

Concept Of Environment Protection In Ancient India

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Abstract: The campaign of environmental protection is not a modern concept, but it has been in prevalence from time immemorial, during the ancient period, human beings and environment were regarded inseparable. At that time man never had an opportunity to pollute environment indiscriminately as on today. Ancient man was afraid of the natural environment and did not dare to pollute and damage the natural environment, present trend of polluting the environment was not n existence n the ancient time.

I. VEDIC PERIOD

In this period the main motto of social life was to live in harmony with nature, Sages, Saints and great teachers of India lived in forest at the bank of the rivers, convince the Gurukuls for teaching purpose mediated and themselves in the form of Vedas, Upanishads, Smiritis and Dharmashtra.

The literature of vedic period is a worshipful attitude towards plants, trees, mother earth (dharti mata), sky(akash), air(vayu), water(jal) and animals, and to keep a benevolent attitude towards them.

All the religions laid down norms for environment protection in different forms and also encouraged limited use of natural resources whether plants, trees, birds and animals. Concept of trusteeship is a part of all religions. In any form human beings of all religion treat the plants, trees, animals and birds as their essential family member as same as living member.

II. HINDU WAY OF LIFE

Hindu religion is one of the oldest and renowned religion of the universe. It instructed man to respect the nature, to show reverence for the presence of divinity in nature. Therefore trees (tulsi, pepal, aawla, banyan, bana etc), animals (cow, bulk), rivers (Ganga, Yamuna), hills (sumeru, Govardhan), mountain (Himalya) are worshiped as symbols of reverence to these representatives of the nature and were source of religious faiths and beliefs. The protection of environment and to the

Hindu mythology correlates together and have harmonious relation to each other. In the Hindu mythology there is a absolute belief that various components of the environment i.e. earth, air, water, fire and other are residential place of divine bodies, Hence they should be respected, worshiped and too be protected ultimately.

Hindu religious literature called Vedas, Upnishads, Smiritis, Purans Ramayana, Mahabharata, Geeta and other mythological literature including stories, codes, political thinking re based on common concept that all lives, human and non human including trees, are of equal value and all have the same right to existence. Drought, fury of floods and storms, heavy rains, cloud bursts, lightning, earthquake, volcanic eruptions, heavy tides and tsunami are the violent forms of anger manifested by the Gods and Goddesses of the nature.

Many versus in the Vedas have been devoted to the praise of lord Surya (Sun), Vayu devta (lord of wind), Agni devta (lord of fire), Varun devta (lord of water), Prathvi mata (Goddess of earth), Vanya devi (Goddess of forest) etc, therefore cutting of trees, polluting of water, air and land were equal to doing sin because elements of nature were to be respected and regarded and regarded as God and Goddess, protection of their purity was considered to be the duty of every one.

III. TREES, PLANTS AND FLOWER AND HINDU WAY OF LIFE

Some trees, plants and flowers are as they are related to some god and goddess as below:-

Name of tree and Plant	Name of God and Goddess
✓ Vat (Banyan)	Brahma (creature of the word)
✓ Lotus	Laxmi (Goddess of wealth)
✓ Ashoka	Indra
✓ Kadamb	Krishna
✓ Palasa	Brahma, Gandharva
✓ Neem	Sitla mata, mansa devi
✓ Banana	Vishnu
✓ Mango	Laxmi
✓ Pipal	Vishnu, Krishna
✓ Dhatura	Shiv (lord of destruction)
✓ Bailpatra	Shiv (lord of destruction)
✓ Shami	Shani dev

Trees are worshiped as varikchay devta with prayer offering of water, flower, sweets and by sacred threads, it is considered that plantation of one tree is equal to ten sons and who plants and care fruit plant will not go to hell.

Carak Sanhita is that, the destruction of forest is most dangerous act for human beings. Vanaspati (vegetation) has direct relationship with the well beings of the society, due to the pollution of natural environment and the destruction of vanaspati, many diseases crop up to ruin the nation. Only the vanaspati with medicinal qualities may enhance the nature and care diseases of human beings. About the air pollution Charak Sanhita describes that, the polluted air is mixed with bad elements, the air which is devoid of the virtues of seas on full of moisture, gusty hard, icy cool, hot, dry, harmful, roaring, colliding from two or three sides, foul smelling, oily, full of dirt, smoke, sand and stream, creates disease in the body.

IV. ANIMALS BIRDS AND HINDU WAY OF LIFE

The most important aspect of Hindu theology is that, the supreme beings actually gets himself incarnated in the form of various species. Hindus were advised to treat all other species jus like their own children. One should look upon deer, camels, monkeys, donkeys, rats, reptiles, birds and flies s though they were their own children, what is that which distinguishes there from those (children)

Many Hindu Gods and Goddess have animals and birds as their mounts as below:

Name of Animal	Name of God / Goddess
✓ Lion	Durga
✓ Wild Goose	Brahma
✓ Elephant	Indra
✓ Bull	Lord Shiv
✓ Rat	Ganesh
✓ Swan	Saraswati
✓ Eagle	Vishnu
✓ Snake	Lord Shiv
✓ Monkey	Hanuman
✓ Peacock	Kartikeya, Saraswati
✓ Owl	Laxmi
✓ Crocodile	Ganga

✓ Ass	Shitla
✓ Dog	Bhairav, Dattatrey
✓ Deer	Vayu
✓ Pig	Varah
✓ Vulture	Shani Dev

Killing of animals and birds is against basic tenet of Hindu way of life *Ahisa Parmo Dharma* (Non-Violence) is the dharma of the highest order, one should non-violent towards animals, birds, trees, plants and other micro-organisms alike. Hinsa (violence) was considered as a sin therefore not eating of any kind of meat in Hinduism is considered both an appropriate conduct and a duty, it was felt that God's grace can be obtained by not killing his creatures and killing of mute animals and birds and destruction of trees and plants is a gravies sin.

The motto of the doctrine of Ahinsa Parmo Dharma (i.e. non-violence) is to protect and promote the animals, birds, plants and trees of economic and medical importance. For example-

Cow's milk and other dairy products are used in religious ceremonies, fasting days and offered as oblations to God. Considering the use and medical utility of cow's milk, urine and dung, cow is sanctified and cow slaughter is treated as the highest form of sin.

-By the end of vedic and upnishadic periods Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, Sikhism and Christian came into existence. Non-violence, truth, respect and love for other organisms including trees became the basic tenets of these religions.

V. BUDDHISM WAY OF LIFE

The Buddhism, which has taken place at the end of vedic period, essence is non-violence, truth, love and respect for living creatures including plants and trees. Principle of non-violence is applicable to living and non living bodies under the Buddhism concept and the animals, plants, trees and other natural resources are considered as the God's gift to this universe which should be preserved and protected by man, cruelty against them is prohibited under the norms laid down in Buddhisms.

The Mauryan period was the most glorious chapter of the Indian history from the environmental protection view. In Arthashastra the appointment of Superintendent of forest and classification, maintenance and regulation of the forest produce and protection of wild life during this period. Various types of punishments were prescribed for cutting trees, damaging forest and for killing animals, fish, deer etc. The superintendent concerned was authorized to impose penalty on those who were found guilty of cutting trees, damaging forest and killing deer, birds and fish declared to be under state protection.

Arthshastra also prescribed punishment for causing pollution and un civic sanitation, threw waste on roads, for causing water muddy, thrown or caused to be piled up near temple, well, pond, sacred place or state building and also urinating in such places.

The Buddhist King Ashok the Great by pillar edicts, had expressed his view points about the welfare of creature and

prescribed various pecuniary punishments for killing animals including ants, squirrels, rats, birds and cutting of forests.

All his edicts, Pillar seven is the most important and unique edicts regarding environment. The description of pillar seven is as below:-

"Happiness in this world and the next is difficult to obtain without much love for the dhamma, much self-examination, much respect, much fear of evil, and much enthusiasm. [...] Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi (Ashoka), speaks thus: Animals were declared to be protected – parrots, mainas, aruna, geese, wild ducks, nandimukhas, gelatas, bats, queen ants, terrapins, boneless fish, vedareyaka, gangapuputaka, sankiya fish, tortoises, porcupines, squirrels, deer, bulls, okapinda, wild asses, wild pigeons, domestic pigeons and all four-footed creatures that are neither useful nor edible. Also protected were nanny goats, ewes and sows which are with young or giving milk to their young, and so are young ones less than six months old. Cocks are not to be caponised, husks hiding living beings are not to be burnt, and forests are not to be burnt either without reason or to kill creatures. One animal is not to be fed to another. Our king killed very few animals."

VI. JAINISM WAY OF LIFE

The norms laid down under Jainism emphasized a greater stress on the destruction of natural resources. The Jainism provides absolute prohibition on the eating of any kind meat, hence cruelty and killing of animals are not permitted under the Jain religion. After Sun setting all kinds of eating whether Vegetarian or non vegetarian are also prohibited in the Jain religion. The concept of karmdan vow like, Asotipashan karam, Van karm, Sphotr karam, Nirlanchan karm are related to the environmental and natural resources protection.

The soul of the Jainism is that "It is one's duty to save any living creature from pain" In the Jain laity the following five duties are at all times incumbent:

Mercy to all living creatures,

The giving of gifts,

The cherishing of pious dispositions

Worships of the images of the Tirthankars, and

Veneration and support of the priesthood.

Ahinsa (non-violence) and Asteya (respect for other's right) are two main traditions of Jain religion regarding environment reverence.

VII. ISLAM WAY OF LIFE

Islam entered in India after the attack of Mohd. Bin Kashim on the king Dahir, the then ruler of Sindh All norms laid down by the Quran describes, that man should not neglect the creatures, created by the supreme creature Allah. All in both the sky and in earth is of Allah and he has covered to all, And Allah flow the water from sky, Thought of conservation and preservation of natural resources and importance of balance between man and nature are the divine principles laid down by the Islamic scripture. The holy Quran describes that man should not neglects the creatures and the sky and the earth is created by the Allah in six days.

The disturbance in the soil is restricted by the holy Quran. From the point of protection and promotion of environment the muslim rulers play a land mark role. Firoz Shah Tugluc dug canals, tanks, roads and planted trees of fruits in the both sides of the roads. The mughul emperors has established the magnificent garden, fruit orchards and green parks, round about their places, central and provincial head quarters, public places and on the bank of rivers and in the valley and dales. They depute 'Muhtasibs' to prevent pollution to remove obstructions from the streets and to stop the commission of nuisance in public places.

VIII. SIKHISM WAY OF LIFE

The Sikh religion also speaks regarding conservation and protection of environment and natural wealth. The founder of Sikh religion, Guru Nanak believes that the spirit of God is present in the nature and in the human beings, he speaks as that,

'El noor te jag upjia Kon bhale kon bandhe I Awal Allah noor upaya, Kudrat k sab dhande II

IX. CHRISTIAN WAY OF LIFE

Christians enters in India in 1600 AD trough East India company of trading and became powerful after the victory of battle of Plashi. Christian religion is based on the principles laid down by the holy Bible.

The holy Bible describes that, in the beginning Earth was alone and in disturbed form, there was darkness on the deep water, the lord separated the darkness and light. Thou said the day to light and night to the darkness, he also divide the water into two part and denotes the difference between them as sky, the lord collect the water at one palace under the sky, and exclaims the collected water by the name of the sea, and Earth to the dry land. Then the Lord creates green grass, plants, trees and other living beings. The main education of the holy Bible is, love to all whether human, animal or plant without any discrimination.

X. PROTECTION OF ENVIRONMENT DURING BRITISH RAJ

After the mutiny of independence of year 1857 AD, the Indian administration was handed over to British Crown from East India company. In year 1860 for the first time to control environmental pollution certain punitive measures were incorporated into the Indian Penal Code-1860, The Code of Civil Procedure-1859 and the Code of Criminal Procedure-1859.

The British government in year-1806, appoint a commission to enquire into the availability of Teek in Malabar and Travancore, and for this purpose conservator of forest was appointed in the last century. In year-1864 first inspector general of forest was appointed to began the management of forest resources, the main duties of this inspector general of forest were to supervise the exploration of resources of forest,

demarcation of reserves, protection of forest from fire and assessment of the growing stock in valuable reserve by sample enumeration and prescription of yields which could be sustained.

The first forest act was enacted in year-1865 and was revised in year-1878 and extended to most of the territories under the British rule. On 19th date of October 1884, the first forest policy was declared by the British government aiming the various objectives, this first forest policy also produce a classification of forests. Including all prior provisions and amendments a comprehensive act was enacted in year-1927 as The Indian Forest Act-1927, for implementation of the above noted year-1884 Forest policy, by this forest act-1927, the then British Government was empowered to acquire all forest land, village forest and other common property resources, to prohibit and regulate activities in forests or in waste land, and to assume management of forests.

To regulate the water pollution the British government passed these following regulations as below:

The Shore Nuisance (Bombay and Kolaba) Act-1853,
The Oriental Gas Company Act-1857,
Indian Penal Code-1860,
Indian Easement Right Act-1934,
Indian Fisheries Act-1897

To control air pollution the British government enacted, The Bengal Smoke Nuisance Act-1905 and The Bombay Smoke Nuisance Act-1912.

For the protection of wild lifes, The Elephant Preservation Act-1897, and The wild Birds and Animals Protection Act-1912 were passed by the British government. Although all above noted acts were enacted by the British Government with the aim of earning revenue point of view for themselves, yet these legislations play a fruitful role in promotion, protection and conservation of the environment and its ingredients. The

Indian Penal Code-1860, The Code of Criminal Procedure-1973 and The Code of Civil Procedure -1908 also describes the provisions with the penal provisions of their violation for the protection and conservation of the environment.

‘CHIPKO MOVEMENT OF RAJASTHAN’

In year 1731 AD ‘Chipko Movement’ came into existence to protect the tree ‘Khejri’ against blind cutting of these trees and Sri Amrita Bai, with her four family members and other 359 persons of the village ‘Kherjailli’ of Rajasthan scarified their life to save the aforesaid tree Khejri. This is a extra ordinary example shown that trees are more precious and revered than our life.

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