

# ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS IN THE VIDIC LITERATURE

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India is a cradle of various religious sects living in complete socio-cultural harmony unifying ethical principle is almost all religions of India. They have all kept nature above man. Our ancient people learnt to live with fine elements of nature, the earth, water, air, light and cosmos and actually worshipped them in reality and symbolically. We get lots of information about the relationships between man and nature and human behaviors and indebtedness towards nature from the writing in the ancient India treatises and literatures, the Vedas and the Upanishads, Arthashastra, Charak Samhita, Ramayana and Mahabharata etc.

The oldest and simplest form of nature-worship finds expression in Vedic lists. Many scholars have come to the conclusion that the Vedas are primarily concerned with cosmology. In recent days, environmental science and ecology are disciplines of modern science under which study of environment and its constituents is done with minute details. As science they are established in 20th century, but their origin can be seen long back in the vedic and ancient Sanskrit literature.

The Vedas are ancient Indian compilations of the Aryan period ranging between 2500-1500 B.C. Rigveda especially mentions about environment on several occasions. A verse from the Rigveda states that "the sky is like father, the earth like mother and the space as their son". The universe consisting of the three is like a family and any kind of damage done to any one of the three throws the universe out of balance.

Vedic culture and Vedic scriptures reveal a clean concept about the earth's ecosystems and the necessity for maintaining their balance. Another verse from Rigveda says "Thousands and Hundreds of years if you want to enjoy the fruits and happiness of life then take up systematic planting of trees." Traditional Hindus believe that trees can bring peace, prosperity and consolation to mankind, worship of God. A green tree is considered to be a sin and sacrilege which can spell disaster for the family. A traditional Hindu father is specially guided by the moral restrictions of destroying a green tree.

The Atharva Veda also mentions about the importance of air, water and green plants essential for human existence. Although there was as such no concept of the word pollution those days but it was referred in terms of 'poisoning' of environment. 'Plants and herbs destroy poisons (pollutants)' 'Purity of atmosphere checks poisoning (pollution)'. The fragrance of guru (Commiphora mukul) purifies the air and cures diseases. NBRI has identified about 150 trees and herbs including plants which are pollution fighters. They are able to intercept several toxic gases and dusts and also infuse the atmosphere with plants of exigent.

The Yajur Veda too mentions about plants, animals and the poisoning of the atmosphere, but it also discusses about energy relations of the global ecosystem. "No persons should kill animal helpful to all". "O king you should never kill animals like bullocks useful in agriculture Or like cow which gives us milk and all other helpful animals and must punish those who kill or do harm to such animals. The oceans are treasure of wealth protect them. Do not disturb the sky and do not poison the atmosphere. about the flow of energy in the global ecosystem the Yajurveda says "the whole universe is full of energy in which the sun is at the center and the ultimate source of energy for all living organisms on earth. The earth provides surface for vegetation which controls the heat build up.

The Upanishads (1500 to 1600 BC) sages perceived the existence of god in their own way. They believed in the existence of a supreme power which is the source of all life and energy. Upanishads prescribed certain norms for human beings to keep the environment clean. "One should not cause urine and stool in water should not spit in water and should not take bath without cloths." The Isha-Upanishad has revealed the secrets of existences of life on earth and the importance of every organism for mutual survival. The universe along with its creatures belongs to the lord. No creation is superior to any other.

The Puranic literature (4th c.A.D.) also contains messages related to the conservation of environment. In Narasimhapuran killing birds for eating was prohibited. Vishnu Puran says "O wicked man if you kill a bird then you are bathing in a river, pilgrimage, worship and yagnas are all useless". " God Keshva is pleased with a person who does not harm or destroy really the virtues of plants and trees

and Stressed on the need to tree plantation. The inhabitants of a house which has sacred basic one fortunate. They may not enter a house where sacred basil is worshipped every day. One who plants a peepal' one neem' One banyan' two pomegranates, two orange, five mango trees and ten flowering plants or creepers shall never go to hell' The Matsya Puran tell about the practices of Vanmahotsava (Tree Plantation Ceremony)' In Padma Puran the cutting of green tree is an offence punishable in hell.

In recent days environmental science and ecology are disciplines of modern science under which study of environment and its constituents is done with minute details. In environmental elements are interrelated and affect each other. Sun is drawing water from ocean through rays. Earth gets rain from sky and grows plants. Air produces food for living beings. The cycle of nature is nothing but sort of yajna. This is essential for maintenance of environmental constituents. The mantra takes about the concord with the universe, peace of sky, peace of mind-region, peace of earth, peace of waters, peace of plants, peace of trees, peace of all gods, peace of Brahman, peace of universe. peace of peace may that peace come to me' Ancient literature contains the earliest messages for presentation of environment and ecological balances. The Bhagwad Gita advises us not to try to change the environment, improve it or wrestle with it. The concept of sustainable development, which the modern environmentalists are harping upon, use the natural resources judiciously for a more stable development and without impairing with the abilities of the future generation to use those resources and without interfering into their living rights was perhaps inspired by these verses of the Isha

Upanishad. It is clear that the Vedic vision to live in harmony with environment was not merely physical but was for wider and much comprehensive.<sup>23</sup>

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