

Flourishing Futures *Nourishing Biodiversity Now*

On occasion of the World Environment Day (WED 2020)

An Initiative of BK Youth

The UN Environment Program, which has its 50th anniversary in 2021, has announced the theme of “Biodiversity” for the year 2020. In the lead up to 2021 the UNEP Major Group Children and Youth has invited all affiliated organisations to contribute an initiative to highlight biodiversity. June 5th is the observance of World Environment Day and May 22nd is the International Day for Biological Diversity.

The term “biodiversity” describes the variety of all forms of life on earth. It includes the whole diversity of species and ecological systems on land, in water and the air. It is acknowledged that over the past hundreds of years, human activity has had a massively destructive impact on the natural biodiversity of the earth and has largely contributed to the destruction of many ecological systems and species. As in complex systems, even the loss of one species has an effect on the whole biodiversity of that territory. The loss of biodiversity further interrelates with other global issues such as climate change as well as an escalation of new and multidrug-resistant viruses.

As an organisation that looks at global issues holistically, the Brahma Kumaris see that changing the course of this downward spiral requires a deep shift in human consciousness. Humanity has, to a great extent, lost touch with the natural world. We lost our natural connection and perception of its beauty, value and boundaries. Along with this, respect and appreciation towards all species and ecological territories has largely decreased, and led to a further appropriation of what is not ours, disregarding the fact that we are taking away the living space of other species.

The BK UNEP team would like to introduce a new initiative that invites young people and children to connect to their local and wider global variances in biodiversity through the specific lens and meaning of “flourishing”. This perspective primarily proposes modifying the previously predominant focus on deficits. It shifts from attempting to repair the "worst things" in life to instead highlighting the positive aspects, strengths, virtues and potential of the human beings that exist within a biosphere of natural surroundings. Adopting the approach of flourishing appeals to an individual's intrinsic motivation due to the hope and promise of abundance. Thus, it aims to elicit positive emotions, happiness, hope, and joy, as well as individual positive characteristics, strength, courage, virtue. These are intended to translate into purposeful action to promote and preserve such a flourishing world. Engaging in a constructive manner, these positive experiences can further translate into organisational structures.

The term flourishing connects beautifully to the inherent quality of life, to nature's natural way of growing and flourishing. An intact biodiversity is always flourishing and blossoming. Flourishing further provides connotations to the inner dimension of development, which we understand to be a crucial part in global transformation. In terms of the inner and the outer dimensions, flourishing contains an uplifting energy.

The initiative addresses three levels:

Individual flourishing and biodiversity

We would like to inspire personal exploration of how biodiversity supports flourishing of a single plant, animal, etc in your own ecological territory and how the flourishing of the single species contributes to a healthy biodiversity. How can you support your own flourishing (e.g. the enhancement of your inner potential, capabilities, values, inner power or consciousness) and use this as a contribution to the environment around you and the world at large?

Flourishing of interpersonal communication and synergy in relationships, enhancing the way we work together whilst engaging in environmental action

We want to inspire people to experiment with the concept of flourishing and set a pattern for a mode of interaction and working together. How can we support each other in collective processes of transformation and operate with an uplifting energy? How can we learn to see and sense opportunities and use them when the momentum emerges? Observing the wisdom of nature we can see how when a plant encounters a hindrance it just grows around it.

A flourishing generation as change makers for a healthy planet

Learning from the biosphere as a complex system, we know that everything affects each other. Trusting this natural law, the initiative invites young people to experiment with subtle ways of intervention by starting with changing one's own consciousness and perception, creating uplifting teamwork and cultivating a flourishing form of activism.

With humanity locked down due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been interesting to observe that restrictions placed on human movement and activity has made way for nature to resume its rightful claim over spaces on the earth. Dolphins play with freedom closer to the shores of the ocean, swans float on rivers that have been reduced to human tourist zones, monkeys play in gardens of urban residences and penguins have been roaming freely on the coastal stretch of the mainland. The hope and promise of reintegration of all rightful members of a biosphere is a clear pointer of the way forward. From the perspective of flourishing, it is time for humanity to make way for a mutually beneficial coexistence.

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