system. They impressed upon the humans the necessity of studying and respecting nature. Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh religion advised humans to always remain in tune with nature. He said, “*pvn gurU pwxI ipqw, mwqw Drq mh`q (jpu jI)*” “The air is the breath of spiritual life (Guru), the water like father is the cause of our being and the earth acts as a mother”. The Sikh Gurus went even further to state “*pwaux pwxI AgnI kw bMDn, kwieAW kot rcwieMdw*” (*gurU gRMQ swihb pMnw 1036*) that “The fortress of the body is created out of air, water and warmth (from vegetation)”. It is for this reason that the Sikh Gurus saw God through nature. Bhai Gurdas explains the Guru’s philosophy by writing, “*kwdrU ikny nw liKAw, kudriq swij kIAw Avqwrw*”(BweI *gurdws vwr 1.4*) “Nobody has seen God. He only manifests Himself through His created nature. If man ignores nature, he ignores God. “*kwdrU mnhu ivswirAw, kudriq AMdr kwdrU vsY*”(B.gu *vwr 37.14*) “ Since God manifests Himself through nature, man has ignored God by putting nature out of mind. Perhaps this is exactly what Eddington meant when he wrote, “All through the physical world runs an unknown content, which must surely be the stuff of our consciousness”. Guru Nanak was so enamoured of nature that he wrote a lot about nature in his Bara Maha Tukhari. He was of the opinion that “*dh idis swK hrI hirAwvl, sihj pkY so mITw (gurU gRMQ swihb pMnw 1109)*” “In all the ten directions, the resplendent Lord manifests Himself through greenery and foliage. Slow development through equipoise is the best sweet reward.”

Human beings are the most developed form of life on earth and as such they must act wisely and responsibly to maintain and develop the evolutionary process. To pollute air and water, and to destroy vegetation indiscriminately is to inflict terrible punishment on life and the future of our planet. Humanity can do so only at its peril. Trees and humans have a relationship. Humans pour out carbon dioxide and the trees convert it into Oxygen. It is the trees that maintain the correct proportion of Gases in the atmosphere.

“kwdry muqlk b kudrq zwhr Asq, drimAwny kudrqy ^ud kwdr Asq”
(BweI nMd lwl kulIAwq 290) “God manifests Himself through His creation.
He is present in the nature around us.”

We, the Sikhs in Nottingham, have simply performed our religious duty by planting the trees in the **Khalsa wood** continuously for the past many years. This is our tribute to our great Guru who advised us to remain in tune with nature. Our effort is only a drop in the ocean. It is our pious hope that all the inhabitants of this world will join us in planting trees every year in all the countries of the world. It is only through such global action that we can keep our atmosphere clean, stop floods, conquer diseases caused by pollution and extend the life of our planet. We seek the blessings of our Guru to keep us on this path.

I am grateful to you for considering me a suitable candidate for this prestigious award.

Our immediate needs:

We need money to

- 1 Erect a suitable gate with a suitable bill –board
- 2 Instal five benches at strategic points each dedicated to one of the *Panj Payaras*
- 3 Create a children’s area with facilities for school children who visit the site in large numbers.
- 4 Sign –board for directions to Khalsa Wood.