



# AN ECOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF EBIET G. ADE'S SONG "BERITA KEPADA KAWAN": REPRESENTATION OF HARMONY BETWEEN HUMANS AND NATURE

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the ecological narratives embedded in the lyrics of "Berita Kepada Kawan" by Ebiet G. Ade through the lens of ecolinguistics. Using a qualitative descriptive-interpretative approach, the research analyzes how the song represents the relationship between humans and nature, and how it conveys ecological values through language. The data were drawn from the lyrics of the song and analyzed using Arran Stibbe's (2015) framework of constructive and destructive ecological discourse. The findings reveal that the song contains strong constructive narratives that promote empathy, spiritual reflection, and environmental responsibility. Nature is not merely portrayed as a backdrop to human suffering, but as an entity deeply intertwined with human emotions and ethical choices. Metaphorical language and symbolic imagery reinforce the urgency of ecological awareness. This study concludes that artistic texts such as songs can serve as powerful mediums for ecological discourse and should be integrated into broader environmental communication strategies. The research contributes to expanding the scope of ecolinguistics by emphasizing the role of music as a tool for environmental education and public awareness.

**Keywords:** Ecolinguistics, Ecological Narrative, Song Lyrics, Constructive Discourse, Human-Nature Relationship

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## INTRODUCTION

Environmental issues have become one of the most urgent global challenges of the 21st century. Climate change, land degradation, natural disasters, and biodiversity loss are all symptoms of an ecological crisis that cannot be separated from human intervention in nature. In this context, interdisciplinary approaches that can help understand and explain the relationship between humans and nature are essential. One such approach is ecolinguistics, which studies the relationship between language, thought, culture, and ecosystems.

According to Stibbe (2015), ecolinguistics does not merely analyze language as a linguistic system but also examines it as a reflection of narratives — *stories we live by*

– that shape how humans perceive, interpret, and act upon the world. These narratives can be destructive, reinforcing nature's exploitation, or constructive, promoting sustainability and ecological balance. Through ecolinguistic analysis, we can identify how language becomes a tool in reproducing particular ecological ideologies.

In Indonesian culture, music and songs are powerful media for conveying social critique and moral values. One of the most consistent artists in expressing ecological and humanitarian concerns through his works is Ebiet G. Ade. His songs are not merely aesthetic expressions but serve as deep reflections on social, political, and environmental realities. Among his works, the song *"Berita Kepada Kawan"* strongly represents human suffering due to natural disasters and serves as a call to reflect on the relationship between humans and nature.

This song describes the post-disaster atmosphere – death, the destruction of homes, and collective grief – yet it avoids fatalistic narratives. Instead, it includes spiritual and reflective messages on how humans have treated the natural world. For example, the lyric *"Maybe God is getting tired of our behavior..."* is a powerful symbol of both ecological and religious criticism.

Halliday (1990) argues that future linguistics should contribute to ecological sustainability by analyzing forms of language that support or weaken environmental awareness. In line with this, song lyrics as popular discourse provide strategic objects of study to observe how language shapes public understanding and ecological consciousness.

Through an ecolinguistic approach, this study attempts to read the lyrics of *"Berita Kepada Kawan"* as an ecological narrative that reflects values of empathy, spirituality, and a call to preserve harmony between humans and nature. This research also aims to fill the gap in interdisciplinary studies between linguistics, music literature, and environmental studies – an area that remains relatively underexplored in Indonesia.

The present study is conducted with the aim of investigating the ecological dimensions embedded in the lyrics of *"Berita Kepada Kawan"* by Ebiet G. Ade, using an ecolinguistic framework. The analysis is intended to uncover not only the linguistic features of the text, but also the underlying environmental narratives and ideologies that shape its message. The objectives of this study are elaborated as follows:

First, this study seeks to describe how the relationship between humans and nature is represented in the lyrics of the song. Understanding this representation is crucial because language, especially in the form of artistic expression like song lyrics, often reflects deeper cultural beliefs and attitudes. Through metaphors, imagery, and symbolic references found in the lyrics, the song conveys a particular worldview regarding how humans perceive, treat, and coexist with the natural environment. This objective involves a close reading of the text to extract and interpret these representations within the context of ecological discourse.



Second, the study aims to identify the ecological narratives that are present in the song. As posited by Stibbe (2015), ecolinguistics focuses on the narratives or “*stories we live by*” that are embedded in discourse. These narratives can either support ecological awareness and sustainability (constructive narratives) or promote apathy and environmental degradation (destructive narratives). By identifying which types of stories are told in the lyrics – whether they evoke empathy for nature, critique human actions, or spiritualize environmental phenomena – the study aims to determine the ecological stance communicated through the song.

Third, the study endeavors to analyze the song lyrics using the theoretical lens of ecolinguistics, particularly drawing upon Stibbe’s (2015) concepts of constructive and destructive discourse. Constructive discourse is language that promotes ecological harmony, encourages sustainable behavior, and fosters respect for the environment. Conversely, destructive discourse normalizes environmental harm, often through silence, indifference, or justification of exploitative behavior. This objective will guide a critical evaluation of the textual elements in the song, examining whether the language used reinforces ecological care or reflects human-centered dominance over nature.

By pursuing these objectives, the research is expected to contribute to the broader understanding of how language in popular music can serve as a vehicle for ecological awareness. Moreover, it aims to highlight the relevance of ecolinguistic theory in analyzing texts that, while poetic in nature, carry significant social and environmental implications.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The intersection of language, ecology, and cultural expression has gained increasing scholarly attention in recent years, particularly through the lens of ecolinguistics. As environmental crises intensify globally, the need to understand how language shapes ecological awareness and behavior becomes more urgent. Ecolinguistics, as defined by Stibbe (2015), is not merely concerned with the structural aspects of language but with the narratives – “the stories we live by” – that influence how individuals and societies perceive and interact with the natural world. These narratives can either reinforce destructive ideologies that normalize environmental degradation or promote constructive discourses that foster ecological responsibility and sustainability.

Historically, the field of ecolinguistics emerged from the broader domain of applied linguistics, with foundational contributions from scholars such as Halliday (1990), who argued that linguistics should evolve to address ecological concerns. Halliday’s call for “new ways of meaning” emphasized the role of language in shaping human attitudes toward nature and advocated for linguistic practices that support environmental sustainability. This perspective laid the groundwork for subsequent ecolinguistic research that examines how language functions as a cultural and ideological tool in ecological contexts.



One of the key developments in ecolinguistics has been the categorization of discourse into constructive and destructive ecological narratives. Constructive narratives are those that encourage empathy, sustainability, and a harmonious relationship with nature. In contrast, destructive narratives perpetuate anthropocentrism, commodification of nature, and ecological apathy. Stibbe's (2015) framework provides a robust analytical tool for identifying these narratives in various forms of discourse, including media, education, policy, and increasingly, artistic texts such as poetry, literature, and music.

The role of artistic expression in ecological discourse has been explored by several scholars who argue that cultural texts possess unique capacities to evoke emotional and moral engagement. Alexander and Stibbe (2014) emphasize that popular cultural products – songs, novels, films – can communicate “green discourse” more effectively than scientific texts because they resonate with broader audiences and tap into shared emotional experiences. This view is supported by Norgaard (2018), who found that ecological narratives grounded in personal or collective emotional experiences are more impactful in raising environmental awareness than those relying solely on data or factual reporting.

In the Indonesian context, music has long served as a medium for social commentary and moral reflection. Artists such as Ebiet G. Ade have used lyrical storytelling to address themes of human suffering, spiritual introspection, and environmental degradation. His song “Berita Kepada Kawan” exemplifies this tradition, weaving ecological concerns into poetic language that is both accessible and emotionally resonant. The song's depiction of natural disasters, loss, and alienation from nature aligns with the concept of ecological grief, a term used to describe the emotional response to environmental loss and disruption.

Recent studies have begun to explore the emotional dimensions of ecological discourse. Dörfler, Eden, and Ackermann (2021) argue that narratives incorporating spiritual and emotional frames are more effective in mobilizing ecological action. Their research suggests that texts which evoke anxiety, empathy, and moral reflection can foster deeper engagement with environmental issues. This aligns with the emotional tone of “Berita Kepada Kawan,” which uses metaphor and symbolism to convey the psychological impact of ecological trauma.

The use of metaphor in ecological discourse is another area of interest within ecolinguistics. Lakoff and Johnson (2008) contend that metaphors are not merely decorative language but fundamental cognitive tools that shape how humans conceptualize the world. In ecological texts, metaphors such as “Mother Earth,” “wounded planet,” or “home” serve to humanize nature and create emotional connections between the reader and the environment. In “Berita Kepada Kawan,” metaphors like “home” and “ruins” are used to express the loss of ecological belonging and the need for restoration. These metaphors function as vehicles for ecological empathy, encouraging listeners to internalize environmental suffering and reflect on their role in ecological stewardship.

The integration of spirituality into ecological narratives is also significant. In many cultures, including Indonesia, environmental ethics are intertwined with religious and spiritual beliefs. The lyric “Maybe God is getting tired of our behavior...” in Ebiet G. Ade’s song reflects a fusion of ecological and religious critique, suggesting that environmental destruction is not only a physical crisis but a moral failing. This dual framing enhances the song’s impact by appealing to both ethical and spiritual dimensions of ecological responsibility.

Ecolinguistic research has traditionally focused on institutional and formal texts – policy documents, educational materials, media reports – but there is a growing recognition of the value of artistic and cultural texts in shaping ecological consciousness. Bang and Døør (2021) advocate for expanding ecolinguistic inquiry to include creative genres that carry symbolic and affective weight. They argue that such texts can build eco-centric narratives and foster a sense of ecological responsibility through aesthetic and emotional engagement.

In this regard, songs like “Berita Kepada Kawan” represent a valuable yet underexplored domain of ecolinguistic analysis. They offer insights into how language can be used to construct ecological meaning in culturally resonant ways. By examining the lyrics through the lens of ecolinguistics, researchers can uncover the underlying ideologies, emotional appeals, and narrative structures that contribute to ecological awareness.

Moreover, the study of song lyrics as ecological texts contributes to the localization of ecolinguistic theory. While much of the existing literature is based on Western contexts, analyzing Indonesian songs allows for the development of culturally specific models of ecological discourse. This is particularly important in regions where oral and musical traditions play a central role in communication and education. Incorporating local artistic expressions into ecolinguistic research not only diversifies the field but also enhances its relevance and applicability in different cultural settings.

In summary, the literature on ecolinguistics underscores the importance of language in shaping ecological thought and behavior. It highlights the potential of artistic texts, especially music, to serve as powerful mediums for ecological storytelling. Theoretical frameworks developed by scholars such as Stibbe, Halliday, and Lakoff provide valuable tools for analyzing how language constructs ecological meaning. Empirical studies further support the idea that emotional and spiritual narratives are effective in promoting environmental engagement.

This study builds upon these insights by examining the song “Berita Kepada Kawan” as an ecological narrative. It contributes to the growing body of research that recognizes the role of cultural texts in environmental communication and expands the scope of ecolinguistics to include musical discourse. By doing so, it affirms the value of interdisciplinary approaches that integrate linguistics, literature, and environmental studies in addressing the complex challenges of ecological sustainability.





## METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive-interpretative design. This approach was chosen because the primary aim of the research is to interpret the meanings embedded in the song lyrics, particularly those related to the representation of the human-nature relationship from an ecolinguistic perspective. The study does not seek to measure, quantify, or test hypotheses statistically; rather, it aims to understand the song lyrics as discourse that conveys ecological, cultural, and ideological values.

The data source of this research is the lyrics of the song “*Berita Kepada Kawan*” (News to a Friend), written and performed by Ebiet G. Ade in his 1980 album *Camellia IV*. The lyrics were selected purposively due to their strong narrative on natural disasters and socio-ecological reflection, making them highly relevant for ecolinguistic analysis. The lyrics serve as the sole object of analysis in this study, as they sufficiently meet the criteria of a text that expresses the relationship between humans and nature. Thus, the subject of this study is the song lyrics themselves, not the songwriter or performer in a biographical or personal sense.

The main research instrument in this study is the researcher, who plays a central role in interpreting the meanings of the text based on the ecolinguistic theory being applied. As a supplementary tool, the researcher used a coding table and interpretive categorization framework to identify linguistic elements that reflect ecological narratives, whether constructive or destructive. The interpretive sensitivity of the researcher is essential in determining the focus of the analysis and in contextualizing the meanings conveyed through the lyrics.

Data collection was carried out through document analysis, specifically by obtaining, reading, and closely examining the officially published lyrics. The lyrics are treated as a text to be analyzed in depth. The data collected consist of linguistic units within the lyrics, including words, phrases, clauses, and sentences that contain metaphors, symbols, or expressions of ecological values.

The form of data in this study consists of excerpts from the song lyrics that portray representations of the human-nature relationship, as well as ecological narratives that convey criticism or awareness of environmental issues. The data consist of verbal elements that express ecological meaning either explicitly or implicitly. Units of data may include direct statements that describe environmental conditions, human emotions, or invitations to reflect on ecological crises.

The technique of data analysis includes several stages: first, identifying lyric excerpts that depict the relationship between humans and nature; second, classifying these excerpts into categories of constructive or destructive narratives, following the theoretical framework proposed by Stibbe (2015); third, interpreting the meaning of each excerpt within an ecolinguistic and sociocultural context, particularly that of Indonesia. The analysis is interpretative in nature, considering the historical and cultural context of the text and its potential influence on ecological awareness among



listeners. The results of the analysis are organized thematically to highlight patterns of representation that emerge throughout the song.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Lyrics: "Perjalanan ini / Terasa sangat menyedihkan"  
(*This journey / Feels very sorrowful*)

The lyrics express human emotional suffering in the face of environmental destruction or disaster. The metaphorical "journey" may refer to a literal travel through a disaster zone or a symbolic journey of life affected by ecological trauma. Ecolinguistically, this illustrates the emotional dimension of the human-nature relationship. Environmental disruption does not only cause physical destruction but also psychological impacts. This line introduces a reflective tone that invites awareness of how deeply nature's changes affect human well-being.

Lyrics: "Sayang engkau tak duduk di sampingku kawan"  
(*Sadly, you are not sitting beside me, my friend*)

This line conveys loneliness and the absence of companionship in facing the devastation. The missing "friend" may symbolize society's detachment from collective ecological consciousness. In ecolinguistics, this highlights the social aspect of ecological experiences. The absence of shared presence suggests a breakdown in communal ties during environmental crises. It reflects not only human detachment from nature but also from each other in the face of ecological suffering.

Lyrics: "Banyak cerita yang mestinya kau saksikan"  
(*Many stories you should have witnessed*)

This suggests that important ecological events have occurred – likely disasters or environmental changes – that the friend has not seen or acknowledged. Narratives play a crucial role in ecolinguistics as tools to transmit ecological knowledge and values. The lack of witnessing implies a collective failure to observe and understand environmental changes. It encourages listeners to become more attentive and responsive to ecological realities.

Lyrics: "Di tanah kering bebatuan / Takkan ada lagi kidung / Cemara dan burung-burung"  
(*On dry rocky land / There will be no more songs / Of pine trees and birds*)

These lines create a stark image of ecological devastation: dry land, rocks, and the disappearance of birds and trees – symbols of life and harmony in nature. This is a clear portrayal of ecological loss. From an ecolinguistic perspective, the silence of



nature (no more songs) indicates the collapse of the biotic community. Nature is personified as once musical and lively, but now dead. The loss of bird songs and natural beauty signifies the extinction of ecological voices that once coexisted with humans.

Lyrics: "Hanya batu dan tanah yang bercerita"  
(*Only rocks and soil tell the story*)

Even in the absence of living beings, nature still “speaks” through its silent presence—rocks and soil hold memories of destruction. This line connects to *eco-semiotics*—the idea that nature communicates through signs and symbols. Although life may be gone, the earth itself remains as a storyteller. It emphasizes the idea that ecological damage leaves traces, and these non-human elements become witnesses to ecological tragedy.

Lyrics: "Tentang kegelisahan / Tentang keterasingan"  
(*Of anxiety / Of alienation*)

The song reflects feelings of ecological anxiety and alienation from nature. This aligns with the ecolinguistic concept of *ecological alienation*—the psychological and spiritual detachment of humans from the natural world. The song gives voice to the emotional consequences of environmental breakdown, turning nature into a mirror of human despair.

Lyrics: "Aku pun lalu berpikir / Kemanakah lagi harus pulang"  
(*Then I began to wonder / Where else should I go home*)

The word “home” here carries a deeper ecological meaning—it suggests that environmental destruction has left the singer without a place of belonging. This reflects the idea of losing our ecological home—our planet. In ecolinguistics, it underlines the urgency of restoring harmony with the environment, because a damaged earth no longer offers a place of return, comfort, or continuity. It is a plea for reestablishing balance and sustainability.

Lyrics: "Bila semua yang terjadi / Telah kau alami"  
(*If all that has happened / You had experienced yourself*)

This line calls on the listener to internalize the ecological experience. It reflects *ecological empathy*, an ecolinguistic strategy to build solidarity through shared awareness. By urging others to “experience” environmental trauma, the song bridges the emotional gap and fosters communal ecological consciousness. Language becomes a means of awakening collective responsibility.



The lyrics of "*Berita Kepada Kawan*" reveal a rich tapestry of ecological meanings. Through its poetic and emotional language, the song serves as:

- A medium of ecological awareness, prompting listeners to reflect on the consequences of environmental negligence.
- A critique of ecological alienation, exposing the psychological and social disconnect from nature.
- A narrative for ecological memory, where nature is both victim and witness.

In essence, Ebiet G. Ade employs language not merely as a tool for artistic expression but as a profound instrument for ecological reflection and cultural critique. His song "*Berita Kepada Kawan*" functions as a lyrical bridge that seeks to reforge the fractured harmony between humans and the natural world. Through emotionally charged verses and spiritually resonant metaphors, the song articulates an urgent ecological message: that the Earth, though wounded by human negligence and exploitation, continues to speak—through silence, through sorrow, and through the remnants of its once vibrant voice. It is a call to listen, to reflect, and to respond with empathy and responsibility.

The analysis of the song's lyrics reveals a deeply embedded ecological consciousness that aligns with the core principles of ecolinguistics. The representation of the human-nature relationship in the text is not superficial or symbolic alone; it is layered with emotional, spiritual, and ethical dimensions. Nature is not depicted as a passive backdrop to human suffering but as an active participant in the narrative—an entity that feels, remembers, and mourns alongside humanity. This is evident in lines such as "Now we live here, among the ruins, dust, and tears," where the aftermath of natural disaster is portrayed not only as a physical catastrophe but also as a shared emotional experience. Such representations resonate with Stibbe's (2015) assertion that language in texts can shape ecological awareness more effectively when it appeals to emotion and moral reflection rather than relying solely on rational argumentation.

More specifically, the song exemplifies what Stibbe defines as a constructive ecological narrative—a form of discourse that encourages reflection, empathy, and a heightened awareness of the need for ecological sustainability. The lyric "Maybe God is getting tired of our behavior, always wrong and proud of our sins" introduces a spiritual critique of human actions, suggesting that environmental destruction is not merely a natural occurrence but a consequence of moral failure and ethical irresponsibility. This framing shifts the discourse from fatalism to accountability, urging listeners to reconsider their relationship with the environment not just as users or observers, but as moral agents.

These findings are reinforced by contemporary research in environmental communication. Dörfler, Eden, and Ackermann (2021) argue that texts which integrate religious and ecological frames are particularly effective in fostering emotional and moral engagement. Similarly, Norgaard (2018) emphasizes that ecological narratives



grounded in personal or collective emotional experiences are more impactful in raising public awareness than those that rely exclusively on empirical data. “Berita Kepada Kawan” embodies this approach by weaving together personal grief, communal suffering, and reflective critique in a poetic structure that is both accessible and emotionally resonant. It speaks to the heart as much as to the mind, making its ecological message more compelling and memorable.

From a linguistic perspective, the song’s use of metaphor and symbolism plays a crucial role in reinforcing the bond between humans and nature. Words such as “tears,” “ruins,” and “dust” are not merely descriptive; they are symbolic representations of ecological collapse and emotional devastation. These metaphors serve as cognitive tools that help listeners conceptualize the gravity of environmental crises in human terms. This supports the view of Lakoff and Johnson (2008), who argue that metaphors are central to human understanding and are instrumental in shaping how we perceive and respond to complex phenomena, including ecological degradation.

The integration of these linguistic strategies within a musical framework demonstrates the unique power of artistic texts in shaping environmental discourse. As Alexander and Stibbe (2014) point out, cultural products such as songs and literature can convey “green discourse” more effectively than scientific reports because they engage broader audiences and evoke deeper emotional responses. This study thus extends the scope of ecolinguistic inquiry beyond its traditional focus on political, educational, and journalistic texts, highlighting music as a valid and potent medium of ecological storytelling.

Furthermore, the findings challenge earlier models of ecolinguistics that prioritized structural analysis over emotional and aesthetic dimensions. By foregrounding the symbolic and affective power of artistic texts, this study supports newer directions in ecolinguistics, such as those proposed by Bang and Døør (2021), who advocate for the inclusion of creative genres in the construction of eco-centric narratives. These genres, rich in metaphor and emotion, are essential for cultivating ecological responsibility and for inspiring transformative change in how societies relate to the natural world.

In conclusion, “Berita Kepada Kawan” stands as a testament to the capacity of music to serve as a conduit for ecological awareness and cultural introspection. It invites listeners to not only witness the consequences of environmental neglect but to feel them, to internalize them, and ultimately, to act upon them. Through its lyrical depth and emotional resonance, the song contributes meaningfully to the discourse on sustainability, urging a reimagining of the human–nature relationship grounded in empathy, ethics, and ecological consciousness

## CONCLUSIONS

The ecolinguistic analysis of Ebiet G. Ade’s song “Berita Kepada Kawan” reveals a deeply evocative and multifaceted representation of the human–nature relationship.



Through poetic imagery, metaphorical language, and spiritual reflection, the song constructs a narrative that not only mourns ecological loss but also critiques human behavior and calls for moral accountability. This study confirms that the song embodies constructive ecological discourse, as defined by Stibbe (2015), by fostering empathy, introspection, and a sense of shared responsibility for environmental degradation. The findings underscore the potential of artistic texts – particularly music – as powerful vehicles for ecological storytelling and public engagement.

From a theoretical standpoint, this research contributes to the expansion of ecolinguistic inquiry by demonstrating the applicability of its frameworks to cultural and artistic texts. While traditional ecolinguistic studies have often focused on institutional or policy discourse, this study affirms that songs, poems, and other creative genres are equally valid and impactful mediums for ecological communication. The emotional and symbolic dimensions of music allow for a deeper connection with audiences, enabling the transmission of ecological values in ways that are both accessible and affectively charged. This aligns with the evolving direction of ecolinguistics, which increasingly recognizes the importance of narrative, metaphor, and affect in shaping ecological consciousness.

In terms of environmental education, the findings suggest that integrating ecologically themed music into curricula can enhance students' emotional engagement and critical thinking. Songs like "Berita Kepada Kawan" can serve as entry points for discussions on environmental ethics, sustainability, and cultural responses to ecological crises. By analyzing such texts, students can develop not only linguistic and interpretive skills but also ecological literacy and moral awareness. Educators are encouraged to adopt interdisciplinary approaches that combine language, literature, and environmental studies to foster holistic learning experiences.

Culturally, the song reflects a uniquely Indonesian perspective on ecological issues, blending spiritual, emotional, and communal elements. This highlights the importance of local narratives in global environmental discourse. Rather than relying solely on Western scientific paradigms, ecolinguistic research should embrace culturally embedded expressions of ecological wisdom. This approach not only diversifies the field but also ensures that ecological messages resonate with local values and worldviews.

Future research should continue to explore the role of artistic and cultural texts in ecological discourse. Comparative studies across genres, languages, and cultural contexts can reveal how different societies articulate their relationship with nature. Additionally, longitudinal studies could examine the impact of ecologically themed music on public attitudes and behaviors over time. Researchers are also encouraged to investigate the reception of such texts among various demographic groups to assess their effectiveness in promoting ecological awareness.

In conclusion, "Berita Kepada Kawan" stands as a compelling example of how language, art, and ecology intersect to produce meaningful and transformative



discourse. Its lyrical narrative not only documents ecological grief but also inspires reflection, empathy, and action. As environmental challenges continue to escalate, the integration of ecolinguistic insights into cultural and educational practices becomes increasingly vital. By listening to the voices of nature—whether through scientific reports or poetic songs—we can begin to reimagine our place in the world and work toward a more sustainable and compassionate future.

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