

# Time for Nature

## “Live and Let Live”

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Since 1974, the World Environment Day is celebrated on the 5<sup>th</sup> June of every year. And countries world-wide organize events and programs, face to face and virtual, to spread awareness and elicit participation amongst the population of all age groups on topics related to human beings and environment or nature. In 1972, the World Environment Day was established in the Stockholm conference of United Nations. In 1974, the theme of the first World Environment Day was "Only One Earth".

The theme of 2020 is “**Time for Nature**”. The key objectives are to enhance the importance of nature, identify problems, and align all stakeholders from the government, organizations and individual societies to define solutions or, actually solve them. This year the topic of heightened importance of how and why “Nature needs time for itself”, and how and why human beings should give “time for nature”, now or never. On how nature provides the infrastructure to support the Earth and life on this Earth. During recent years, the environment day and the activities around it have gained significant value as life on Earth is facing unprecedented crisis in terms of Ozone depletion, water and air pollution, indiscriminate industrialization and unscientific agricultural methods leading irreversible soil degradation and erosion. Mindless afforestation has multiplied the severity of nature’s problems, leading to climatic changes and melting of polar snow caps – both Arctic and Antarctic.

This year is unique in the sense that we cannot move out, remove plastics from the beaches, do mass tree or sapling plantation or refurbish lakes, due to the Corona pandemic. Corona is a zoonotic infectious disease which is transmitted between animals and human beings. This is a direct and stringent warning from Nature that it can take no more! Such diseases mean that we have encroached upon and destroyed nature, thus forging a dangerous and unhealthy relationship with Nature. Our actions have seriously undermined Nature’s capability to foster and nurture life on Earth. Human eco-systems including industries, agriculture, war like situations, chemical weapons, cities and concretization etc. have made these natural acts untenable.

Greenhouse gas emissions and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions have impacted bio-diversity to the extent that our Earth has experienced an increase of 1.1 degree Celsius over pre-industrial years. We see a unabated increase of extreme phenomenon – floods and drought, forest fires, earthquakes and Tsunami’s,

ice melting, sea level rising and erosion of coastlines, acid rains, locust attacks, species extinction etc.

By this time, nature has already taken enough lack of sensitivity from us, human beings :-

- We have impacted 75% of Earth's land area and geography
- We have been instrumental in the extinction of 1 million species – flora and fauna
- We have destroyed 420 Mn hectares of forest since 1990

....these sorry state of affairs continue unchecked.

During these COVID times and lock-downs, we have witnessed that Nature is able to heal itself and bloom back to normal levels.

- Rivers flow without industrial waste released into them
- The ozone layer is seen to be healing itself with no aeration fuel released in the upper atmosphere
- Animals are able to roam freely in Bandipur forest, with Elephants, deer seen relaxing on the man-made roads and concrete structures
- Orissa has seen a surge of turtles season with an increased chances of their survival back into the ocean
- Rare cats which were considered extinct found roaming freely in Canadian cities
- Kangaroos bouncing gayly in Adelaide and Penguins wandering freely into so called human inhabitations
- The roads are no more congested, with very little or no vehicular pollution, which makes one reminisce the yester years' beauty of the garden city, Bangalore!
- The sky is clear and looks fresh, feels good...

All these are good indicators of a GREAT POSSIBILITY if only if Nature is allowed to thrive by itself with little or no human intervention. Are these heavenly experiences sustainable? Let us try to be positive...

The way forward, rather the CORRECT WAY FORWARD..

- Invest on nature's infrastructure – expand, protect and sustain our forests, mangroves and water resources
- Diversify into sustainable and renewable energy sources like Solar, Hydrel, CNG and Biogas. Phase out pollutants like Petrol and Diesel
- Promote reliable and easy-to-access Green Public Transport in all cities
- Refurbish lakes and ponds, promote rain-water harvesting and move out industrialization from core inhabitations

- Incentivize afforestation activities to those industries which impact or impacted forests like Mining, Construction, Transport industries. Revitalize erstwhile forests like Kudremukh in Karnataka
- Provide multiple wildlife habitats
- Adoption of forest lands, animals could be eligible CSR activities to promote participation

Corona has presented a compelling situation, hard to ignore, and these facts corroborate the situation – IT IS NATURE’S TIME NOW. Nature has been supporting us by

- Contributing to half of global GDP, directly or indirectly
- Supporting the lives of 86 million families through Green Forest based livelihood
- Providing natural medicines to nearly 4Bn people around the world
- Controlling the weather in our concretized cities through greenery around

The Global Paris Climate Accord is one of the ways, humans can give it back to Nature, as it is NOW OR NEVER. We can do more –

- Take an individual vow that we have a small but sustained garden in our apartments. Support mass tree and sapling plantations
- Support NGO’s who engage in refurbishment of Nature and promotion of GREEN INITIATIVES
- Support Karnataka State Pollution Control board’s initiative and endeavours to establish and maintain effective
  - Sewage treatment plants
  - Waste management
  - Lakes and water body protection
  - Greenery in and around our apartments with earmarked gardens
  - Roof top Solar power tapping and use
  - Promotion of Innovative ideas to make city more sustainable

We may not know whether CORONA is a curse or blessing – but for the responsible citizen and human being, it does sound like a subtle blessing!

Nevertheless, let us STAY SAFE, STAY HEALTHY and STAY CONNECTED!

We STAY HEALTHY if the NATURE on whose lap we rest upon, is allowed to THRIVE AND PROSPER !