
Environment and Ancient Sanskrit Literature

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Abstract

Environment plays a very significant role in human civilization. The culture of every country depends on its environment, climatic conditions and human behaviour. Literatures reflect in their own culture, geographical conditions, climatic influences and environmental aspects. Therefore, from this point of view the Vedic literature is of great utility to us and the world society at large. Accordingly if we study the environmental conditions of our society and the world, we shall be greatly benefitted in our living and healthy life.

KEYWORDS: Environment, Vedic literature, Benefit, Healthy life

INTRODUCTION

Environment plays a very important role in human civilization. Human beings have close relations with the biosphere in which they live. The whole environment and ecology consisting of earth, air, water, plants and animals provide the necessary and sufficient conditions for sustaining human life. Today, the environment crisis is a tremendous problem for the whole world. Developing countries and developed countries alike are all suffering from environmental pollution. Therefore, today environmental problems have been the object of discussion everywhere from village to parliament. Pollution is by far the most rapidly growing problem of the modern technological society. The condition in India is pretty serious. June 5th, 2011 was decided to be celebrated as world environment day by the United Nations General Assembly in 1972 and the Number of Ngos and private Agencies working for the cause of Environment protection has been increased tremendously in India in the last two decades. With all these positive signs of awareness, this paper is an effort to examine our Forgotten culture which was very Environment sensitive.

Ancient (Sanskrit) Literature Reveals a Full knowledge of the Undesirable Effects of Environmental Degradation. Whether caused by Natural Factors or Human Activities. Hindu Philosophy has always been very environment Friend and they were very sensitive about Environment. The Mahabharata, Ramayana, Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita and Puranas be full of messages for preservation of Environment and ecological Balance.

MAJOR DISCUSSION

Vedas – Sanskrit is the vehicle of civilization and culture of Bharatvarsha. Sanskrit has been serving the human race from the time immemorial. The Vedas are treated to be the oldest literature of the world. When the people of the other continents were in under developed our Vedic seers-contributed to science, Technology, Mathematics, Astrology and high Philosophical order at all. They built the treasure house of India full of human wisdom, social welfare, Unity, Peace and Prosperity, instead of personal gain or internal prosperity at large. Therefore, from this point of view the **Vedic Literature** is of great utility to us and to the world society at large.

We are crying for a better environment now and the Vedas for the first time, teach us to take steps for the protection of our clean environment. All four Vedas ‘The Rig, Sama, Yazur and Atharva’ recognize the importance of maintenance of the Seasons’ cycles that are likely to get altered due to climate change owing to inappropriate human actions. It is remarkable that the people in Vedic times regarded nature and the environment in a holistic manner and revered each of its constituents and entities by carefully preserving them. Do not harm the environment, do not harm the water and the flora, earth is my mother, I am her son, (“माता भूमिः पुत्रोहं पृथिव्याः”)¹ this vedic prayer invokes devine intervention to bliss and protect the environment. They believe that the five great elements (Space, Air, Fire, Water and Earth) are all connects to our five senses. The human nose is related to earth, tongue to water, eyes to fire, skin to air and ears to space. This Bond between our senses and the elements is the Foundation of our human relationship with the natural world. To protect environment the Rig Veda says –

“मधु वाता ऋतायते मधु क्षरति सिन्ध्व। माध्वीर्नः सन्त्वोषधीः
मधु नक्तमुतोषसो मधुमत्पार्थिवंरजः। मधु द्यौरस्तु नः पिता॥
मधुमान्नो वनस्पतिर्मधुमाँ अस्तु सूर्यः। माध्वीर्गावो भवन्तु नः”²

(Environment provides bliss to people leading their life perfectly. Rivers bliss us with sacred water and provide us health, night, morning, vegetation. Sun bliss us with peaceful life. Our cows provide us milk.)

Tulshi, Pippala and Vatavrksa have great importance to our culture. About the importance of Tulshi, Vatavrksa there are many shlokas are found in the Vedic literature. Some of them are –

यावदिनानि तुलसि रूपितापि यत् गृहे गृहे।
तावदवर्ष सहस्रानि वैकुण्ठे सः महीयते॥³

He will live in Heaven for so many years as the Tulshi plant will be in his house for the equal number of days.

अश्वत्थो देवसहनस्तृतीयस्यामितो दिवि।
तत्रामृतस्य चक्रं देवाःकुष्ठमवन्बत।।⁴

(It was prohibited to cut Vatavrksa because gods live in this tree and no disease where this tree is situated.)

Now a day's according to modern scientist the Pippala and Vatavrksa consume carbon dioxide from the air and give us oxygen and thus balance the air. The Osodhi Sukta of Rig-Veda addresses to plants and vegetables as mother, 'O mother ! Hundreds are your birth places and thousand are your shoots.

शतं वो अम्ब धामानि सहस्रमुत वो रुहः।⁵

Similarly the Hindus have worshipped the Bilva, Kadamba, Rudraksha, Champaka, Bakula etc. So the Indian sages, like Manu suggested punishment for him who cuts down such valuable trees. The vedic sages also know that mountains cause rains and fresh air and also provide medicine – “पर्वतेषु भेषजम्”⁶ Therefore they gave importance to save mountain and that it is better to live in the forests or mountains than the villages.⁷ The fire and sun play the most significant role in the purification of environment. Animals and birds are part of the nature and environment.⁸ Protection of birds animals is a norm of Hindu religion. The Hindu mythology believes fourteen avataras of the God like Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Nrisingha etc. – signify the divine forms in such animals and thereby making their life secure. Killing of certain animals and birds who acted as scavengers by feeding on carcasses and filth was religiously banned according to the Vedas. It is need of the day to follow in the root steps of the ancient period.⁹

RAMAYANA, MAHABHARATA AND GITA

In the epic Ramayana, Ravana, when face with calamity speaks as follows... I have not cut down any fig tree in the month of Vaisakh, why then does this calamity befall me ? This serve as a good example to illustrate how hindus respected trees which constituted a large part of our environment.

In the words of the Ancient immemorial Indian poet Kalidasa: “The Himalaya is a great devattma.” The Mahabharata “hints that the basic elements of nature constitute the cosmic being – The mountains his bones, the Earth his flesh, the sea his blood, the sky his abdomen, the air his breath and Agni his energy. The whole emphasis of the ancient Hindu scriptures is that human beings cannot separate themselves from natural surroundings and earth has the same relationship with man as the mother with her

child. Planting and preservation of trees are made sacred in religious functions. In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna compares the world to a single Banyan tree with unlimited branches in which all the species of animals, humans and demigods wonder. Hindu religious scripts, stories and rituals have attempted to drive home the importance of preserving nature by deifying it through the centuries. Lord Krishna says in the 'Gita' –

“पत्रम् पुष्पम् फलम् तोयम् यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति।
तदहं भक्त्युपहृतमश्रामि प्रयतात्मनः”।¹⁰

All Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, Sutras and other sacred text of Hinduism contains a number of references of the worship of the nature. Our Sanskrit mantras daily remind us that our rivers, mountains, trees, animals and the earth deserve respect and dignity.

CONCLUSIONS

The Vedic sages realized that the pure water, air etc are the roots of to good health and happiness and hence they considered all these as gods. The Vedic people desired to live a life of hundred years –

“तच्चक्षुर्देवहितं पुरस्ताच्छुक्रमुच्चरत।
पश्येम शरदः शतं जीवेम शरदः
शतम् शृणुयाम शरदः शतं प्र-बबाम
शरदः शतमदीनाः स्याम शरदः
शतं भूयश्च शरदः शतात्”।¹¹

And this wish can be fulfilled only when environment will be unpolluted, clean and peaceful.

To have a balanced, peaceful life, we should not create disturbances to our surroundings. We should make extensive efforts in planting trees, conserving soil, protecting biological diversity and finding new ways of producing natural energy could help to a greater extent in maintaining a balanced environmental harmony in our present world.

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