

The sea is life.

Some of my earliest memories are of the seaside, splashing around in the warm water with my brothers and sisters.

We went on holiday a lot, from northern India down to Kerala, or maybe one of the islands. There's lots of choice for the upwardly mobile Indian family.

The Indian Ocean is vast, lapping on the shores of Africa, up to Indonesia, India of course, and over to Australia.

I remember, once, we were in Kovalam, a beautiful old fishing village in Southern India.

My father paid a fisherman to take us for a day trip in his boat. He said to the old man, 'you are so lucky to live by the sea'.

The fisherman smiled, and he told us; the names of fish, the best places to catch, the fees he must pay to dock his boat, selling a catch to the local market, the danger of a sudden storm, the happiness of a big catch.

Not even once did he use the word 'beautiful', or 'relaxing'. Or 'nature', or 'holiday'.

It hit me.

For this person the sea puts food on the table, gives his family a roof over their head.

The sea is also full of life. Like, more than you can possibly imagine.

We don't even know how much!

From tiny plankton to the huge blue whales that eat them; jellyfish that live on the surface to strange creatures in the deep depths.

And there's more! They say the Amazon rainforest is earth's lungs, because of all the oxygen it produces.

Well, it might be one lung, but the sea is the other.

When we throw our rubbish and it ends up in the ocean, we strangle the life that lives there. When we take out too much, it cannot recover.

When we are careless, we're destroying an ecosystem that can't be replaced in another 10,000 years.

Thankfully, some people are actually doing something about it. Governments are starting to manage their oceans.

The Australians, for example have created National Marine Parks so people can enjoy the sea whilst protecting the wildlife at the same time.

But I realised I am part of the solution, even though I live many miles away.

I am lucky that I can visit on holiday; many Indians don't even have that luxury, so I must be a good guest when I'm there..

...and remember it when I'm at home.

Many products we use are harmful and we don't even realise.

We damage the sea by taking out precious resources to make them. Or because they end up back there as pollution when I'm done with it.

Sustainable alternatives are available and I'm responsible for what I use.

Because we cannot live without the sea. And really, it is quite wonderful to live with it.