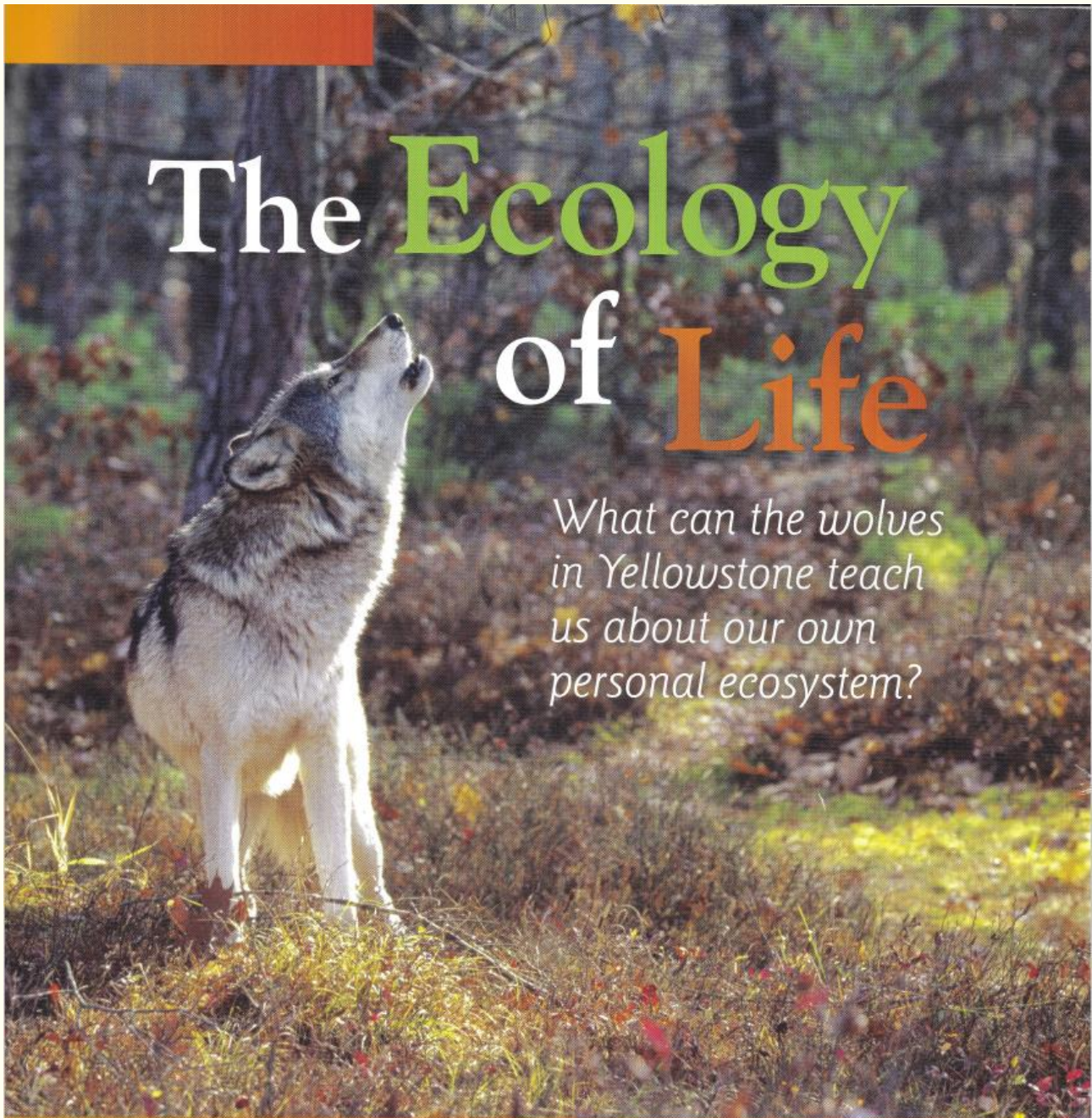


The Ecology of Life

What can the wolves in Yellowstone teach us about our own personal ecosystem?



In his TED Talk, "Re-wilding the World" journalist George Monbiot discussed trophic cascading, an ecological process by which the effects of adding a species to the top of an ecosystem, cascades down to the bottom of that ecosystem.

He explained that when wolves were re-released into Yellowstone National Park in 1995, the entire ecosystem of the nature preserve improved.

The reintroduction of wolves caused the deer population to flee the valleys and canyons, toward more forested areas. The deer, in fact, had caused serious damage to the local flora through their uncontrolled reproduction.

The wolves allowed the lower areas to revive, resulting in the return of grasses and berries. Jackals disappeared, mice, hares, rabbits and hawks flourished!

Trees strengthened and their numbers increased fivefold, and beavers returned. Exponential growth of trees and grass along the banks reduced coastal erosion, riverbeds straightened somewhat and flowed better. Fish, duck, and musk rat populations grew considerably. The population of songbirds increased significantly. Bears returned to the park.....

All of this and more was due to the re-appearance of the wolf in the area!

His data is astonishing, and it teaches us a great lesson: balance is both fragile and significant. What's at the top is important and has its effect on everything else all the way down.

What's true in nature is also true in the ecology of our own lives. Trophic cascading goes on there as well. In the last few decades, the post-modern mindset has meant that the spiritual side of existence has been devalued. With every decade, society has become more self-absorbed, and yet, it seems, less satisfied.

Maybe we need to introduce something at the top of our own ecosystem (and egosystem)?

We must rewild ourselves by reclaiming our spirituality. Try adding a dimension of a higher practice to your life like mantra meditation, vegetarianism or reading spiritual literature. The effects will trickle down through many aspects of our daily lives. Great wisdom texts like the Bhagavad-gita promise good effects, and sages and yogi's throughout history attest to their power.

These spiritual activities, taken together, comprise the basics of bhakti yoga. The positive results of introducing these practices might surprise you, just as adding wolves to Yellowstone surprised those who made that change.

When you're depleted or stressed, try gathering with others interested in bhakti yoga for kirtan, or listen to one online, and let the stress melt away.

Or we can sit quietly and chant the maha-mantra.

**Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare**

It slows the heart rate and clears and purifies the consciousness. We can find answers to life's difficulties by reading the Bhagavad-gita and other spiritual texts. Bhakti Yoga practice gives us new perspectives, and deeper knowledge of life's purpose - and more clarity on how we want to live. We get focused, find direction, and develop new momentum for living. Our inner ecosystem becomes more balanced. It starts from the top down.

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, who introduced bhakti to the Western world, used to compare bhakti to a million dollars. When we gain a million dollars, he would say, all our ten-dollar problems are solved. When we add bhakti yoga practices to our life, all our day-to-day problems are solvable. Life has balance and we find both peace and joy. That peace and joy cascades down through our whole existence, affecting positive changes in our relationship with our world.

However, as in the Yellowstone experiment, the process takes time. We've been conditioned by the experiences of this and previous lifetimes to behave in ways detrimental to spiritual fulfillment. But the application of these practices will have its effect, and we will notice it. Bhakti yoga is considered both the topmost yoga system and is sublime for the advanced yogis who are serious about advancing spirituality, but also for beginners who are just on the threshold of spiritual inquiry. Om -Tat – Sat.

(This article appeared originally in our magazine "Spirit Soul" and is a free and adapted translation thereof)

With thanks to our author of the original article, Maya Priya Long.

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