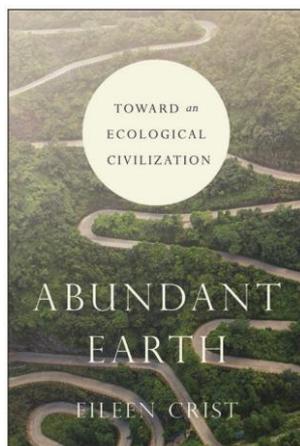


the public strives to enter into spiritual union with the discoverer.’ In a brief foreword to the Russian edition translated by Itelson, Einstein wrote ‘more than ever it is necessary in our hectic times to nurture those things which can bring people of different language and nation closer to each other again’. Tragically, as the editors point out ‘In 1926, the 74 old Itelson was brutally beaten on a main street in Berlin by anti-Semites screaming “beat the Jews to death”.’ There are similar vignettes related to Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Polish and Hebrew editions. The Czech one was special to Einstein for he was in Prague between 1909 and 1912 when he was wrestling with the creation of General Relativity. In his foreword Einstein fondly recalls those days. One can thus see that the booklet was not a one off effort and Einstein continued to be involved in its future editions and translations adding new material and improving the presentation. In one footnote, the editors refer to the 2005 English edition of the Booklet. It has an Introduction by Roger Penrose, Commentary by Robert Geroch and historical essay by David Cassidy. Like me, I am sure you would like to lay your hands on it.

In Albert Einstein’s own words regarding his Odyssey: ‘The years of anxious searching in the dark, with their intense longing, their alternations of confidence and exhaustion, and final emergence into light – only those who have experienced it can understand that.’ Einstein, it appears wanted to share this remarkable exhilaration with all mankind. Even after a century, GR is universally acknowledged as being the epitome of mathematical elegance, conceptual depth and remarkable observational success. Its creator Albert Einstein is as alive today as in 1919 when overnight he became an icon for intellectual heights humankind can achieve. The Booklet even today serves as a enjoyable guidebook for the uninitiated for a tour of the relativity landscape and this anniversary edition makes the trip even more exciting with its unique value additions I mentioned.

BALA IYER

*International Centre for Theoretical  
Sciences,  
Shivakote,  
Bengaluru 560 089, India  
e-mail: bala.iyer@icts.res.in*



**Abundant Earth: Towards an Ecological Civilization.** Eileen Crist. The University of Chicago Press, 1427 E 60th St., Chicago, IL 60637. 2019. 307 pages. Price: Rs 799.

It would be hard to reconcile that the species that has all but proven its supremacy with no less than 7.8 billion humans currently dispersed across the globe and growing, has also stockpiled some 15,000 nuclear weapons enough for self-annihilation many times over its present and future numbers. Even if there are deterrents to pressing the nuclear button, the growing number of humans and their insatiable consumptive desire is sure to suck life out from all other living creatures on this planet. Shockingly, this is the new normal towards which the world is fast hurtling.

And it does not concern many that at this pace future generations are bound to inherit a different planet, perhaps inhospitable. Expanding human mobility, spreading modern conveniences, multiplying commodities glut, and enabling food choices have given unrestricted boost to the idea of human expansionism even as nature is screaming for freedom from such an onslaught. That there is a global ecological crisis of unprecedented magnitude knocking at our doors hardly registers. Instead, what often gets argued is that techno-managerial leap of progress will sail humanity through such adversities. With manmade disasters mounting by the day, how far can market-driven technologies be able to contain the collapse of its own making?

Virginia Tech professor Eileen Crist takes on this overwhelming question from all pervasive and disturbing ideas that not only human impact on nature is

natural but maintaining wilderness is a defunct idea that does not augur well for human freedom and economic welfare. It is a constructed reality that harbours multitudes of challenges for human survival on this planet. Even though it is not widely acknowledged, a belief in human supremacy is anything but self-destructive. While being optimist that an ecological civilization is not an altogether utopian idea, she questions why significant steps have not been taken by humans to live in loving fellowship with our earthly wild without whom the exuberant dance of seasons, diversity, complexity and abundance will remain mere screen savers in our virtual world. *Abundant Earth* is a beautifully crafted book that not only touches upon the ‘why’, ‘how’ and ‘what’ of the impending ecological crises but provides ‘what next’ of an integral way of life to halt the inevitable.

Taking the reader beyond the oft-repeated dystopian narrative on global warming, ocean acidification, forest destruction and species extinction, the book questions the distorted mandate of the environmental movements in their failure to direct its energies toward protecting a living planet. ‘No social movement agitating for liberty, equality and fraternity can succeed as long as the constitution of the biosphere as humanity’s colony reigns.’ Unless the environmental movement breaks free of its ideological shackles, Crist argues, it is unlikely to resist the life-destroying human-supremacist worldview. The world is fast running out of time to press for such a change – to balance human–nonhuman unequal power relations.

Enlisting direct causes and unraveling underlying drivers leading to the eco-crises at hand, *Abundant Earth* challenges the false sense of human supremacy while calling for a challenging task of scaling it down and pulling back. Despite it being politically controversial, the book strongly advocates the need for reframing the population question because ‘overconsumption’ and ‘overpopulation’ are two faces of the same coin. Given an all pervasive mainstream trend to bring the entire population at a universal consumer standard, the projected ballooning of global middle class to 5 billion by 2030, from the present 3.2 billion, will turn the earth into an unimaginable waste bin. The world can ill-afford such a transformation, which will cause an irreversible

## BOOK REVIEWS

blow to the biosphere if it has not done that already!

For the biosphere to sustain its basic ecosystem services – healthy soil, clean air and pure water – the nonhuman species would need to be in fine balance with the humans. In her authoritative analysis of the cause–effect analogy of global development, Crist leaves the reader with a number of proposals that seek to challenge the conventional capitalist ideologies. Drawing a comprehensive picture on the problems and possibilities, *Abundant Earth* takes a deep dive to draw contours of human

freedom within a broader concept of freedom for other inhabitants. It is a gem of a book, for its contents and treatment, which leaves the discerning reader with insights on contemplating limits to growth as the guiding principle for ecological emancipation.

Crist is clear in her assessment that an immediate turn in the direction of a global ecological civilization is the only option. For such a change to happen, the current trends of economic growth and techno-managerialism would need to take a break. Unless the wisdom of limitations becomes the mainstream thought,

it is unlikely that the human enterprise will reduce its multiples stresses on the biosphere. While making a fact-filled assessment of the current dystopia, *Abundant Earth* draws a realistic blueprint to halt the decline. Crist deserves appreciation for writing a book that will appeal to a wider audience interested in the affairs of the Earth.

SUDHIRENDAR SHARMA

7 Triveni, A6 Paschim Vihar,  
New Delhi 110 063, India  
e-mail: [sudhirendarsharma@gmail.com](mailto:sudhirendarsharma@gmail.com)

## CURRENT SCIENCE

### Advertisement Rates

India		Tariff (Rupees)*						
Size	No. of insertions	Inside pages		Inside cover pages		Back cover pages		
		B&W	Colour	B&W	Colour	B&W	Colour	
Full page (H = 23 cm; W = 17.5 cm)	1	18,000	30,000	25,000	40,000	35,000	45,000	
	2	33,000	55,000	47,000	76,000	65,000	86,000	
	4	62,000	1,05,000	92,000	1,46,000	1,25,000	1,65,000	
	6	90,000	1,50,000	1,25,000	2,00,000	1,75,000	2,25,000	
	8	1,10,000	1,87,000	1,68,000	2,65,000	2,30,000	3,00,000	
	10	1,35,000	2,25,000	1,98,000	3,15,000	2,70,000	3,60,000	
	12	1,80,000	3,00,000	2,50,000	4,00,000	3,50,000	4,50,000	
Half page (H = 11 cm; W = 17.5 cm)	1	10,000	18,000	Quarter page (H = 11 cm; W = 8 cm)	No. of insertions	Inside pages		
	2	19,000	33,000			B&W	Colour	
	4	35,000	62,000			1	6,000	12,000
	6	50,000	90,000			6	30,000	60,000
	8	60,000	1,10,000			12	60,000	1,20,000
	10	72,000	1,35,000					
	12	1,00,000	1,80,000					
Other Countries		Tariff (US \$)*						
Size	No. of insertions	Inside pages		Inside cover pages		Back cover pages		
		B&W	Colour	B&W	Colour	B&W	Colour	
Full page (H = 23 cm; W = 17.5 cm)	1	300	650	450	750	600	1000	
	6	1500	3000	2250	3500	3000	5000	
Half page (H = 11 cm; W = 17.5 cm)	1	200	325					
	6	1000	2000					

\*25% rebate for Institutional members. Add 5% GST (No. 29AAATC4245R1Z7) and 2% (India)/3% (other Countries) payment processing fee to the tariff.

The payment made only through Razorpay by the link provided below and not by any other mode.  
<https://rzp.io/l/xQ5rdk0/>

**Contact us:** Current Science Association, C.V. Raman Avenue, P.B. No. 8001, Bengaluru 560 080 or e-mail: [csc@ias.ac.in](mailto:csc@ias.ac.in)

**Last date for receiving advertising material:** Ten days before the scheduled date of publication.

[The jurisdiction for all disputes concerning submitted articles, published material, advertisement, subscription and sale will be at courts/tribunals situated in Bengaluru city only.]