

Reflection Paper

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We are not superior beings than animals, only superior animals.

Like all animals we are only a part of the nature, not the owner of it.

For most of us it is very difficult to look at the earth as our home. We do not feel responsible to take care of anything that resides outside the walls of our house. In fact to most of us that is exactly what it is to us; just a house, not a home. Some of us even find it difficult to differentiate between the two. The modern world has created so much need for unlimited materialistic possessions that we want to consume more and more every day. We only thrive to possess what is in demand in the circles we move, but those possessions hardly have any real value to us. Hence, the house is simply a shelter for our heads that acts like a storage space to store our material possessions. Similarly, earth is only a place where we live and which is the unconditional supplier of things we need and want to lead our life.

Our self centered views and perception of life has made us emotionally and ethically detached from our responsibilities towards nature and its inhabitants. In this race of modernization and advancement we are deliberately ignoring to see the consequences of our actions on the world around us. We choose to ignore that we are only taking from nature and not replenishing it. We are only taking and taking and at some point we would loot from the natural world so much that we would not leave anything for our seventh generation. This is really the time to take up our roles as stewards which we were always meant to be. Stewardship is the concept that we are stewards of the nature and our duty is to take care of the environment. As stewards we are suppose to take from the Mother Nature whatever we need, replenish it so that there are enough resources left for our seventh generation. Then our children would take up the role of the stewards and they would live in a way so that there are enough resources left for the use of their seventh generation. In this way, if every generation thinks about their seventh generation we would never run out of resources and our environment would be in a good health.

The public trust doctrine states that all water bodies in a state are public resources and are available for the use of all people in the state for the purposes of recreation, commerce and other activities. The Public Trust Mandate asserts a similar notion that resources like water bodies (e.g. rivers, estuaries, beaches) should be looked after by the governments and not sold for private ownership. The public has a right to access these water bodies for different activities. The Public Trust Mandate takes this a step further and says that we are not only the consumers of these resources but also the care taker or the steward of it. It states that it is nature's law that human being would be the stewards of the

natural world because in this way we are being made a part of the nature itself. This is the foundation of the idea, "Being not Having". We are not having anything from the nature, we are being a part of it and because of that it is our responsibility to ensure the existence of the natural world.

Human population has increased alarmingly over the past 3 centuries and is still threatening to increase. There are only so many resources in the natural world and we are using it up at a terrifyingly fast rate. We are not giving the environment enough time to restock itself and a time will come when nothing would be left for the future generations. For instance, think about the wetlands and rivers, we are regularly fishing from there to provide food for the growing population. However, many fishes have become extinct because of our over fishing. We are not giving the fish population enough time to grow to their maturity and reproduce. As fewer and fewer fishes are reproducing they are dying out. Sea creatures like sharks, turtles and whales are also declining in number fairly fast. We fish for the purposes of food, recreation and to make luxury goods, but we fail to understand that we would be leaving nothing for our children if we do not stop and think about what we are doing now.

One might think it does not matter if only one or two fish species die out as there are so many fishes in the world. However, this is not the case; when a species of fishes die out, it has an effect on the entire food chain. For example, think that Fish A has become extinct. Now Fish B, whose major food supply is Fish A, does not have that food source anymore. What would they eat to survive now? Though it has been seen that these fishes now start looking for a different food source, they really need a bit of time to adapt. However, there is no guarantee that they will survive to that time. Before they can actually adapt, they might die out. Now think Fish C, whose major food supply was Fish B, is facing the same problem. As Fish B has become extinct, they do not have their major food source anymore. They would also need to adapt or they would die out and the cycle continues. Another problem with adaptation is that, when two species of fish start living off the same food supply, it depletes faster. For instance, Fish B starts feeding off Fish X, which is also the major food supply for Fish Y. Now Fish X is being hunted more and their species cannot reproduce fast enough to continue their existence. If Fish X dies out, then again both Fish B and Fish Y would not have their food supply anymore. Hence, the extinction of one species can affect the entire food chain in the natural world very badly. It is important to understand that everything in the nature is there to create balance in this earth, if we are killing off species in the land and water all the time, it disturbs that balance and eventually we would be ones who would have to pay for it.

No matter how much progress we make, we cannot go and live outside the planet. There is only one Earth and we would have to take care of it. In the name of privacy, modernization and development we cannot destroy the natural world as we are not the only inhabitants here. There are millions of different kinds of species of animals, birds, fishes, insects, bacteria, many of which maybe we do not even know of yet, that call earth their home. They have the same rights to enjoy the resources in the nature as we do. In fact, because of their habitation the natural world is in a balance which is allowing us, human beings, to reap off so much benefit from the environment. We do not have the right to make them homeless and then extinct just because we consider ourselves superior.

It is important that we become aware of the consequences of our actions and take steps before it becomes too late. The public doctrine mandate is a just one of the first steps we can take to protect nature. We always have to remember that we are not only consumers. We are also stewards. We have to take care of the resources that were handed down to us, so that in time we can hand it back to our offspring's and then they to theirs. We have to become aware of the little things that we can do to keep our environment healthy, as like the earth we only have one natural world. There is no way in which we can replace nature or live without it. We are a part of the nature itself and we have to protect it. It is only fair as nature takes care of us by giving us the air to breathe, the food to survive, and so many resources to make life easy. We do not want the time to come when our natural world would feel, it does not need to take care of us and leave us to our own means, which we do not have.