

Hinduism and the environment

Prepared by Aditya Nochur for the Chaplaincy's Table on "Religion, Ecology, and the Environment," March 2, 2006

Key concepts

- On a fundamental philosophical level, Hindus believe in *Brahman*, an all-pervading divine force. All Hindu Gods and Goddesses, and everything in the universe, is a manifestation of *Brahman*. To be Hindu, therefore, means to see divinity in everything.
- Hindus believe in *karma*, the law of cause and effect, and reincarnation in both human and animal form. To perform one's *dharma* (duty) well means one will attain a more favorable rebirth and thus come closer to attaining *moksha* (enlightenment).
- The ultimate goal for a Hindu is to transcend the cycle of reincarnation so his individual soul (*atman*) can attain *moksha* (enlightenment) and become one with *Brahman*. Various paths to *Brahman* include Vedic ritual, *bhakti* (devotion to God), and *yoga* (meditation).

Selected ecologically relevant quotations from Hindu texts

O Earth, O Mother, dispose my lot
In gracious fashion that I be at ease.
In harmony with all the powers of Heaven
Set me, O Poet, in grace and good fortune!

– Atharva Veda, "Hymn to the Earth"

The air is his breath, the trees are the hairs of his body,
The oceans his waist, the hills and mountains are his bones,
The rivers are the veins of the Cosmic Person,
His movements are the passing of ages.

– Srimad Bhagavatam, 2.1.32-33

Everything in the universe belongs to the Lord.
Therefore take only what you need, that is set aside for you.
Do not take anything else, for you know to whom it belongs.

– Isa Upanishad