

# Go Green Conference Study Circle: Day 1

## “Tread softly, move reverentially and utilise gratefully”

The aim of this study circle is to delve deeper into Swami’s teachings in relation to the unity between God, Nature and Man and the practice that it demands, so that we can develop spiritually while simultaneously benefitting the environment through our actions. The study circle can be used in a group setting, or individually.

Depending on the available time this study circle can be spread out over several sessions. There are more than one question for self-assessment and personal sadhana and change: either all can be studied or one preferred question can be chosen. Between sessions, one can practice a given environmentally-friendly action and evaluate it in the following session.

### Reflection

Start with a moment to reflect upon the oneness of God, Nature and Man.

**A visualisation:** Start with complete silence, sit comfortably and relax, breathing naturally.

Close your eyes and visualise the divine presence within you. Feel the energy from the Divine course through you with every beat of your heart. Feel the rhythm of this energy, let it infuse through your veins to every cell.

Expand your inner vision to the people around, visualise that within each of them is this same Divine Principle. Focus on this for a moment. Continue to expand your visualisation to include plants, trees, tiny insects, birds, reptiles, mammals etc. Imagine all of these beings continuing with their daily duties- collecting nectar, building nests, producing oxygen...within each of these beings resides the very same Divinity. Take a few moments to look around in your visualisation and see the divinity in each being, feel God’s presence everywhere.

Now imagine a gentle breeze blowing across your skin, rays of sunshine on your face, fresh cool air entering your body. Realise that these too are the manifestations of the Divine.

Imagine that every plant, rock and animal is made up of billions of atoms. Each atom is filled with the very same Divinity.

Take a few minutes to visualise divinity permeating the entire universe, from the biggest to the tiniest level.

Maintain the silence for a further minute.

When you are ready, slowly open your eyes.



## Introduction

*"Nature's role is to help man, the crowning achievement of the evolutionary process, to realise the Divinity immanent in creation."*

–Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. 21/Ch.19, 12 July 1988

As Nature's role is to help man, how can we learn the lessons and help Nature in return? Briefly go over the objectives of the study circle:

- **Awareness:** Do I realise the unity of God, Nature and Man?
- **Self-assessment:** Why have we lost connection with God in Nature?
- **Personal sadhana and change:** How can we live more in harmony with nature?
- **Practical action points:** What can we do?

## Question 1

### **What makes us realise that we are part of an ecosystem that is divine in nature and which sustains us?**

What is our current state of mind? How can I experience true Unity?

#### **Awareness**

The aim of this question is to make us realise that we are part of nature, dependent on it and that divinity is inherent in it.

*"There is nothing except God. Nature is His Manifestation. Man must recognise God in all human beings and in all else that exists."*

–Sathya Sai Speaks Vol.14/Ch.9, 13 August, 1978

*"The purpose of life is to experience the sacredness of nature as a projection of the Divine."*

–Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol.22/Ch.35, 28 October 1989

## Question 2a

### **Is my method of seeking happiness beneficial to the planet? How can I make life more fulfilling?**

How am I connected to nature and impacting the environment? what is motivating me and what can I change? Knowledge about the environment. Mind as key to liberation or obstacle. Inner enemies at play. How to activate the human values

#### **Self-Assessment**

Man tends to pursue happiness through several methods, many of them being materialistic in nature at the cost the environment. Evaluate the inner causes of true happiness and their effects on the environment.

*"Unfortunately today, as a consequence of scientific and technological progress, humanness has declined and man considers the world as only intended for his enjoyment. As a result, the powers of Nature are being used in a manner which poses a great threat to the world."*

–Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol.25/Ch.37, 22 November 1992



**Fact:** According to the World Health Organisation, between 2030 and 2050, climate change is expected to cause approximately 250 000 additional deaths per year, from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhea and heat stress.

<http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health>

## Question 2b

### How can I enhance my connection with God and Nature?

What can we do to experience God in nature, feel the unity, help others to connect with nature and develop love for the environment?

Search for practical examples or experiences on the individual, family and Sai group levels.

*“Nature is your school, your laboratory, the gateway to liberation and the panorama of God’s majesty. Seek to know the lessons it is ready to teach.”*

–Sathya Sai Baba, Divine Discourse, 4 October, 1970)

*“You must learn to discriminate between delusion and relative truth and his will help you to perceive God in everything. In this way you will develop a feeling of closeness to Nature and to God and awareness of Oneness.”*

–Amrita Varshini 24, cited in *God, Nature and Man* by Ross Woodward, p. 40-41

## Question 3a

### How can I achieve balance in life and effectively contribute to conserving the Earth’s resources?

How to handle our inner enemies and develop the human values? How to place a ceiling on desires? How to balance the pace of life and develop positive habits and attentiveness?

#### Personal Sadhana (Spiritual Practice) and Change

Is there balance in your life, in society, in the world? Why or why not: what is at play? What are the effects of the imbalance? How to restore balance?

*“Today the world is losing its ecological balance, as man, out of utter selfishness, is robbing the mother Earth of her resources like coal, petroleum, iron, etc. As a result, we find earthquakes, floods and such other devastating natural calamities. Human life will find fulfilment only when ecological balance is maintained. Balance in human life and balance in nature, both are equally important.”*

–Sathya Sai Speaks Vol.33/Ch.15, 25 September 2000

**Fact:** Reducing emissions of greenhouse gases through better transport, food and energy use choices can result in improved health, particularly through reduced air pollution.

<http://who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health>



## Question 3b

### How can protecting the planet help me to grow spiritually and vice versa?

To serve the planet will certainly render our life more meaningful and help to experience the underlying unity. How can we practice Ceiling on desires, 5 D's, Service, enhance inner motivation and engage in lifestyle changes?

#### Personal Sadhana (Spiritual Practice) and Change

We cannot continue to be unconscious and exploit the environment. Our spiritual practice should lead to greater understanding and respect for Mother Nature. The lessons she teaches will help us develop our human values, resulting in a more eco-friendly lifestyle.

*"In this vast world in which countless human beings are leading miserable lives, pursuing endless desires and unattainable aspirations, the spirit of sacrifice is most essential. Trees bring forth fruits for the benefit of others. Rivers carry water for the use of others. Cows yield milk to benefit others. Likewise, man should share in harmony with others his qualities of goodness, compassion, forbearance, and charity."*

-Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol.28/Ch.31, 18 November 1995

Fact: Globally, the number of reported weather-related natural disasters has more than tripled since the 1960s. Every year, these disasters result in over 60,000 deaths, mainly in developing countries.

<http://who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health>

## Question 3c

### How can my spiritual practice help me to be more mindful about fulfilling my needs and using resources more responsibly?

This question can prompt the participants to discuss needs versus desires, various spiritual practises and how to live responsibly in the present to bring about positive results in the future.

#### Personal Sadhana (Spiritual Practice) and Change

In this day and age, where many of us are in a continuous race against time, we seldom stop to consciously notice the moment at hand and our surroundings. What are our needs and what are mere desires or habits? We often fail to notice the damage caused to the environment by of our actions and avoid accepting responsibility.

*"You must learn to discriminate between delusion and relative truth and this will help you to perceive God in everything. In this way you will develop a feeling of closeness to Nature and to God and awareness of Oneness."*

-Amrita Varshini 24, cited in God nature and Man by Ross Woodward, p. 40-41

*“God is the Creator. He created everything in the Cosmos. But He did not retain within His hands the responsibilities relating to the Creation. He gave to human beings all capacities. But He laid down a condition relating to the use of these capacities. Men are free to live as they like. They can utilise all the material objects in creation. There can be no objection to this from anyone, not even from God. But, the Divine has declared that there is no escape from the consequences of one’s action. This has to be properly understood.”*

–Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol.25/Ch.14, 22 May 1992

## Conclusion

### How can I sustain the motivation from this study circle in the next 6 months?

Keep a journal, checklists, make a personal vow, set a group challenge, expand good practices.

#### Action Points

Sum up in two sentences your inner motivation to practice eco-care and the practical applications you plan to engage in.

The aim is to elicit specific :

- Self-transformational practices in daily life with an environmental impact
- New go-green initiatives and practices both within the SSIO and in our personal and community life
- Newfound spiritual motivation

#### Story

“One day, an old man was walking along a beach that was littered with thousands of starfish that had been washed ashore by the high tide. As he walked he came upon a young boy who was eagerly throwing the starfish back into the ocean, one by one.

Puzzled, the man looked at the boy and asked what he was doing. Without looking up from his task, the boy simply replied, “I’m saving these starfish, Sir”.

The old man chuckled aloud, “Son, there are thousands of starfish and only one of you. What difference can you make?”

The boy picked up a starfish, gently tossed it into the water and turning to the man, said, “I made a difference to that one!”

- Replace bad habits with good habits and make incremental changes, to ensure that the results are sustainable.
- Life becomes more fulfilling when you serve society and the Planet.
- Get motivated to put into practice **at least one action point** from the study circle as every single small act can make a difference.

## Closing Moment of Introspection

### Gratitude to Mother Nature

1. Settle yourself in a relaxed posture. Take a few deep, calming breaths to relax and centre. Let your awareness move to your immediate environment: all the things that you can smell, taste, touch, see, hear. Say to yourself: "For this, I am grateful."
2. Think of one thing that you have received from Nature- food, water, the air that you breathe, materials for your clothes, beautiful birdsong etc. Think of what Nature gave selflessly to produce what was destined for you. Thank Nature for the bounty received.
3. Finally, rest with the realization that this birth is a precious gift – you have been born into a period of immense possibilities, access to spiritual teachings, and the chance for self- transformation. Express your gratitude.



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