

[Reversing Our Global Arrogance](#)

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Reversing Our Global Arrogance

Mayur, Rashmi

On November 24th HINDUISM TODAY'S editor spoke with Dr. Rashmi Mayur, a Bombay-based ecologist and climate scientist who recently produced a film called "Nature and Man in India" Dr. Mayur is a specialist in greenhouse warming and the rise of the oceans. We asked him to define the four key concepts determining and influencing long-term development in the underdeveloped nations, including India.

First on his list was population growth. He said this single force "will influence all institutional efforts and values for the future. India, with a population of 820 million today (and only 236 million in 1901) will reach 975 million in 2000 and 1.1 billion in 2015, when it will surpass China."

His second key was the exploitation of nature. "India lost 1.6 million hectares of forest in 1989 alone, and the whole Third World lost 11 million. Fully 78% of the jiva, the 10 million species which share this planet with us, live in the tropics." He is concerned that loss of tropical ecosystems will harm or even annihilate life, "Himsa is the Indian term [for such harm] and it is nothing but reckless destruction, hurting not just ourselves, but all life." He noted that "prakriti, or nature, encompasses the totality of the reality in which we exist. We need to come to terms with our relationships with ecology, environment and resources. It is through himsa that we divide man and nature and increase cancer, drought and other by-products of institutional failure."

Third on Dr. Mayur's list is the "distorted development of Third World technology." He explained, "Business has turned the planet into a marketplace. Blind limitation of mega-technologies in the Third World is a deepening cause of human alienation." Is there a solution? "Though the centuries," he asserts, "there was a

built-in sustainability based on Indian philosophy. A good example is the use of bio-wastes at the village level. There was a close relationship in Indian society between earth and humans. Values emanated from the earth, at least for the common man and woman. Vedic philosophy offered a symbiotic relationship of man and prakriti, in which all the five elements - earth, air, fire, water and space - were a part. Man was not above nature, but part of it. It was Aristotle who brought man in as the center of the universe, which he is not. By contrast, Indian philosophy valued modesty and humility in man and discourage arrogance, which I see is at the root of the difficulties we are facing now. This is the ultimate test of humans, as to whether we will make it. Our perception of what we are must change. We must rediscover ethical relationship with values, things, people and nature. We must comprehend our place in the universe better, and work together in common purpose. Unless we do this, we have a sad, even a tragic, future. Otherwise we are the thieves of the future, stealing the future from others."

We asked him how Hindus, who are fully one-seventh of the human family, can be part of the solution rather than part of the problem. He was quiet and said, gently, "I may not really have an answer to that. Those who have studied Hinduism in depth can perhaps reverse the global arrogance of the human race, put us back in tune with the five elements, return us to a balanced relationship with each other and with nature. Unless we have a consciousness of our rightful place - see that humans are in a procession of life - then Hindus too will submerge themselves in the arrogance of technological progress, war pollution and destruction of life forms. In India many millennia of experience accumulated, resulting in a large body of wisdom. Maybe the real contribution of Hinduism is to draw on that traditional wisdom and provide an alternate, sustainable model for the world. In the old days, life was based upon the fundamental concepts of simplicity, which kept people from getting trapped in the material world, from becoming technological addicts. These traps must be understood and avoided. I would say this model of simplicity, coupled with humility and an integration of man with nature provide the keys for a reversal of the present course."

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