

“Connect with Nature”

Genesis 1:1-26

Revelation 21:1-6

Psalms 19

John 15: 1- 9

A certain guru was engaged in a meditative practice at his monastery on a hill-top. Once he wanted to have a white rose plant at his monastery. His disciple was sent to search for this particular rose plant. And he wandered around the whole valley to find this unique kind of white rose plant, but could not find. Then somehow he managed to get a red rose plant and he brought the same to the guru.

The guru planted this red rose plant in the courtyard of his monastery. He prayed to God for the growth of this plant. First, he asked for light in order for the plant to grow. God sent the light. Then he prayed for the shadow and God has given the same. Then he started praying for rain. God sent drizzling rain. Then he prayed for strong rain and there was very strong rain. But the red rose plant slid away at the rain.

“You have destroyed the flower plant after giving everything I asked?” the guru complained to God.

“Who destroyed? Isn’t it you? I had been extending all the necessary things according to the needed portion. However, when you intervened and asked for extensive quantity, it had been ruined. How can you blame me for this? We need to wait for the commune of nature to experience it and do not force yourself on the nature.”

Yes! The extensive and exploitative use of human power and force has caused adversely for the devastation of the environment. We see violent implementation of scientific and technological machines for the over production goods from the natural resources. Such use of might on the rights of the nature to have her own being and becoming by the aggressive development urge have done enough damage for our earth, who is our common shared home. Human contacts with the earth for economic advancement have harmfully affected the earth and its related communities. The earth and its natural diversities have become the worst casualties in the age of corporate greed and devastating developmental experiments. Both renewable and non-renewable energy sources have been exhausted and we are at an ecological juncture to meditate and act on the need for restoring the rights of the nature for her own survival. We are living in era deliberated, more specifically human accelerated environmental degradations. Whether it is the so-called green revolution (agriculture) or white revolution (Milk industry), urbanization or digitalization, special economic zone or special packages for the under developed, the catastrophic use of force and violent implementation of economic and development policies have contributed dangerous for the existence of the nature and the earth. Nuclear power projects, real estates, rock and sand mining, water sporting and tourism, and all such sorts of engagements have its own negative impact on the future of the earth.

It is in such an evasive context, once again we, as a faith community, are observing the environment Sunday. These kinds of liturgical remembrances are occasions for us understand

ourselves in relation to God and to the world. Christian liturgy is a medium to feel the presence of God in our midst. If so, the entire creation itself is a liturgy of God, Because, God has transmitted the divine essence in all creations. Even though we worship God in the humanly constructed church buildings and with a human focused liturgy, the participation of the entire creation is invoked in order to attain the spirit of worship in truth. So this liturgical reenactment of the liberation of God in our lives, socially and spiritually resignifies the importance of nature and environment in our relation with God.

Bible, as the word of God contains God's redemptive purpose for the entire world. Though most of the narratives are scripted from the Human-Divine perspective and experience, nature is also a vital part in the overall plan of God. Therefore, on occasions like this, we as a believing community and more specifically as community of Jesus' disciples, have to read and be inspired by the creation accounts from the bible. The word of God contains the details of God's creative and creational interactions, recreating interventions and sustaining and flourishing intentions for cause of the whole created order. It is appropriate for us to concentrate on three fundamental ideas or concepts in order to understand the theme, "Connect to the Nature", biblically.

1. "Connect to the Nature": A Call for Creational Spirituality.

Genesis 1 gives us a perspective on the reality of creations. *"In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the water (V.1)".* Creation is God's struggle against situation of formlessness, voidness or chaos. From the beginning itself, we see challenges the forces that perpetuate orderlessness or disconnectedness in the universe. When God try to connect and contact with the already existing chaotic context, the creation take place. God fights out the perplexing order of things in order to bring life as an order of the divine. This resistance of God to the powers that brings disorder in the universe is the sum and essence of God. This essence in fact precedes the existence God. We see creation as the imparting of the essence of God. Whatever situation and forces that distorts the equilibrium of this divinely created and ordered earth needs to be challenges as part of our faith in this living God. When some section of humanity approach the universe and the nature with intentions to exploit and with selfish agenda of greed, they try to garble the purpose of God which we call as the mission of God. The mission of God in creation, as we see in the genesis narratives, is the extension of the substance of God in all the creatures. Any kind of dishonor and disrespect to the creation is automatically against the mission of God. Every creature in the nature has their own right to exist. Creation is the freedom of God. When we unjustly intervene in the freedom of the creation either with perverted sense of development or violent means of mechanisms, we reduce this liberty of creation. Enslavement and manipulation any kind is a violation of this God given freedom. It does not mean that we are against development. We are for a development paradigm that is sustainable for everyone, non-destructive for environment and good for the coming generations. Our life at this planet, at this era, is both received legacy from the past and a loan from the future generation. Therefore we need to live harmlessly in the nature. As a community of faith in God we are called through re-telling of the creation narratives to radically connect ourselves with the nature in order to practice our faith as a

resistance against the forces that disorient the rhythm of creation. Connect to the nature is clarion call for all people to subscribe to creational spirituality that promote freedom, equality and integrity of all the creation.

2. “Connect to the Nature”: A Conviction for Relational- Linking

The first sounds of creation, God’s first words, are these: “Let there be light” (Gen.1:3). We are not sure these words are just said, shouted or sung. Quite often, we as people who read the scripture for different occasions do not comprehend the tone of the word. This first ever utterance of God is a creational hymn. The creation of light has brought the mind of God evident and the order of God as creation obvious. God carefully separates this “light” from “dark.” Because of that divine “let there be light” word or hymn, there is no longer a “void”. Instead, “there was evening and there was morning, the first day” (Gen1:5). Light is both as a reality and a symbol in biblical tradition. Every metaphor or symbol that we come across in the history of the biblical traditions directly or indirectly points to an environmental reality that meditatively teach us the meaning of life on earth. Light and life are intrinsically related in the creation of God. The most important fact we infer about light is what makes light “light”, and that is links. Light only comes through links, through relationships. Interlinked frequencies communicate and emit different kinds of light-ultra violet, infrared, a rainbow spectrum of colorful relationships. Light I formed by connection between frequencies, the relationship between particles. The links give us the light that transforms our world. May be a better translation of “Let there be Light” is “Let there be Links”. In Christian tradition Light is God’s self-communication. The difference between “God is nowhere” and “God is now here” is but the addition of a link, a span of relationships. Creation of God is in continuity. We, human beings are also created as continuity from other creations. And we are created to continue in this process of relational-linking. Human beings are the final outcome of the labour of God, because God created us from the dust of the earth. We are to return to this dust at the end of our life on earth. This creation cycle meant for everything on this universe dictates to us that we all are created in relationship. Even the labor, our power potential to work with nature for the flourishing of the creation, is also relationship. Work is in fact just relationship with the nature. If we bypass the important ethics of justice in terms of relationships with nature, as the integral other, then we end up in exploiting the natural resources and ultimately contribute for the climate and environmental crises. Therefore the theme, “Connect to the Nature” is a conviction for us, the faith communities, for relational-linking with nature and the environment around us.

3. “Connect to the Nature”: A Commitment for Ecological Reciprocity

John 15:1-9 describes Jesus explanation on his mutual relationship between him and his disciples. He receives a nature metaphor or more specifically an agro-imagery, of Vine and branches, in order to explain this mutual discipleship. Reciprocity between Jesus Christ and his followers defines the concept of discipleship. Jesus himself considers the nature and her web of relationships as the mother of his divine knowledge and he uses the natural relationships of vine, branches and fruits to teach the value of being related to him and also to God. God is presented here as the vinedresser. We have to see this image not as an agency of unending

desire for exploitation, rather as caretaker for the creation. God as a caretaker of the creation is interested in the flourishing and survival of the environment for existence of all. As disciples are intrinsically related to the savior Jesus Christ, we the human beings are created to live in harmony with the nature. The earth is not simply the “environment”, a scenic backdrop on which the human drama takes place; rather it is what has made us who we are and what sustains our every second of existence. For example, the breath we take from the nature, the most basic, the first and last thing we do, depends on the soils, plants and other elements which silently process the constituents of the air necessary to sustain our lives. We are radically dependent on the nature. Everything in the nature is interdependent. This interdependency is the foundation of our faith and spirituality. Perhaps, the human beings are more dependent on nature than other creations of God. If all human beings disappear from the earth tomorrow, no plant or animal would miss us, on the contrary everything would be better off. But we cannot live even a second without the nature. We may be greedy, but more basically we are needy, terribly needy. Therefore we need to commit ourselves to relate and reciprocate with the nature for better environment for all the elements of life on earth.

We, as faith communities, have to consider our mission in a wider sense in order to contextualize the message of Gospel of Jesus Christ as the love for all creations. We must begin to see and perceive differently in order to live differently. This environment Sunday worship is a time for all of us to experience the realities around as potentially divine and engage with the nature with a counter cultural perspective. The dominant and abusive approach to nature in the name and slogan of development has almost enough damage to our environment. We face the ecological impact of deforestation, aggressive pesticidation of the agriculture, sand and mountain mining, increase in carbon emission and many other violent activities for the consumer taste and comfort of human beings. Corporate greed and unbridled consumerist market competition have distorted our relationship with the nature. The nature has become the worst inflicted victim at our age due to our selfish and individualistic approach for amassing more for us by unjustly stealing the right of the nature and future. Therefore our meditation invites us to reconnect ourselves with nature by affirmatively acting as the just and interdependent caring community for the environment.

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