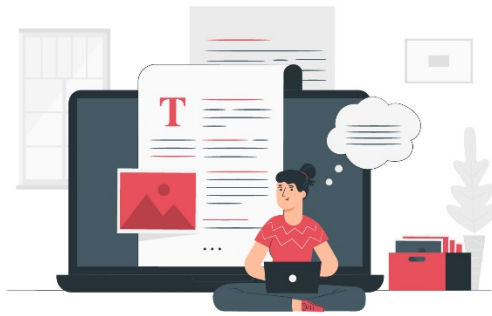


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Need of Regaining the Spirit of Sabbath for the Environmental Sustainability

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Abstract:

Man, a beautiful creation with intelligence and understanding. His acts although are the most inhumane doings seen in the world. Since time immemorial, man was expected to lead a harmonious life in union with Nature, yet the scenario is a stark contrast to reality. Man, and his uncanny ability to continuously take and never give back has led to the depletion of majority of the earth's resources and he still hasn't given up. Man continues to siphon off the earth on a daily basis leading to major crisis in the environmental stability of the earth. The concept of Sabbath as rest seems to be the only means of regaining this lost stability. Resting in terms of giving Nature the time and space to revitalize and rejuvenate itself from the harm done by man. In this rat race to conquer the world man neglected the concept of preserving the universe for the future generations, and continued to exploit and deplete nature for his own selfish needs. Conducting an Eco-spiritual analysis of the concept of sabbath and implementing the same into man's life can save the universe from the dearth of extinction.

Keywords: Eco-spirituality, Bible, Sabbath, Nature, Man.

With the world coming to a near standstill owing to environmental crisis and globalization which manifests due to man's greed and overuse of nature 'nature's resources; there is a dire need to replenish the loss. Pollution or Ecological crisis is a significant problem in the world, and different disciplines and organizations are working on it. In all the religious scriptures, there is a vast description of the relation between human being and Nature, and the relationship between Nature and man is as old as humanity. Over the years due to the increase in population, there has been the need for more resources and man has been exploiting this situation to meet his needs. At some point in time, this need was replaced by greed and a new

crisis was formed. From global warming to extreme depletion of natural resources, the entire Earth has been affected by this continuous siphoning from the Earth. Today the entire world is in chaos facing a lack of necessary resources and extreme climatic conditions because of this gluttonous Nature of man. Mother Nature can be painted as an exhausted figure, unable to bear the brunt of man's greed.

In the Bible, the concept of *Sabbath* was introduced to ensure a day of rest for all beings probably so that there is adequate time given to Nature to reinvigorate itself. According to the Bible, God created the universe and all its being and on the 7th day he rested. This seventh day was later referred to as the Lord's Day and in the 10 Commandments given by Yahweh to Moses on Mount Sinai, the third commandment clearly states "Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day". This is the day of the Sabbath. A day of rest. A day for a man to connect with Nature on a spiritual level.

Shabbat is the original Hebrew word for our English word sabbath. It comes from the root Shin-Beit-Tav and means "to cease, to end, to rest." The concept is invariably linked to the seventh day after the six days of creation, and that is how we see it used in the Old Testament. Sabbath is the most important holy day on the Jewish calendar, though it is kept every week by observant Jews and some others, and not just once a year. Six days you shall labor and do all your work" (Exodus 23:12 and Leviticus 26:2). There are many interpretations of the word Sabbath; here, I would like to focus on the meaning 'to cease' or 'to stop.' In Jewish tradition, they believe that God created the world and entrusted humans as the guardian of everything and permitted him to labour for his daily bread. Still, God made a commandment that the seventh day of the week will be Sabbath, which means to rest or to stop. Here the key idea is not to do anything with Nature, especially giving rest to Nature to control human exploitation over Nature.

The link between the commandment and the creation story indicates how Shabbat rest contrasts with creative labour. Genesis describes a very anthropocentric world: Humanity stands at the head of the created beings, as benevolent dictator in chapter 1, and conscientious steward in chapter 2. Sabbath implies an approach that can be labelled biocentric, demanding that humans abstain or stop from domination. It thereby allows them to see themselves as creatures, rather than creators.

Man is expected to live in harmony with Nature. This harmony is three-fold: Man, to God, Man to Nature and Man to other beings. From time immemorial, it was expected of a man to co-exist with Nature, but instead, the current scenario is quite different. Man has taken the upper-hand and turned Nature bare. This imbalance between man and Nature has affected entire humanity leading to adverse conditions of war and murder amongst men. Now the situation is at its worst, making it of utmost importance to regain the spirit of Sabbath concerning its Biblical connotation to preserve the environment for future generations.

The research paper aims to clearly outline the concept of Sabbath as a means to end this imbalance between man and Nature and to create awareness amongst men that it is essential to preserve Nature and its elements to leave a sustainable universe for the coming generations.

The evolution of the idea of Sabbath from its initial connotation to its present-day understanding can be understood with the help of historical methodology by conducting a close reading of the Bible, especially the book of Genesis.

An eco-spiritual reading of the Biblical concept of Sabbath can be seen as one that leads towards the creation of consciousness in the mind of the masses for the preservation of Nature for future generations through optimal usage of natural resources thus preventing the exploitation of Nature.

To regain and to establish the ecological balance is a challenge for all the people in the world, until and unless each individual takes personal initiative to save the environment, the scenario of exploiting Nature will continue. This research paper looks at the meaning of the term Sabbath, which means to stop, from the light of the Bible. The main focus will be given to the aspect of giving rest to Nature than to a human. This is an attempt to develop or to create an awareness to the people about giving rest for Nature, which leads to an eco-friendly and harmonious life through which Nature is protected.

Genesis 2:2-3

"And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy because, on it, he rested from all the work of creating that he had done."

The idea of *Sabbath* of God in the book Genesis Chapter 2 mainly focuses on the concept of rest or peace. It also refers to the relationship between creator and creatures. This is entirely different from the Mosaic or Sinaitic covenant of Sabbath. In the modern era we humans face a set of dire ecological crisis, the result of what we may call the Anthropocene era, the era of human modification of Earth or planetary systems. This results in global warming, altered weather species extinction, etc. According to the Sabbath concept of Genesis 2:2, it is a weekly ritual, symbolic and with real-world impacts, widespread observance of Sabbath done right could reduce environmental harm by about one-seventh in much of the world and provide a platform for ongoing modification on our environmental exploitation and their consequences.

So, regaining the real spirit of Sabbath may help to improve the life situation of humanity in a different way, which means we need to give awareness to the masses through education about the value of every natural resource and the minimal use of natural resources, and that will help to preserve the resources for the coming generations.

"Transforming Environmental Attitudes and Behaviours through Eco-Spirituality and Religion by Crowe, incorporates spirituality, and religious themes in environmental education as a way to link learners to their meaning systems. Research has shown that the incorporation of a spiritual element in education provides a way for students to have authentic learning experiences and make meaning of the knowledge they acquire in the classroom. This mixed-methods study examined the environmental attitudes, education, and actions of students in an introductory environmental science course with a spiritually infused curriculum at a community college. Environmental education increases knowledge and awareness about Earth's environment and teaches skills that lead to action that will ensure stewardship of all aspects of Earth's environment. The integration of spirituality and religious traditions in environmental education offers an alternative approach in curriculum design that encourages learners' environmental attitudes and behaviours to be transformed.

Modern environmental problems will never be adequately addressed until citizens fully grasp the necessity of a healthy environment. Declines in environmental awareness and concern show that we need a new focus in the field of environmental education. They are acquiring an environmental knowledge in a setting that encourages critical reflection on the role of humans in the world and promotes a holistic connection to our planet has the potential to produce a citizenry that practices sustainability in every area of their lives. To preserve Nature, the first

thing that needs to be introduced is environmental education, so we need to find out different methods to educate people about the need for protecting Nature.

Genesis 1:28

"And God blessed them. And God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the Earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the Earth."

When God created the universe, he left the man in charge of his creation to guard and protect it. He assigned him as a steward. He was expected to procreate and live in harmony with Nature and its elements. Over the years, man has been seen taking on the charge of exploiting this beautiful creation and ensuring the destruction of many aspects of Nature. Instead of co-existing harmoniously man has made every effort to control and tame Nature to his whims based on his needs alone. The man seems to reject outright any form of preservation of Nature for the generations to come. Man, who was created in the image of God, was expected to be the protector of Nature and aid in its growth. Instead, man exploited Nature to its fullest and has stunted its growth on many levels. Thus, destroying the universe to a great extent for his own selfish needs. Even on the day of rest man is at the epitome of exploitation. He uses the day of the Sabbath to indulge in this exploitation by harming most aspects of Nature. Thus, the spiritual understanding which was to be achieved on the day of the Sabbath remains unachieved, and man fails to understand the impact of his wrongdoing. Therefore, a spiritual awakening may lead the people to have a proper understanding of how Nature and all the creatures are interconnected.

Ursula King, in her article, "*Earthing spiritual literacy: how to link spiritual development and education to a new Earth consciousness?*" Here she discusses the development of spiritual literacy concerning a new awareness of the Earth. It draws on the metaphor of 'earthing' to argue for a close link between spiritual literacy and Earth literacy, considered of great importance for both personal spiritual development and the further evolution of humanity. The universe story, Earth story and human story are intimately interconnected when the whole planet and all life are understood as a vast ecosystem linked to philosophical and spiritual dimensions. This awareness leads to a discussion of a global, dynamic vision of education, the meaning of religious pluralism, the existence of a 'dialogical imperative' and the need to draw on global spiritual energy resources to feed the zest for life,

so essential for the flourishing of all peoples and the planet. Here she argues that the idea of developing spiritual literacy in conjunction with Earth literacy can be called a pneumatophore – an idea that is a bearer of spirit that can kindle spiritualities for the life of the human community on Earth. This article leads us to a proper awareness about the need for developing a spiritual approach towards Nature is to have an appropriate harmony between humans and Nature.

Genesis 7:12 "And the rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights."

While man failed to understand the true meaning of *Sabbath* chaos clouded his understanding of everything. He failed to understand the Nature of his fellow human beings and his surroundings, therefore, waging war against anything that went against the norm. The entire moral understanding of man took a hit, and he failed to differentiate between the good and evil and what was right and wrong. On his creation, the man was given the unique ability of thinking and understanding which due to his greed for material pleasure clouded his better judgment rendering him incapable of the level of animals who are unable to be the decision-making body under any circumstance. Man failed to realize the greatness of his creation and thus indulged in greed and exploitation of Nature.

Nature unable to bear the brunt of man's exploitation retaliates in the form of natural disasters. Instances of the same are seen in the Bible when the floods which went on for forty days and forty nights during the time of Noah destroyed the entire Earth. Nature rebuilt and rejuvenated itself during this time while the man was absent from its midst thus recreating itself for further sustainability. It seems as though Nature has given man multiple opportunities to change his ways.

However, due to man's attraction towards material pleasures, he has been blinded from understanding nature and thus living in disharmony. Tracing man's history over the years would prove that every natural disaster that occurred was nature 'nature's attempt at revitalizing itself by distancing itself from man, thus indulging in a certain period of rest. Man, in his rush to attain the world often disregards the concept of rest and expects Nature to follow so but instead of achieving great heights, he merely collapses. When we go through the history, like Newton's third law for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction, which means it is clear that humanity is paying for all his greedy action towards Nature. One of the best solutions for greedy human action is to become aware of what he is doing, and he must have the realization

that the imbalance of Nature is caused by the careless action of everyone. So, abstaining from the harmful action towards Nature will help humanity for the sustainability of all species.

"Ecological Imbalance in Suakin Ecosystem" in this article, E.A. Elhag gives the analysis report of the investigation about a rocky, a muddy, and a sandy shore around Suakin (Sudan) during the years 1982, 1983 and 1984. In this paper, the macro and meiofauna of the three shores were compared. The population composition of each shore and their relative abundance were estimated. Though the species composition was not similar, the species density was higher in the rocky shore. The substrate particle sizes of the muddy shore are becoming coarser with time. The difference in the population of the three localities is attributed to the combined effects of the different physical, biochemical, and behavioural factors. However, a profound decline in overall abundance in the three localities was observed since 1982. This is probably due to the decrease in organic input from the Red Sea Hills and plains caused by rains (run-off) before the years of drought. The effect of drought and the construction of a new harbour in this area has prompted such base-line information to monitor any expected impact. This article gives the need for having a peaceful relationship between man and Nature for the survival of both. It proves that the existence of any species, including man, very much depends on Nature and natural resources. So, it reminds us of the need for respectfully preserving Nature.

Although Nature always has hand-held man towards progress by providing it with its resources, man has forever established himself as being blinded by greed, looking for a profit in every aspect of Nature. The man began using technology to drain out the maximum resources from Nature for his own needs, thus depleting the resources and draining Nature of its powerful energy. Even today the primary cause of man's suffering can be traced back to his exploitation of Nature, be it the use of chemical fertilizers for the production of enhanced crops or worldwide epidemics due to these harmful chemicals. Man, thus ruins land with the usage of these harmful chemicals rendering the land invaluable and invalid for future use. Therefore, it is essential that man realizes the need for rest in every aspect of Nature and also for himself to ensure maximum producibility in his life.

The planet faces a variety of troubling issues that stem from human-made adulteration. Many of these lead to environmental problems that are causing long-term damage to the Earth's ecosystem. It is high time to become aware of all the issues The Global Issues website explains

that the only way to control current environmental issues is to create sustainable development strategies and continue to instil conservation methods.

Life is lived well only when one is entirely in tune with the whole universe. Everything created is worthy of praise as they have been created by God, created for a man not for him to dominate, but for him to use with brotherly sympathy. This kind of harmony leads to responsibility and mutual dependency. Because of the intimate connection between human beings and Nature, the inner state of man is reflected in the external order. Therefore, when the inner beings of humans turn to darkness and chaos, Nature too turns from harmony and beauty to disequilibrium and disorder. So there exists a need for realization in the inner self of humanity, about the value and dignity of all creation and creatures, only that realization can lead one to act responsibly, to be aware of the real spirit of Sabbath can help one to more pro-active in all the moments of life or that can help him to be more responsible in all his action.

To regain and to establish the ecological balance is a challenge for the whole people in the world, until and unless each individual takes personal initiative to save the environment, the scenario of exploiting Nature will continue. This research paper is an attempt to explain the necessity and importance of having an Eco spiritual relationship with Nature. Here I have tried to analyze the meaning of the Sabbath, which means to stop, from the light of the Bible. My main focus is giving rest to Nature than to a human. This is an attempt to develop or to create an awareness to the people about giving rest for Nature, which leads to an eco-friendly and harmonious life through which Nature is protected.

The research paper outlines the concept of rest in as transparent a manner as possible to ensure that maximum awareness can be spread among men. The environment is ours to protect and preserve. Further exploitation of the natural resources would result in the complete depletion of the resources and extinction of the same. This scenario would leave close to nothing for our future generations to survive on. Man needs to take responsibility for his actions and begin to take adequate measures towards replenishing the Nature he so conveniently destroyed. This act of understanding and recognizing his mistake itself is a big step towards a better and sustainable future. This would lead to a spiritual awakening within man thus helping him reach a state of calm and harmony with all other beings. The chaos within and around the universe would cease to exist as both man and Nature take the time to rest and rejuvenate themselves. There would be peace entailing as man's mind is at rest and is attempting to attain

a specific state of calm which would clear him of his impurities which have collected over the years while he was on a marathon run to achieve the world.

This concept of Eco spirituality and Sabbath has been addressed to a great extent but at the same time owing to its religious connotation which is rooted in Judaism and Christianity it faces a barrier from those who believe in other religions. This thought prejudices the masses from indulging or even understanding and accepting the concept of Sabbath. Thus, it is opposed to taking off towards the entirety of humanity.

The concept of Sabbath associated with the understanding of rest is, therefore, a means to end the imbalance between man and Nature. Hence, it is essential and necessary to create awareness amongst men to preserve Nature and its elements to leave a sustainable universe for the coming generations. Man is the superior being; thus, he was placed as the steward over the entire universe in the hope that he would guard it. Even today, this hope rests on them, the hope that man would heal the world and make it a better place for all.

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