

Editorial

ECO-SANCTUARIES AMID GREEN SACRIFICE: A SPIRITUAL HYBRID DILEMMA

MATHEW ATTUMKAL

The twenty-first century confronts humanity with a profound paradox. Even as global awareness of the sacredness of nature deepens across cultures and faith traditions, the very ecosystems we revere are increasingly imperilled by industrial expansion, climate instability and development-driven interventions. This tension—between *biophilia*, humanity’s innate affinity for life, and *theophilia*, its reverence for the divine—gives rise to what may be called a *spiritual hybrid dilemma*. At this crossroads stand eco-sanctuaries: spaces of reverence and protection that are simultaneously threatened by narratives of sacrifice invoked in the name of progress. Historically, eco-sanctuaries such as sacred groves, rivers, wetlands, forests, mountains and revered landscapes, have embodied a harmonious convergence of spirituality, culture and ecology. Across civilizations, human communities have intuitively recognized that certain places possess intrinsic value beyond material utility. In India, sacred groves have preserved endemic species, stabilized soil and water systems and functioned as ecological corridors within human-dominated landscapes. Rivers such as the Ganges, the Jordan and the Nile were ritually protected through religious observance, sustaining both ecological processes and social cohesion. In Africa, sacred forests and cultural taboos have long safeguarded biodiversity, while in East Asia, temple lands and mountain sanctuaries have quietly conserved habitats for centuries. These examples reveal an enduring truth: conservation has never been driven solely by policy or economics. Moral imagination and spiritual worldviews have historically shaped ecological behaviour. Sacred spaces function as living laboratories where

human values, ethical commitments and empirical ecology intersect, offering generative models of sustainable land management and responsible stewardship.

Yet modernity introduces a disruptive reality: the emergence of *Green Sacrifice Zones*, where ecological and cultural costs are disproportionately borne by specific landscapes or communities in pursuit of national or global objectives. Renewable-energy corridors, lithium and rare-earth mining for green technologies, industrial expansion through indigenous territories, hydropower dams and large-scale river-linking projects exemplify this painful trade-off. Even ethically framed environmental initiatives can unintentionally erode local ecologies and cultural lifeworld. The controversies surrounding lithium mining in Portugal, hydropower projects in Southeast Asia and industrial encroachment on sacred forests in India expose this dilemma with unsettling clarity. At the same time, counter-examples offer hope. Bhutan's culturally mediated forest governance strengthens carbon sequestration, biodiversity conservation and watershed integrity. Costa Rica's eco-tourism model – often linked to sacred or culturally revered landscapes – demonstrates how conservation, spiritual meaning and sustainable livelihoods can be aligned. These cases affirm that spiritual, ethical and scientific imperatives need not be adversarial; when thoughtfully integrated, they can reinforce one another. It is within this context that the metaphor of sacrifice acquires renewed philosophical and theological significance. The biblical narrative of Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac stands not as an endorsement of destruction but as a model of moral discernment, restraint and trust. Contemporary ecological decisions demand a similar ethical courage. *Green Sacrifice*, properly understood, must be reframed not as the loss of nature for human gain, but as the conscious renunciation of practices that undermine ecological integrity.

Religious traditions offer rich resources for articulating such an ethic. The Judeo-Christian principle of stewardship emphasizes responsible care rather than exploitative dominion. Islamic teachings on *khalifah* (vicegerency) and *mizan* (cosmic balance) manifest humanity's moral responsibility toward all

forms of life. When applied to eco-sanctuaries, these frameworks call for an integrative ethic that honours ecological sanctity, safeguards the rights and dignity of local communities and resists environmental degradation. A genuinely hybrid approach must hold together conservation, social equity and spiritual reverence. Eco-sanctuaries thus emerge as spaces—both physical and metaphysical—where creation is received as sacred rather than subordinated to domination. Paradoxically, they also reveal the moral unease inherent in restoration, for healing often demands loss and transformation. This tension constitutes the spiritual hybrid dilemma at the heart of this editorial. It challenges us to ask whether ecological healing is possible without reimagining our metaphysics of responsibility, reciprocity and restraint.

The theme of this edition of the *Journal of Dharma*, “*From Biophilia to Theophilia: Kinship with Nature through Sacred Scriptures*,” speaks directly to this challenge. Sacred texts across traditions consistently call humanity toward interconnectedness, moderation and reverence for life. They invite us to re-envision eco-sanctuaries not as static remnants of the past but as dynamic, spiritually charged ecosystems requiring wise governance, ethical clarity and theological depth. To illuminate this multidimensional vision, the present issue brings together seven interdisciplinary studies. Jijimon Alakkalam Joseph, in “Farming with Faith,” examines how Buddhist and Christian narratives shape the ecological consciousness of farming communities in Taiwan. He demonstrates that faith-based worldviews, when grounded in reverence for creation, can serve as powerful catalysts for sustainable agricultural practices and responsible ecological stewardship. His research illustrates how rituals, seasonal festivals and scriptural injunctions reinforce local ecological knowledge and offer culturally embedded pathways for sustainable farming, bridging moral imagination and empirical ecological action.

In “Soundscape Ecology and Posthumanist Music Practice,” Xiahong Qiao exposes noise pollution as a subtle yet pervasive form of ecological violence, severing humanity’s acoustic bond with nature. He proposes soundscape ecology as a

pathway for ecological healing, emphasizing the restorative potential of attentive listening and sonic awareness. Qiao further argues that cultivating a renewed music-literary consciousness can rekindle humanity's relationship with the natural world, reminding us that environmental crises are not only material but also sensorial and spiritual. By linking posthumanist musical practices with ecological thought, Qiao demonstrates that culture, art and spirituality are essential components of environmental consciousness, capable of complementing technological or policy-based interventions. Biju Karukappallil's study, "*The Principle of Bal Tashchit in Deuteronomy: A Sacred Call for Wartime Eco-Sensitivity*," explores one of the earliest scriptural mandates advocating ecological restraint. He demonstrates how this principle, originally contextualized within wartime conduct, has enduring ethical relevance for contemporary ecological crises. Karukappallil argues that *Bal Tashchit* extends beyond human conflict to a broader ethic of conservation, reminding societies that human actions, even in pursuit of necessity or progress, must be circumscribed by moral and ecological responsibility. By analyzing textual interpretations and historical applications, his study bridges ancient moral insight with contemporary environmental ethics, providing a scholarly theological and philosophical framework for restraining exploitative practices in ecological governance.

Qiang Liu, Yingyuan Zhang, Hong Zhang, Xin Sheng and Chunying Zheng, in "*Cross-Cultural Moral Ecology in Sportsmanship*," investigate how classical spiritual texts across cultures converge on ecological and moral principles. Their analysis shows that the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Analects* emphasize balance, reciprocity and disciplined action, values that can translate into an ecological ethic of sportsmanship and collective responsibility. By examining how sports practice embodies ethical cultivation, the authors demonstrate that physical and cultural practices can become laboratories for environmental ethics, where lessons of restraint, humility and interdependence are internalized through embodied experience. Youliang Chen's "*The Hills Have Eyes: An Approach Towards Eco-Marxism Policies and Land Ethics*" critiques fatalistic interpretations of

predestination that absolve humans of responsibility for environmental degradation. He frames ecological crises as the product of social, political and economic structures that require systemic interventions. Chen emphasizes the ethical necessity of collective stewardship, land justice and policy reform, arguing that environmental responsibility cannot be reduced to individual moral acts alone. The author's eco-Marxist perspective challenges prevailing fatalism and invites reflection on structural causes of ecological vulnerability, highlighting the inseparability of social justice and environmental sustainability.

Christoph W. Stenschke, in “The Purpose and Promise of Creation According to the Letter to the Romans: A Contribution to Christian Environmental Ethics,” examines the Pauline vision of creation as co-heir in God's salvific promise. He demonstrates that ecological stewardship is not merely a moral obligation but a theological imperative: creation itself bears witness to the divine and participates in God's plan. Stenschke's work illuminates how Christian ethics can integrate spiritual reverence, moral responsibility and practical action, offering a foundation for environmental policies and personal conduct rooted in the sacredness of life. His study reasserts the intrinsic value of creation, highlighting how theological reflection can complement scientific understanding and ethical reasoning. Finally, the article “The Yellow River Basin, Ecological Migration and Cultural Adaptation” by Guorui Zhou, Zheng Gong, Yifang Fan and Liuji Gong examines the dynamic interplay between environmental restoration, cultural continuity and community participation. The authors argue that lasting ecological recovery depends on the careful alignment of governance mechanisms with local cultural practices and lived realities. Emphasizing participatory planning, they highlight the importance of recognizing the knowledge systems, rights and traditions of affected communities. The study compellingly demonstrates that ecological interventions detached from human and cultural contexts not only undermine social justice but may also intensify ecological vulnerability.

The ecological crisis is not merely scientific or political; it is, at its core, a spiritual predicament. Our journey from *biophilia*

to *theophilia* invites us to recognize the Earth as an eco-sanctuary worthy of protection grounded in love, values and reverence. Eco-sanctuaries cannot be sustained by sentiment or ritual alone, just as technical solutions cannot succeed without moral foundations. The true challenge lies not in choosing between sanctuary and sacrifice, but in discerning what must be surrendered to safeguard what is essential. In this sense, Green Sacrifice does not signify the destruction of nature but the courageous refusal to participate in its destruction. It is an ethical commitment to protect creation even when such fidelity demands restraint, justice and the abandonment of harmful conveniences. Eco-sanctuaries thus emerge as ethical classrooms – spaces where scripture encounters science and reverence shapes responsibility. As humanity confronts the uncertainties of the Anthropocene, embracing Green Sacrifice offers a path of hope. It reframes ecological action as a sacred responsibility rooted in kinship with all beings and calls cultures and faith traditions into collaborative care for our shared home. May this edition of the *Journal of Dharma* awaken such moral imagination, deepen ecological wisdom and contribute to a spiritually grounded ethic for the flourishing of life on Earth.

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