

A detailed landscape painting of a forest. In the foreground, a large, gnarled tree with thick, moss-covered branches stands prominently. The forest is dense with various types of trees and lush greenery, including ferns and large-leafed plants. A waterfall cascades down a rocky ledge on the left side of the image, flowing into a pool of water. The background features rolling hills and mountains under a sky filled with soft, white clouds. The overall scene is vibrant and detailed, capturing the beauty of a natural environment.

Change the Culture
to Change the Environment

Cultural Renovation

Human greed is the cause of environmental problems. America, and most so-called developed nations, need a cultural change to control greed. Even though new technologies may address some environmental issues, American attitudes and lack of responsibility toward the environment will continue unless there is a cultural overhaul.

The *Bhagavad Gita* has a model for such change that will control greed and introduce sustainability.

There are 300 million people who follow the tenets of the *Gita*. Most are vegetarian; 50% practice an agrarian lifestyle; and their collective consumption and waste are much less than any comparable group in the West.¹ They contribute positively to the planet.

In contrast, 330 million Americans consume and waste more than any other group of its size. Their behavior and example threaten to destroy the earth.

¹ <https://goo.gl/8GPKzw>, <https://goo.gl/fDaNLn>,
<https://goo.gl/yJioWq>, <https://goo.gl/369W8V>, and
<https://goo.gl/JkNPXd>



Greed and the Environment

In 2010, *The Guardian* published: “US cult of greed is now a global environmental threat... Until we recognize that our environmental problems, from climate change to deforestation to species loss, are driven by unsustainable habits, we will not be able to solve the ecological crises that threaten to wash over civilization.”²

Professor Stephen Hawking, internationally respected physicist, said that greed will kill off humans.³

In 2014, Pope Francis stated: “God always forgives mankind, but the earth does not.” He commented that if humans continue to be greedy about abusing natural resources, the earth will eventually take her revenge.⁴

“Greed will kill off humans.”

-- Professor Stephen Hawking

Many experts have recognized greed as the root cause of environmental disasters. The Bible, Koran,

² January 12, 2010, *The Guardian*, <https://goo.gl/Yo11cF>

³ Stephen Hawking: Greed will kill off humanity, <https://goo.gl/WztPHB>

⁴ Pope Francis: <https://goo.gl/dZjaU9>

Buddhist literature, Karl Marx, and Thomas Jefferson are some of the many influential sources that caution humanity to control greed.

These literatures and individuals have presented their solutions. Religious perspectives generally focus on controlling one's animal nature and rising to a less greedy state of mind. Political ideologists usually favor a change of government and laws to restrict greed.

These remedies may work to a degree. However, a more practical approach is to first analyze the mechanics of greed, and then propose a solution based on that analysis. And this is what the *Gita* does.

There Krishna explains that the senses—seeing, hearing, and so on—are powerfully attracted to their objects—form, color, sound, objects of touch, etc. He says that when the mind contemplates those objects, desire for them arises, and the intensification of that desire is greed.⁵

The *Gita* says that we are slaves to the senses, which in effect constitute the body. To free the mind from such slavery, one should redirect it to the soul. This is yoga, which shouldn't be confused with the yoga that's practiced simply for bodily health.

⁵ *Bhagavad Gita* (BG) 2.62, 15.9



Slave to the senses and their objects.

When Greed Is Good

Greed is not good.

As stated above, Krishna, Jesus, Muhammad, Marx, and Jefferson all agree that it's not good. Regrettably, many people have rationalized traditional thinking on greed.

In 2014, Professor John Paul Rollert wrote: "Greed Is Good: A 300-Year History of a Dangerous Idea."⁶ In this article, he discusses how Western attitudes toward greed have changed. He starts by saying that in the fourth century St. Jerome condemned greed: "A man who is a merchant can seldom if ever please God."

Rollert writes that, in contrast to this thought, a few hundred years ago people began to rationalize greed. Some said that when humans are greedy as individuals, it may be a vice, but it can be good when they work collectively like tireless bees for the advantage of the hive or when they act altruistically like those who acquire wealth and at the same time benefit society with their largesse.

⁶ Rollert, "Greed is Good?" <https://goo.gl/mxsZQP>

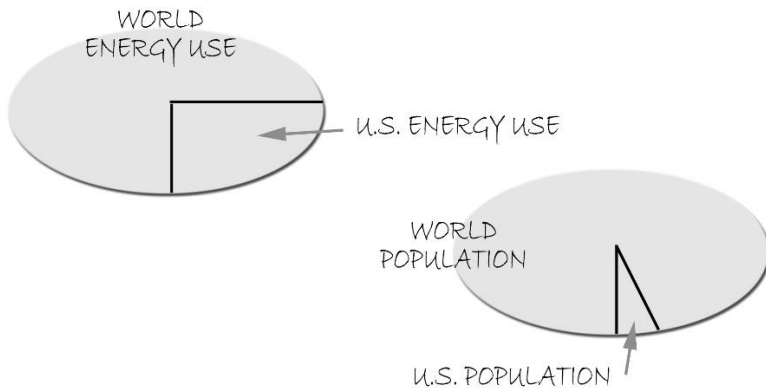
Rollert explains that until the 1960s and 70s corporations tended to act less greedy, more philanthropically. But they then became “collections of self-serving individuals whose interests could be aligned with those of shareholders.” Regardless, these perspectives ignore the human relationship with Nature. They focus only on whether greed might be good in relation to human interaction. Inevitably, when the culture is anthropocentric, greed harms Nature.

And exploitation of the environment is not entirely the fault of government and corporations. The responsibility lies on the shoulders of the public; American culture encourages collective indifference and rationalization regarding its own greed.

Many Americans believe that if they have externally clean communities, food, rivers, and air, then their responsibility toward the environment ends. In this way, excessive exploitation and destruction of nature continues unabated.

Cultural change is necessary to reform attitudes and foster responsibility on both an individual and collective level. And the *Gita* provides an excellent

model for an environmentally friendly culture that is effective on a large scale.



The *Gita* doesn't reject mercantile behavior as does St. Jerome. It explains that Krishna, the Supreme Controller, acts through the gods to supply all things to humanity. Those who honor those higher powers control their greed by reducing their attachment to wealth that's used for their own enjoyment. Rather, they use it for sacrifice and charity.⁷

Cultural change is necessary to foster responsibility.

⁷ BG 3.10-11, 16.2, 16.21, 18.27; 3.7-9

How We Got Here

Many experts like philosopher Arne Naess, historian Lynn White, and Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, agree on the cause of modern Western indifference to the environment. It is the Christian culture that has influenced Western society for hundreds of years. And its moral legacy continues to do so even among non-Christians.⁸

In America, the Christian majority, especially evangelical Protestants, have been reluctant to endorse solutions to environmental issues that call for deep reverence for Nature. Thinking that veneration of Nature might somehow compete with the worship of God, they've not been active in environmentalism until recent decades.⁹

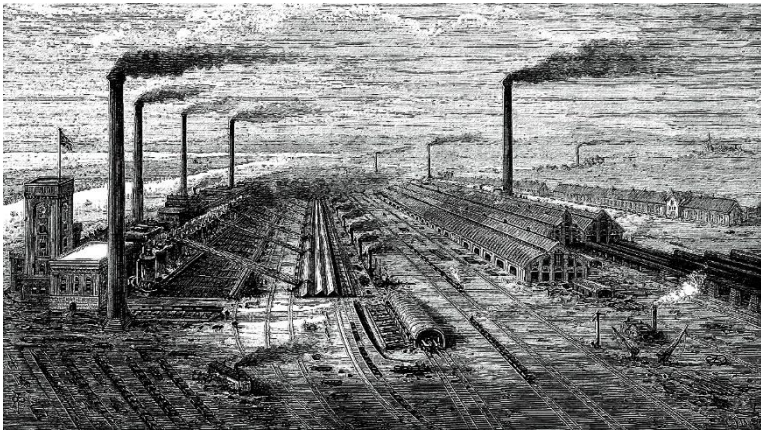
In general, modern Christians over the last three centuries have come to believe that “stewardship” of Nature does not necessarily mean extraordinary care for it. Rather, they think it implies domination of Nature that sadly infers unrestricted exploitation.

⁸ History of Christianity and the environment: <https://goo.gl/ByZYWB> / <https://goo.gl/D6a9kx>; Faith in Conservation, Palmer-- <https://goo.gl/QpqgTk>

⁹ <https://goo.gl/GQvFbS>

Thus, during the colonial era when European countries, whose sense of morality was influenced by Christian thinking, were in control of much of the world, the seeds of large-scale exploitation of Nature were sown and cultivated.

Modern societies have inherited this mentality, and the exploitation not only continues, but it increases whether those who participate in the culture are Christian or not.



In the 19th and 20th centuries, social and political movements responded to greed and injustice within human society. But, in general, these movements, most of them materialistic and based on Marxist thinking, haven't adequately addressed environmental

issues. They tend to be anthropocentric or humanistic rather than centered around Nature.¹⁰



While materialists, and some religious people, have been busy trying to rectify greed that affects humans, they've been slow or ineffective in curbing greed when it affects Nature.

Most people in Western society consciously or unconsciously believe it will be possible to coax more and more from the universe by clever exploitation, alternate energy sources, space colonization, and so on.

This greedy perspective is assisted by science and technology, which of themselves don't provide any

¹⁰ Marx on religion: <https://goo.gl/n3QTcu>

moral check on such exploitation. For example, a company can develop a machine to cut down a forest, and nothing in science prevents the company from doing so.

When scientists and technologists invent things like cars and medicine, which have dangerous effects on humans, legislators are quick to enact laws. However, when the effect is to the advantage of humans but abusive toward Nature, as with deforestation for farming or species annihilation for superstitions regarding animal horns, the movement is much slower.

According to the *Bhagavad Gita*, humans must recognize the soul in all beings. It's the life force, or soul, that animates everything, including even the universe. By seeing that all living beings are equal souls, one may become reluctant to kill or exploit another. This view is essential, but not adequate in itself. Most important is that humans must see that Krishna, acting through the gods, supplies everything, and without acknowledging Him, humans are stealing from Him.¹¹

¹¹ BG: 7.5, 5.18, 3.12

Science and Technology

James Gustave Speth, Law Professor and Environmental Advocate, said: “I used to think the top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse, and climate change. I thought that with 30 years of good science we could address those problems. But I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed, and apathy... ..and to deal with those we need a spiritual and cultural transformation. We scientists don’t know how to do that.”¹²

Most people have faith in the modern version of science, but it should be viewed with distrust, because it has been used, through technology, to cause considerable destruction in the world.

Modern science is seriously flawed. In 1690, in his “Essay Concerning Human Understanding,” John Locke, one of the most influential of Enlightenment thinkers, wisely defined science as having three components: (1) the nature of things; (2) human responsibility; and (3) the means for discovering and

¹² Speth: <https://goo.gl/WIJkn6>

teaching the first two. It should be emphasized that he said true science includes human responsibility.¹³

Unfortunately, science has evolved into something different. It lacks the responsibility component. For example, followers of modern “pure science” would say that developing an atomic bomb is within the realm of science and technology. But science does not contain guidance about when to use the bomb. That decision is in the realm of politics.

Certainly, there are fields like philosophy of science and science of morality that discuss the issue of human responsibility. However, these are toothless discussions. The world burns, and they talk about the morality of it.



¹³ Locke: Essay, Book 4, Chapter One, 1823/1963, p. 174:
<https://goo.gl/uF3V3Y>

Thus, science, as it's practiced today, cannot solve the devastation that science and technology have caused. This is because such so-called science has eliminated human responsibility or relegated it to a field that's not considered "pure" science.

Science lacks the component of responsibility.

Those who follow the *Gita* practice the most elevating type of responsibility. But those who aren't concerned with doing so have no true power of discrimination; their work is unbeneficial; and it ends in destruction.¹⁴

Today the interpretation of human responsibility is left to politicians and businesspeople. And both groups are proven to be predominantly motivated by power and money—that is, greed.

¹⁴ BG 16.7-9

What Are the Solutions

The most attention-getting solutions to environmental problems are based on modern science. These remedies feed into economic and political considerations.

Internationally, there are nearly 100 treaties that countries around the world have signed, some with global impact and some local, that concern the environment. They cover many practical areas—climate change, pollution, fishing constraints, biodiversity, animal conservation, waste treatment, and so on.¹⁵

These treaties tend to be science-based and organized by economists, lawyers, environmentalists, politicians, and others. Such agreements are essential. They are the solutions that carry the most weight at present.

However, scientists, economists, and politicians can't truly address the issue of greed, which is the infection that causes humanity's feverish and violent consumption of Nature's resources.

¹⁵ Environmental Treaties: <https://goo.gl/Jpi6Pq>

The *Gita* teaches that the gifts we have taken from Nature are offered to us by the gods and ultimately by the Supreme. To enjoy them selfishly outside of a relationship with the Supreme amounts to stealing from Him.

The timeless method of maintaining such a relationship is doing sacrifice and accepting Nature's resources as they were intended—gifts to supply the simple necessities of life.¹⁶

In the *Gita*, sacrifice has three categories—unselfish, which elevates; selfish, which causes mixed results; and irresponsible, which degrades.

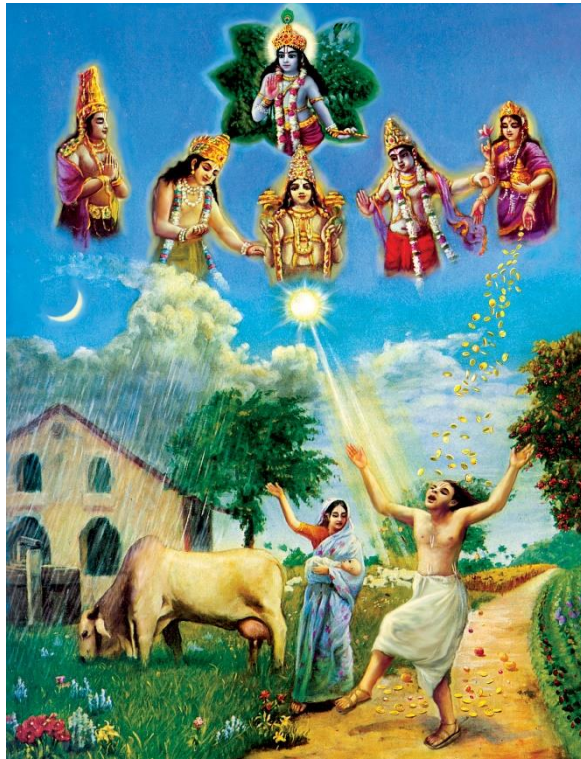
Currently, people are indeed doing many things that could be considered sacrifice, even if they aren't called as such. But they tend to be either selfish or irresponsible.

Responsible, unselfish sacrifice is done to establish a relationship with Krishna, who is the supreme object of sacrifice.

Such sacrifice is enjoyable, but that enjoyment is refined and requires cultivation. It's the force that can stop the power of greed. Greed is fueled by the wrong type of enjoyment. Thus, the goal is to replace it by

¹⁶ BG 9-12; *Sri Isopanishad*, Mantra 1

unleashing a non-exploitative, unselfish enjoyment that is more powerful than greed.



Sacrifice is refined enjoyment.

Such enjoyment comes from the power of love in a relationship with Krishna. Humans are addicted to the gifts they get from Him, but their greed for them causes suffering and destruction. This is because

they're abusing the relationship that Krishna offers. Affection and relationship are the most substantial and important things in life, so it's understandable that to abuse them causes suffering.

For example, if a friend, relative, or lover offers a gift, such an offering represents the relationship, and it requires reciprocation. In fact, mature reciprocation is characterized by genuine affection.

Only childish and selfish behavior considers that gifts are for individual enjoyment and nothing more.

Krishna teaches that sacrifice to Him is the vehicle by which one acknowledges that He provides everything. So, central to the culture of His 300 million followers is sacrifice that involves the adoration of His many names and the veneration of His incarnations through both lavish and simple festivals. In addition, about half of His followers exemplify simple, unselfish living through agrarian communities.

It's by their sacrifice that they reciprocate their affection and gratitude with Krishna. It's enjoyable. And there is no greater power than such affection. It counteracts greed.¹⁷

¹⁷ BG 3.9-17, 9.2; 18.54; *Sri Sri Siksastakam* 1:
<https://goo.gl/zFsGdC>

Conclusion

It's essential that Americans learn what the *Gita* has to offer. Individuals and communities can learn how to sacrifice by studying it and taking the advice of gurus who are expert in Krishna's teachings and who practice the sacrifice of His names.

Followers of the *Gita* take a strong position against those who think they can selfishly continue without restriction to exploit natural resources, whether those of the sun, wind, oil, mineral, land, water, animal, plant, or whatever.

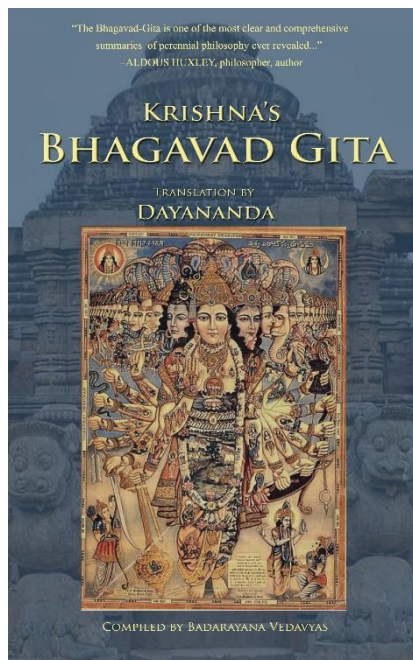
Their greed is endangering us all. It's stealing from our children and our children's children. In unthinkable numbers, it's killing humans and the other living beings with whom we share this planet. It's overexploiting divine Nature. And it's stealing from the rightful owner, the God of gods, Krishna.

So, on behalf of humanity, posterity, Nature, the gods, and Krishna, we oppose such people in every way.

It's essential that Americans learn
what the *Gita* has to offer.

Human **greed** causes environmental problems, and America needs cultural change to control that greed.

Technologies address some environmental issues, but American attitudes and **lack of responsibility** toward the environment will continue unless there is cultural overhaul.



Download a free copy of the *Bhagavad Gita* from <https://goo.gl/qMPp3C>.

The *Gita* has a model for such change.

Three hundred million people follow the *Gita's* advice. They set the example of how to consume.

In contrast, the consumption and waste of 330 million Americans threaten to destroy the earth.

Work with those who follow *Bhagavad Gita* culture.
Contact info@gita108.com for more information.