I am always being asked by people, “Why do spiritual leaders, yogis, plant trees?” Unfortunately, we have compartmentalised our life in such a way that we are breaking up one and hoping that the other will live. Trees are our closest relatives. What they exhale, we inhale; what we exhale, they inhale and keep our lives going. It is just like the body in which our lungs are enclosed. You cannot ignore your body if you want to live. The planet is in no way different from that. What you refer to as “my body” is a part of this planet.

Spirituality is about turning inward. The first fundamental fact about looking inward is always to understand that you are naturally very much a part of everything around you. Without that realisation, there is really no spiritual process.

The United Nations is projecting that by 2050 there will be around 9.6 billion people on this planet. In India, fifty-two percent of our land is ploughed in order to feed 1.2 billion people. It is amazing that our farmers, with rudimentary, ramshackle infrastructure, are producing food for over one billion people.

Still, the man who produces food is not able to feed himself properly. That is not something to be proud of. The children of people who produce food for all of us are under-fed. This is because we have not allocated land and food resources evenly. The limited land cannot support endless growth of human population. Either we control our population consciously or nature will do it in a brutal and painful manner.

The idea that the planet is made only for human beings is gross. Unfortunately this idea has been introduced into people’s minds along with the notion that man is made in God’s image. If man thinks God is a big man, I am sure the worms are thinking God is a huge worm. It is not just due to ecological reasons, but also for the sake of your humanity. That you must understand that every creature on this planet has a life of its own. Even an insect has a life of its own. Just because something is smaller than you and looks different from you, you cannot think that he has no right to live. It is uncivilised.

Without controlling human population, ecology, land and water conservation is not going to happen because the kind of impetus that is there in the form of science and technology is making every human being hyperactive. You cannot cap human activity; you can only cap human numbers. There is no way we are going to cap human activity because that will amount to capping human aspirations. Today, everyone aspires for education. They have large dreams and ambitions. These cannot be accommodated with the current levels of population, unless we strive for a more conscious way of determining where we want to stop.

So, are we going to adjust our population to the resource that we have? That is all we can do, and that is the easiest thing to do. That is something that every human being can do, if the necessary education and awareness is created. If that investment is made, we don’t have to plant trees. If we stay away from the land, trees will grow; you cannot stop it. People are going about projecting that the planet is in danger. The planet is not in any kind of danger. It is only human life that is in danger. I hope we wake up to this fact and do the needful.

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