

A virtuous attribute of hope for the future, faith allows us to look at adverse changes and transforming contexts in a more patient and peaceful manner. In these times of great flux, there are drastic fast-paced changes, which at times have led to a breakdown in the economic, social and political framework of societies. We are grappling to find sustainable ways to engage with our natural resources for human consumption and address the crucial environmental and social issues. In these times, it might be a good idea to revisit the idea of faith in the context of development and nature conservation.

In the multicultural society of India with diverse value systems, now in existence for more than many millennia, the idea of faith has generated a sacred, living and survival relationship with the natural world. M.N. Ashish Ganju, guest editor of the section, while introducing the theme, *Faith and Nature*, notes that the ecological worldview relies on interdependence of all phenomena being the basis of life, which is an ancient belief system of the region. Traditional practices in architecture and nature conservation, spread over the country, create localized resilient communities with low carbon footprint. With context-based knowledge, culturally specific responses and community-centred production, they are powerful tools to manifest the idea of faith in many ways along with values of pluralism and coexistence. Tribal practices across diverse geographical regions, mostly sited in egalitarian realms, are another set of secular lens through which the idea of faith for conserving nature can be viewed in the subcontinent.

A tree, in the forests of Chhattisgarh, becomes a site for an annual festival for the local tribals who come together to celebrate the beginning and the completion of the cultivation cycle as Savyasaachi notes in the article, *Belong—Faith and Nature*. The relationship of symbolic and material is another manifestation related to faith in Indian tradition. Vikram Soni, a scientist, in his essay, *Resonance*, explores the mysterious ways of nature and finds the formation of the ice glacier of Amarnath, an island at the confluence of three rivers and a hot spring at the heights of Badrinath, magical which compels belief. An artist-architect and nature enthusiast, Gopalak watches the colours and glories of nature at different places at different times and tries to bring some of those impressions on paper, few of which he shares in his feature, *Treescapes*.

Most of the scriptures of organized religions in the country have promoted a way of living in close harmony with other beings. Nature is revered as a supreme force. The value of this profound thought has transcended in each time and place in the history of Indian civilization. Leslie Sponsel in his essay, *Buddhism and Nature*, notes that Buddhism provides all the essential elements for a relationship to the natural world characterized by respect, care, and compassion. In *Braj, Cultural Landscape of Bhakti*, Divay Gupta observes that various sites in the region of Braj (associated with Lord Krishna) acquire a sense of sacredness, although they have no religious association to the place or region.

These varied typologies of engagement with nature become sites of experiential and functional living domains which celebrate the sacred relationship between environment and man.

The path of sustainable development needs change in the way we think, we engage with the environment and we produce models of knowledge, which need to be based on humane values and an ethical standpoint. The tradition of faith as the main anchor to engage with nature can create these models from which a country with an agenda of sustainable development in the twenty-first century can learn.



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