

## **The Sarnath Pledge to the Earth**

**November 2015**

Members from the Dharma religious traditions, along with representatives from the Abrahamic and Native American traditions, gathered in Varanasi and Sarnath, India to explore how to uphold Dharma in the world today. How can our understanding of the principles of Dharma help us respond to the multiple world challenges, foremost of which is the violence we, the human community, have inflicted upon the Earth and her vast communities of life?

What we urgently need is to come again into a respectful and loving relationship with the Earth, her life energy, life systems and living communities. We must come again to know the living energies in water – the streams, rivers and oceans -- the living energies of the forests and diversity of plant life, the living energies of the mountains, the air and all animal life. Our societies have commodified this life and used it for our own egos and power, and to build unsustainable ways of living, but this life has an integrity of its own, independent of humankind and can exist without us, although we cannot exist without it.

We are bound together in an intricately interconnected web in which each part affects all others. We are One – one unbroken stream of consciousness appearing as many. We recognize this interdependence as well as the law of cause and effect and know that by pillaging the earth we are, in fact, inviting harm onto ourselves and the rest of the human family.

There is no more important task now than to rekindle our love for the Earth, to express our gratitude and to counter a propensity for domination by cultivating greater humility and cooperation. Try as we might we cannot replicate nature's exquisite sense of balance and harmony.

There are multiple ways to demonstrate our care and appreciation. Recognizing the harmful impact on earth's life systems inflicted by industrial meat production, which is one of the greatest contributors to climate change, we can advocate for a global reduction in meat consumption. Recognizing the damage to soil and water systems imposed by industrial agriculture, we can support organic, chemical free and local agriculture. We can advocate for the development of new, clean energy technologies. And through our thoughts and actions we can offer gratitude for the bounty provided by our mother Earth.

Just as the Earth has been commodified so too have our sacred teachings been commodified and secularized -- these gifts of meditation and other spiritual practices, which have been handed down through the millennia for the purpose of awakening us to our true nature. Just as the Earth must be reclaimed as sacred so too must these gifts, which are a living treasure for all humanity.

The Sarnath Pledge is one in which we commit to upholding the universal truths of Dharma in relationship to the Earth, knowing that we are part of nature and if we are to serve Dharma must come again into harmony with her laws.