

# AN ANALYTICAL STUDY ON THE CONCEPT OF ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION UNDER ANCIENT INDIAN JURISPRUDENCE

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## ABSTRACT

India is famous for its culture, Traditions and Customary practices. Respecting view of Religion is came from our ancient peoples. This article discusses the protection of the environment in the ancient India by analyzing ancient Hinduism particularly in Vedas, Puranas and Manusmriti and vkingdom like Maurya, Environment protection provision in Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Islam and Christianity etc., enables us to understand the concepts of environment conservation and maintaining ecology.

**Keywords:** Environment, Vedas, Buddhism, Sikhism etc.

## INTRODUCTION

India is richest country in the whole world, due to its unique tradition, customs, practice etc. The fundamental feature of the Indian culture is unity in enormous diversity. India, since the remote period is not only divided in culture, religion, social customs, language, dress and food habits but also in climate, environment, flora and fauna. It is inhabited by a variety of races with different degrees of culture ranging from rude savages to polished philosophers. Hence, it has been described as an 'ethnological museum'.<sup>1</sup> Physically it is divided into five well demarcated divisions i.e. the Himalayan region, the Indo-Gangetic alluvial northern plain, the Deccan plateau, south-eastern and south-western coastal plains. "It is the protective wall of the Himalayas that has given to India the continuity of its civilization and social structure from the earliest times to our own days."<sup>2</sup> The Vindhya Mountain ranges separate the northern plains from the peninsular India. However, in spite of ecological diversity, various geographical zones of the subcontinent have never been isolated units.<sup>3</sup> Nature has blessed the Indian landmass with a large number of perennial rivers fed by both rain water and snow. From very ancient times, human interaction took place through routes cutting across mountains, rivers and regions, dictated by geographical features and human needs. India was one of the cradle lands of civilizations in the ancient world. Indian civilization like other great ancient world civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia and

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<sup>1</sup> It is in Chittagong, established in 1974- exhibit the various aspect of lifestyle of 29 ethnic group of the country.

<sup>2</sup> K.M.Panikkar, *A Survey of Indian History*, Asian Publishing House, Mumbai, 1997, p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> Upinder Singh, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India*, Pearson Publication, 2008, p. 234.

China developed along the course of a famous river named Indus,<sup>4</sup> after which the name of the sub-continent is known as India. It is true that since the dawn of civilization, people realized the tremendous value of water in human life and hence, developed their settlements on river banks. Rivers were the perennial source of water which was essential for drinking, cooking, cleanliness, cultivation, irrigation, and mode of transport and medium of trade and commerce. The rivers like the Sindhu (Indus), Ganga, Yamuna, Brahmaputra, Mahanadi, Narmada, Tapti, Godavari, Krishna, Kaveri etc., played a conspicuous role for the development and prosperity of Indian civilization and culture. The Himalayan Rivers which originated from the Himalaya mostly depend on snow for their water supply and are perennial in nature while the rivers in the Peninsula, which are entirely dependent on monsoon, become dry during the summer months. The extensive coast line of India, however, since very early times fostered overseas trade and maritime activities and gave impetus to cultural expansion in far off countries. It was from different ports of ancient India that her enterprising sailors and navigators maintained commercial cum cultural relations with the countries like Egypt, Babylonia, Greece, the Roman Empire and different countries of the Southeast Asia.

Environment is a broad term which encompasses all natural things that surrounds us and is essential to sustain life such as air (atmosphere), water (hydrosphere), land (lithosphere), flora, fauna etc, and environmental history is the study of human interaction with the natural world. Environmental history shares a very messy boarder with economic and social histories, history of science and technology, disease history, and even with various other disciplines. The principal goal of environmental history is to deepen our understanding of how human beings have been affected by the natural environment and also how they have affected that environment and with what results and consequences. Environmental historians base their understanding of human and nature relations primarily on historical methodology, sometimes taking ideas and inputs not only from scientists but from the scholars working in other fields also. The study of ecology and environmental history in India is comparatively of recent origin. The intellectual root of the study of environmental history traced back to the Annals School<sup>5</sup> of France which stresses on the significance of natural geographical features and their role in shaping a society.

### **Definition of Environment**

Environment is a very factious object and capable of multiple interpretation. In its broadest sense, environment is defined as including water, air, soil, flora and fauna.<sup>6</sup> In the 1972 Stockholm Declaration also “especially representative samples of natural ecosystems” are included in the definition.<sup>7</sup> The term

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<sup>4</sup> India, in ancient times was known to the foreigners by the name of its river Sindhu, which the Persians pronounced as Hindu and the Greeks as Indos. Its flows length 2,880 kilometers in total length

<sup>5</sup> It is group of historian associated with a style of historiography developed by French histories in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Lucien Febvre (1878-1956) and Marc Bloch (1886-1944).

<sup>6</sup> See the English Environment Protection Act 1990, defines the “environment” as consisting “of all, or any, of the [media] the air, water and land; and the medium of air includes the air within buildings and the air within other natural or man-made structures above or below ground”, see Section 1(2).

<sup>7</sup> See Principle 2 in the Declaration of the UN Conference on Human Environment, Stockholm 1972, published in Molitor (ed), International Environmental Law, Primary Materials, 1991, p 81.

“environment” could be said to cover “all those elements which in their complex inter-relationships form the framework, setting and living conditions for mankind, by their very existence or by virtue of their impact”.<sup>8</sup> Another view is that from the New Zealand Environment Act of 1986, where the environment is defined as including:

- “a) ecosystems and their constituent parts;
- b) All natural and physical resources;
- c) The social, economic, aesthetic and cultural conditions which affect the environment or which are affected by changes to the environment.”<sup>9</sup>

According to Gilpin, environment means , “from a scientific point of view is taken to mean everything that is physically external to the organism; organisms of course include human beings”.<sup>10</sup>

Justice P.N. Bhagawati, has defined the term environment to mean “the term refers to the conditions within and around the organism, which affects the behavior, growth and development, or life processes, directly or indirectly.<sup>11</sup> It includes the conditions with which the organism interacts”.

Therefore, Environment can be defined as “environment is essential for the development of both biotic and a biotic things and the relationship between both biotic and a biotic things.

### **Religious Concept of Environment**

Religion is sometimes defined as the relationship between people and that which they regard as holy, often in supernatural terms. All faiths around the world share a common ethic based on harmony with nature, although a wide gap is often perceived between the religious texts and the current practices of the adherents of those religions. There is a close relationship between religion and environment. Religion has had major positive influences on the natural environment. A growing collection of research explores how world religions, individually and collectively, can positively address anthropogenic climate change

In early days, many religious and customary norms governed environmental conservation. The people gave utmost importance and reverence to every aspect of nature. The Indian traditions teach us that all forms of life - plants, animals and human beings are closely interlinked and interdependent and that disturbances in any one of them would jeopardize the entire ecological balance of the universe.<sup>12</sup> It was the dharma of each individual in the society to protect nature. The five important elements of nature called the Panchabhutas were divine incarnations to them. Hinduism recognizes that the human body is composed of and related to these five elements, and connects each of the elements to one of the five senses. The human nose is related to earth, tongue

<sup>8</sup> EEC OJ C 115, May 1976, p 2.

<sup>9</sup> Cited in International Bar Association (IBA), Environmental Liability, Chairman P Thomas, 1991, by R J Somerville, Environmental Audit: Insurance; Indemnities and Proposals for Reform in New Zealand Environmental Law, p 355.

<sup>10</sup> Gilpin A, Dictionary of Environmental Terms, (Queensland Univ. Press); p- 51

<sup>11</sup> Justice Bhagawati, P.N. The Crucial Conditions, in Survey of the Environment, (The Hindu); (1991) p. 165

<sup>12</sup> Pathak, Chintan, Dr. Hiren Mandalia, and Dr Yogesh Rupala. *Bio-Cultural Importance of Indian Traditional Plants and Animal's for Environment Protection*. Review of Research (2012 March): pp. 1 -4

to water, eyes to fire, skin to air and ears to space. This link between our senses and the elements is the foundation of our human relationship with the natural world. For Hinduism, nature and the environment are not outside us. They, in fact, form an inseparable part of our existence.<sup>13</sup>

## Hinduism

Hinduism is known to be the oldest religion in the entire world. The oldest book Rig Veda is proof of this religion is oldest. The Hindu religious scriptures like Vedas, Upanishads, Smritis, Puranas, Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagwat Gita crowns the glories of Ancient Indian Literature. All these scriptures rotate around the idea of well-being of Mother Earth, nature and life present on it. Hinduism and Hindu literature owes the importance to environment which is called *Paryavaran* in Hindi and its origin from the Sanskrit word *Parvavarnam* which means avaran (Covering). Environment get its importance and respect in Vedic and ancient Sanskrit literature. The Hindu religion conceptualizes the relationship between human and nature. The ancient texts available in Hinduism provide knowledge about the basic elements of the environment.<sup>14</sup> They instruct in all the forms to have a worshipping attitude towards the entities of mother Earth and all the natural resources present on it. All the religious text preach human that it is the sanctified duty of the human to protect Prithvi (Earth), Vayu (air), Aakash (sky), Jal (water) and animals.<sup>15</sup> Hinduism always speaks about respect for nature and to live in harmony within it. Many plants and animals were worshipped as deities. According to Hinduism Conservation of plants and animals was considered as the top most duty of human who was also considered the creation of God.<sup>16</sup> *Ahimsa Parmo Dharama*, i.e. non-violence is still considered as the dharma of highest order. According Saikia (2018), the Vedas have answers to all the questions related to environment. Physical and spiritual knowledge both are covered in Vedas and they are full of idea of life and nature.<sup>17</sup>

An analysis shows that the Aryans worshipped those to whom they loved or liked or to whom they feared. Out of total 33 Rig Vedic gods and goddesses,<sup>18</sup> several Hindu Gods and Goddesses have represented essentials of human beings.

<sup>13</sup> Renu Tanwar. *Environment Conservation in Ancient India*. IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science 21 2016 (9). P. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Young KK. Hindu Bioethics. In: Camenisch P.F. (eds) *Religious Methods and Resources in Bioethics*. Theology and Medicine, Springer, Dordrecht. 1994;2. Available: [https://doi.org/10.1007.978-94-015-8362-6\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007.978-94-015-8362-6_1) last visited on 27/2/2021.

<sup>15</sup> S.C. Shastri, *The Environmental Law*, (5<sup>th</sup> ed), Eastern Book Company, India ; 2015, p.25.

<sup>16</sup> J. Lipner, *Hindus: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2010, p.52.

<sup>17</sup> J. Saikia, *Role of environment in Vedic literature*, International Journal on arts management and Humanities 2018;7 (1): pp . 147-150.

<sup>18</sup> Benudhar Patra's "Environment In Early India: A Historical Perspective", Environment: Traditional & Scientific Research, Volume 1, Issue 1, January-June 2016, p.45

Name of God	Considered as
Indra	god of rain thunderbolt, lightening and war, occupied the prime position.
Agni	fire god
Pusan	cattle
Varuna	god of water
Maruta	storm god
Vayu	god of air
Surya	Sun god
Usha	goddess of dawn
Saraswati	goddess of rivers, Education

According to veda, felling of trees, polluting air, water and desert land was regarded as sin as these were to be respected and regarded as God and Goddesses. Maintaining these pure, was the duty of everyone. Our ancestors considered it as their pious duty to save tree and in order to do so they accorded every tree with religious sanctity.<sup>19</sup> Charak Samhita<sup>20</sup> has considered the destruction of forests as the most dangerous act for humanity and its welfare.<sup>21</sup>

Trees and plants had been regarded as indispensable in the life of human being and considered as the abode of various Gods and Goddesses. Some of the trees associated with the God and Goddesses, may be cited to support this point of view.

Name of Trees/ Plants	Name of Gods/Goddesses.
Ashoka (Saraca asoca)	Buddha, Indra
Fig (Ficus carica)	Vishnu, Rudra
Kadamb (Neolamarckia cadamba)	Krishna
Lotus (Nelumbo nucifera)	Laxmi
Mango (Magnifera indica)	Laxmi, Govardhan
Neem (Melia azarachta)	Sitala, Manasa
Palasa (Butea monosperma)	Brahma, Gandharva
Pipal (Ficus Religiosa)	Vishnu, Krishna
Vat(Banyan)	Brahma

<sup>19</sup> I.S. Negi (Ed) XXXVI, 1-2 Cheetal, 10(1998).

<sup>20</sup> Sanskrit text on Ayurveda, it consists eight books and 120 chapters.

<sup>21</sup> Varaha Purana, 172:39.

Several Hindu Gods and Goddesses have animals and birds as their mounts. The selective examples are as below.

Name of animal / Bird	Name of God/Goddesses
Ass	Sitla
Bull	Shiva
Crocodile	Ganga
Deer	Vayu
Dog	Bhairava
Eagle	Vishnu
Elephant	Ganesha, Indra
Lion	Durga
Monkey	Hanuman,
Owl	Laxmi
Peacock	Saraswathi
Rat	Ganesh
Serpent	Shiva
Swan	Saraswathi
Wild goose	Brahma
Ram	Agni
Crown	Shani
Horse	Sun
Swan	Brahma
Mouse	Ganesha
Peacock	Kartikeya
Crow/Raven/Vulture	Shani
Cat	Shashthi
Male Buffalo	Yama
Crocodile	Varuna
Tiger	Ayyappa

In this ways ancient Veda are protecting the environment by moral as well as devotional power.

### Perspective of Environment in Vedas

The Concept of Conservation and protection of environment is not new to India. The Primary steps of conservation and protection of environment is traceable in the Vedic period where worship of nature is thought to be originated.<sup>22</sup> Several prayers and hymns mentioned in Vedas given an idea of respecting the nature in all aspects which also have similarity with the principle of modern times which relate to conservation of natural resources. Veda directs every individual present, to pay due regard to the environment by worshipping trees.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Sharma KN, *Vedic perspective on environment*, 2009, Article published in Time of India 30-09-2009. Available: [timesofindia.indiatimes.com/vedic-perspective-on-environment/articelshor/4613346.cms](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/vedic-perspective-on-environment/articelshor/4613346.cms). last visited 28/2/2020.

<sup>23</sup> Coward, H. *Hindu views of nature and the environment book chapter published in science across cultures: The History of Non-Western Science*. 2003; 41 (1),p.419.

The four Vedas were brought to earth by Gods. The *Agnideva*<sup>24</sup> brought Rig Veda, *Aadithya*<sup>25</sup> brought *Yagurveda*, *Vayudeva*<sup>26</sup> brought Samaveda and Seer *Angiras* brought Atharva Veda to earth.<sup>27</sup> Rigveda Says “Environment provides blessing to people for living their life perfectly. River blesses us with the sacred water and medicines provides us health, sun bliss us with peaceful life. Our cows provide us sweet milk”<sup>28</sup> Rig Veda the first literary work of ours presents the noble concept of man nature relationship in the universe. The hymns of Rig Veda view man only as the manifestation of the same reality of cosmos with equal importance. It is deeply rooted in the Indian philosophical concept of Monism (Advaita). “Nobody thought of an existence that was apart from nature, which is the basis of man’s existence. His duty is to protect nature and accept what nature offers”.

In our ancient tradition and in literature Nature was worshiped with same importance given to other deities. “Man and nature were in perfect harmony, enjoying the abundance and the bliss of the supreme. The sacred rivers like Ganga, Yamuna Saraswathy and Kaveri were worshiped as mother goddesses from ancient time. According to Vedic Tradition the cause of existence of man in the universe is due to the blessings of nature and the compassion of mother earth and her prosperity. The majority of Vedic hymns are the prayers of man to nature goddess. Rig Veda refers mainly the Sun God (Savithav<sup>29</sup>) the source of energy, Water (Varuna) the god of water and other gods like Ushas, Yama, Rudra, Puusha, and Agni also were the manifestations gods. “In the incipient golden era, the spiritual vision, thoughts and actions of mankind were not contaminated by corruption of any kind. Man and nature were in perfect harmony, enjoying the abundance and the bliss of the supreme”.<sup>30</sup> Human beings pray for the blessings and abundance of harvest and prosperity. “The Veda wants every member of a society to have a vocation and to work not only for one’s livelihood but also to achieve noble ends. Ushas, the Goddess of Dawn, is associated with men’s active life”.<sup>31</sup>

### Hindu Epics and Environment

The epics like the Ramayana (c.1000/900 BCE) and the Mahabharata (c.900/800 BCE) at various places refers to environment. Valmiki, the author of the Ramayana and Veda Vyasa, the author of the Mahabharata had their ashramas in the forests which allow concentration and inspired them to write such great epics. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are replete with references to forests, rivers and mountains. In the Mahabharata<sup>32</sup> the whole of India was represented as the land of seven mountains which were chosen as seats of

<sup>24</sup> According to Hindu mythology agnideva is god of fire and symbol of purity.

<sup>25</sup> According to Hindu mythology Aadithya is god of light.

<sup>26</sup> According to Hindu mythology Vayudeva is god of Air.

<sup>27</sup> V. Rajeev, *Man and Nature in Indian Thought*, International Journal for Environmental Rehabilitation and Conservation, Volume IV No. 1, 2013, pp.50-55.

<sup>28</sup> K. Acharya, *Environment consciousness in ancient India*, published in Tuck Magazine on; October 18, 2016.

<sup>29</sup> According to Hindu mythology Saithav is sun light.

<sup>30</sup> Swami Gururethnam Jana Thapaswi, *Secular spirituality and The New Dharma of Health, History of Spiritual development*, Santhigiri publication, Trivandrum: 2010. Pp.19-20.

<sup>31</sup> V. Rajeev, man and nature in Indian thought, International Journal for Environmental Rehabilitation and conservation, volume IV No.1, 2013, pp.50-55.

<sup>32</sup> Bhishmaparva, Ch.9; Mookerji Environment: Traditional & Scientific Research 1954:37-38

contemplation and peace. Sita, the main character of the Ramayana who is considered as the 'ideal' of the Indian women is known to have taken birth out of soil (dharti mata). It is interesting to mention that, in the Ramayana, the main subject matter is the fight between Rama and the Asuras, headed by Ravana of Sri Lanka. It was, however, not actually a fight between Rama and the Asuras but a struggle between the Aryans and the non-Aryans. Ravana, the demon king who was a non-Aryan had a beautiful garden known as the Ashoka Vatika. Bali and Sugriva who belonged to Kishkindhya region may not be actual monkeys but belong to the non Aryan group and were the protectors of the jungle wealth. Sugriva had well idea about the forest and hill regions of south India, and helped Rama who is considered the supreme human being (Purushottama) in finding out and recovering Sita from Sri Lanka.

### **Hindu Purans and Environment :**

The Puranas had also great concern for environment, flora and fauna. They conceptualized the trees to feel happiness and sorrow (Vidyasagara 1876: 231 ff.) and attributed auspiciousness to plantation of trees.<sup>33</sup> A tree is said to render to a sonless person the virtue of having a son .<sup>34</sup> In the Padma Purana, it is mentioned that trees like, pipal, bel, ber, neem, etc., are the abode of god and are not to be cut which indicate that trees were sanctified by the people who through religion tried to conserve vegetation and forest. The Agni Purana even prescribed death penalty for pollution of ponds. The Manu smriti condemned cruelty towards animals and stated that the killer of the cattle is doomed to die as many times as there are hair on the skin of the cattle. As all the rites, rituals and traditions are made by human beings and the epics, Puranas, Dharmasutras, Dharmashastras etc., are composed by them, it indicate that the ancient Indians had a great concern for the preservation and conservation of nature and the natural world.

### **Manusmriti and Environment:**

The Manu Smriti, an ancient legal text condemned cruelty towards animals and stated that the killer of the cattle is doomed to die as many times as the number of hairs on the skin of the cattle(Krishna 2017, 137). According to it water is not a private property but is a public property, therefore no one should pollute the water. He also talks about the air pollution. Impure substance is not to be thrown to fire as the smoke rose thereof, may act poisonous. The highest environmental ethics of Manu is to go for penance after someone commits an environmental sin; a high order of self-punishment entails self-realization. Under conditions of urgent necessity, this punishment is relaxed for an aged man, pregnant women or a child.<sup>35</sup> The Manu smriti also says that „He who injures innocent beings with a desire to give himself pleasure never finds happiness, neither in life nor in

<sup>33</sup> Skanda Purana: 1.2.27, 21-22; Dutt 1903: 282. 1-4

<sup>34</sup> Bhavisya Purana, Madhyama Khanda, 1.10.37; Shastri 2003: 170. 35-37

<sup>35</sup> Sachidananda Padhy, *Environmental Laws of Manu: A Concise Review.*” J. Hum. 2006 Ecol 19 (1).



death". These innocent beings include the flora and fauna of the earth and creatures in the sky and under the sea(Krishna).<sup>36</sup>

## Kingdom

During sixth /fifth centuries BCE owing to abundant natural resources and suitable environmental and climatic conditions, the kingdom of Magadha could establish a vast empire in northern India locating its base on the Gangetic basin at Rajagriha in Bihar. In the words of D.N.Jhwhole lower Gangetic plain, and its rich alluvial soil provided a strong agricultural base. The thick forests beyond Gaya in south Bihar supplied timber for buildings and elephants for the army". From the Hathigumpha<sup>37</sup> Inscription of Kalinga (ancient name of modern Orissa) king Kharavela, it is known that Mahapadma Nanda (fourth century BCE) of the Nanda dynasty who ruled from Pataliputra and sometimes considered as the first empire builder of India dug a canal in ancient Orissa (Kalinga) near Bhubaneswar which was extended by the great Kharavela during his reign perioda (2003:86) "Its [Magadha] favourable geographical position enabled it to control the (1<sup>st</sup> century BCE). The Mauryas who succeeded the Nandas made great endeavours for the development of environment, and did many things in this direction. The Arthashastra of Kautilya and the Indica of Megasthenes throws welcome light on this aspect. (Kautilya was the mentor and prime minister of Chandragupta Maurya and wrote a book named Arthashastra which is on the state craft and polity. Megasthenes, The Arthashastra of Kautilya contains laws about the environment.

Kautilya also recommended sylvan surrounding for residence and pinpointed importance of lakes, groves, gardens, hillocks to make a city worth living which gave rise to a distinctly comprehensive science in ancient India, called arboriculture which dealt with the construction and maintenance of gardens and planned greenery (Shukla 1970:179- 182).

<sup>36</sup> Nanditha Krishna, "*Hinduism and Nature*". Penguin Random House India Private Limited., 2017 p.125

<sup>37</sup> It is inscription in Udayagiri hills inscribed by khavavela, the king of kalinga (Bhuvanewar).

Kautilya, in his Arthashastra, describes the precepts for city administration and penalties for citizens for making the city dirty, Section 26 to 30 of Chapter 36 of Arthashastra provides<sup>38</sup>

Section 26:	For throwing dirt on the road, the fine (shall be) one-eighth of a pana, for blocking it with muddy water, one quarter; and
Section 27:	On the royal highway the fine shall be double, for throwing dirt.
Section 28:	Fine for voiding faeces in a holy place for water, in a temple and in a royal property are one pana rising successively by one pana, half for passing urine
Section 29;	If (these are) due to medicine, illness or fear (the persons are ) not to be fined.
Section 30	For throwing the dead body of cat, a dog, a serpent inside the city, the fine shall be three panas, for throwing the dead body of donkey, a camel, a mule, a horse or cattle six panas, for human corpse fifty panas.

### Maurya Period:

The Maurya period marked so phenomenal development in the field of agriculture that the Maurya rulers appointed a superintendent of agriculture known as Sitadhyaksha to look after the growth and promotion of agriculture. “Possessed of the knowledge of the science of agriculture dealing with the plantation of bushes and trees (krshitantragulmavrkshshayurvedajnah), or assisted by those who are trained in such sciences, the superintendent of agriculture[sitadhyaksha] shall in time collect the seeds of all kinds of grains, flowers, fruits, vegetables, bulbous roots, roots, pallikya, fibre-producing plants, and cotton” (Shamasastri 1956:127). The agricultural progress must have owed a great deal to the provision of irrigation facilities by the government. The Arthashastra also refers to the distribution and measurement of water for irrigation. According to the Girnar Rock Inscription, Pushyagupta one of the governors of Chandragupta Maurya built a dam across a river near Girnar in Saurashtra. Ashoka, the great Maurya who became a righteous and non-violent human being after the devastating Kalinga war of c. 261 BCE through his edicts prohibits animal slaughter and, thus, encouraged the growth of animal world. His stress upon the plantation of tree at various parts of his empire (Chaudhary: 49) not confine to beautification alone but goes much beyond.

<sup>38</sup> R.P. Kangle, *The Kautilya Arthashastra*, ( 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed), Part-1, Motilal Banarsidars publication, University of Bombay, p.94,

Asoka's rule is the foremost example of ecologically responsible statehood in India's ancient history. The Pillar Edict V of Asoka inscriptions reveal that he had imported and grown herbs suitable for human and animal. He had ponds dug up and shelters erected along the roads at every eight kilometers, and planted banyan trees on the roads to give shade to man and animal. He was concerned about the wildlife and its importance and banned the royal hunting and animal sacrifices. Burning of the forests without purpose was forbidden.

The Gupta period which is considered the golden age of the ancient Indian history marked significant developments in the arena of environment. The poets, astronomers and scientists of the Gupta period were greatly influenced by the environment. Kalidas,<sup>39</sup> the renowned literary figure of ancient India who probably belongs to the reign of Chandragupta II, in his work Ritusamhara describes the six seasons in relation to shringara. Meghaduta, (cloud messenger) another poetical work written by him reflects various aspects of nature, especially of clouds. Aryabhata,<sup>40</sup> the great scientist and astronomer and the author of the Aryabhatiyam, who flourished in the fifth century CE contrary to the existing notions, opined that the earth revolves around the sun and rotates on its axis which is a great contribution to the world of natural science. The Panchasiddhantika of Varahamihira (C.6<sup>th</sup> CE ) deals with five astronomical systems (Siddanta).

Harshavardhan, the greatest ruler of the Pushyabhuti dynasty ruled over northern India during the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang (Yuan Chwang) visited India during the reign period of Harshavardhan. Harsha though started his rule from Thaneshwar in Haryana subsequently realizing the importance of Kanauj which was located on the Gangetic basin later on shifted his capital to the later place. He convoked a religious assembly at Prayaga on the bank of the river Ganga under the presidency of Hiuen Tsang. As per the description of Banabhatta,<sup>41</sup> his court poet, Harsha in course of his search to find out Rajyashri, his sister during the time of her distress, made friendship with Vyagraketu of the Vindhya forest who introduces him every creek and corner of the hills which reminds us the friendship of Rama with Sugriva of the Ramayana period. Harsha recovers his sister when she was 'prepared to enter the funeral pyre' in the Vindhya forest. It indicates one thing that the Vindhya Mountain was impenetrable during those days. Hiuen Tsang in his eye witness accounts refers to many natural spots and vividly described about them. The Chola Kingdom in the south, ruling from Tanjore, their capital became a great maritime power because of its location on the extensive sea coast. Similarly, throughout the Indian history environment has got its due weight. Almost all the kings, in spite of their variation in personal aptitude take concrete steps for the management of water and forest; undertake irrigational activities, constructed canals and bridges and planted trees for the benefit and welfare of the public.

<sup>39</sup> According Indian history he is a classical Sanskrit author who is considered as ancient Indian's great playwright and dramatic who wrote Meghaduta, Shankuntala (play). He lived in Chandra gupta II.

<sup>40</sup> He is first major mathematics and Indian astronomy (476 AD- 550 AD) his works are Aryabhatiya and Ary-siddhanta.

<sup>41</sup> He is 7<sup>th</sup> century Sanskrit prose writer and poet in India. (606-647 CE).

## 2.6.2 Jainism

The principles of Jainism and Buddhism propagated by their respective founders i.e. Vardhamana Mahavira and Gautama Buddha during the 6th century BCE are closely related to environmental issues. The principle of *ahimsa* of Jainism was practiced not only towards human beings, but towards all living creatures including animals and plants. In other words, by not killing or destroying plants or animals one can help to maintain the ecological balance. The Jain scriptures tell us: “The Arhats (venerable ones) of the past, present and future discourse, counsel, proclaim, propound and prescribe thus in unison: Do not injure, abuse or press, enslave, insult, torment, torture and kill any creature or any living being.” Vardhamana Mahavira (great hero) said: “There is nothing so small and subtle as the atom, nor any element so vast as space. Similarly, there is no quality of soul more subtle than non-violence and no virtue of spirit greater than reverence for life.” Further, he proclaimed: “One who neglects or disregards the existence of earth, air, fire, water and vegetation disregards his own existence which is entwined with them.” The Jains believed that the universe is eternal and divided into an infinite number of cycles, each consisting of a period of improvement (utsarpini) and another of decline (avasarpini).

### **Budhism:**

Buddhism came into existence as religion by the end of vedic period. The fundamental tenets of Buddhism are truth, non-violence, respect and love for living organism including trees and plants. Buddha, as an enlightened being saw the interdependence of nature and advocated that there should be a proper harmony between human beings and nature. In the Jatakas,<sup>42</sup> Buddha is symbolized with different trees; therefore, trees are regarded as objects of worship in Buddhism. It appears that Buddhism adopted the concept of tree worship from the contemporary Hindu (Vedic) religion to represent Buddha through symbolic trees. His holiness Dalailama<sup>43</sup> highlighted the ethical and ecological vision of Lord Buddha in the following words:

“Destruction of the environment and the life depending upon it is a result of ignorance, greed and disregard for the richness of all living things. This disregard is gaining great influence. If peace does not become a reality in the world, and if the destruction of the environment continues as it does today, there is no doubt that future generation will inherit a dead world”.

### **Sikhism:**

Sikhism is one of religion in India. It has demonstrated through performance of its followers, the most laudable virtues of protecting and enriching the natural environment, making the most efficient use of natural resources, for man’s sustained benefits in terms of food, nutrition, health and good living and developing the true spirit of partnership and sharing in community life. In Gurunank Bani the term Jaga and Jagat refer to the

<sup>42</sup> Important part of Buddhist art and literature. They describes the previous existences or birth of the Buddha.

<sup>43</sup> He is spiritual leader of Tibetan people and influenced by Buddha and Gandhi.

world and convey the idea of process of creation from water, fire and air, God is the creator of these.<sup>44</sup> According Sikhs, there is one way, one love, one beauty shines through air, water and fire, one humble-bee roam in the whole universe. He who understands this unity will be honoured.<sup>45</sup> According to Guru Nanak Dev,<sup>46</sup> the immanent spirit of the God is continuously present in nature and nature is in direct and constant dependence upon His will. He is beyond the creation in the sense that while nature and human beings depends on Him.<sup>47</sup>

### **Islam and Environmental Protection.**

The Holy Qur'an declares that everything is created from water. Allah is considered to be the owner of land and mankind is the trustee or guardian whereas other living creatures are considered to be the beneficiaries. According to Holy Quran the owner of land on this earth is God and whoever is in charge, possession or control thereof is only a trustee. The beneficiaries of nature are God's creatures. However, the prophet has qualified this saying that whoever cultivates such barren land, which does not belong to anyone and plants it with trees he acquires a right over it. It is open to a community, which is enjoying the shade of a tree, either to cut and fell it or to eat its fruit. The Islam not only cared for environment but encouraged limited use of natural resources. The concept of trusteeship also finds place in Islam.<sup>48</sup>

### **ENVIRONMENT AND CHRISTIANITY**

The Christianity also says that harmonic triadic relationship exists between the divine and humanity, among human beings and nature and failure to maintain the harmony may alienate humanity from its creator and also from Nature. As the Lord said "I am the Alpha and the Omega the first and the last the beginning and the end" consequently every part of creation has His divine hand in it: no human being has absolute right to destroy it. It is from this perspective that Rev. Father Lanfranco Serrihi (Minister General, Order Friars Minor Conventual, Rome) said "All human effort in the world must therefore lead to mutual enrichment of man and creatures". Pope John Paul VI in his message to United Nations Conference on Human Environment held at Stockholm (1972) stated that the environment and resources are for everyone: they are inalienable property of everyone and there does not exist over this universal prosperity discretionary sovereignty exempting from responsibility towards humanity of today and tomorrow.<sup>49</sup> This message of Pope John Paul VI makes it amply clear that there is a close link between Christianity and Environment and the thrust is for Sustainable Development. Thus the true spirit of Christianity to keep the environment in a perfect condition is very much stressed.

<sup>44</sup> G.B .Ravinder Singh, *Indian Philosophical Tradition and Guru Nanak*, (1983), p.119.

<sup>45</sup> Gurumukh Nihal Singh, *Guru Nanak; His life time and Teachings*, (1969) p. 5.

<sup>46</sup> He is founder of Sikhism and is the first of the ten sikh guru (1469-1539)

<sup>47</sup> Ibid p.15.

<sup>48</sup> The Holy Quran 3; 499.

## CONCLUSION

Under Indian mythology and epics environment has been given importance by treating them as god. The Vedas are the primary sources of not only moral enhancement for the economic man but also paths for misguided ecology to achieve a true sustainability. It views human perfection and happiness from integrated perspectives, which embraces both material and spiritual values in individual and harmonious unity. The Vedas will guide to enlighten the inner human soul in order to maintain have moral values, true purpose of life and care for nature. The Vedic cultures are unique from development perspectives.<sup>50</sup> Nature and the environment confront each-force-of-exploitation with an equal treatment. Nature keeps on rendering its goods and services without any maltreatment to the people who are dependent n it. Nature doesn't discriminate on lines of caste, creed and color; it keeps on giving plenty without any favor and differentiation. Nature and natural resources do not understand any disparity, distinction and disability. Nature and the environment don't treat anybody dependent on it as splintered on sectarian lines. Environment treats every living organism on equal footing. Nature and natural resources interact with everybody with same spirit of temperament and disposition. Environment holds every human and living being with much respect and admiration. Environment enforces much discipline, restraint and regulation on its surroundings. Environment renders benefit to all creatures with equal respect and esteem. Environment in the true sense of the term enforces secularism. Secularism which is built upon four pillars of core principles of green geopolitical ethos of "ecological responsibility, social justice, grass root democracy and non violence."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Rekha Sharma, *Vedic Science And Environment*, Social Issues and Environmental Problems, Vol.3 (Iss.9:SE): Sep, 2015, p. 3

<sup>51</sup> A K Singh 's"Environment Enforces Secularism" Eastern publication 2002, p.3