

ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION IN VEDAS: PERSPECTIVES FOR BETTER FUTURE

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Each and every atom of nature is marvel of science and technology we just have to decipher it; dwellings of ants and white worms are as comfortable and safe for all weathers as our modern structures. If these little creatures can make these things, why not human beings of ancient times can do such things as available today. In our blind race towards discoveries and developments, we often tend to ignore the contributions of our ancestors. Our ancient scriptures are proof of their contributions. In ancient times, science and technology were greatly developed in India. Today our science is largely based on sensory perceptions. We cannot imagine calculation of eclipses without telescopes and other instruments, but in various classical texts, there are enough evidences of the existence of advanced technologies for predicting such events. We can delve into our treasure of knowledge through evidences available in Classical texts, Evidences found in excavations and accounts of foreign visitors. Environmental preservation has been discussed in great details in Vedas which is probably most discussed topic these days. Vedic saints were well acquainted with the disastrous outcome of various types of pollution and environmental imbalances. They recognised the emission of oxygen by *Peepal* tree. So by reviving knowledge of ancient India, we can take momentous leap towards making a better India. This article presents a review of ancient texts to identify the relevant themes related to Science and Technology, which, if properly documented and analysed, can serve as starting point for future discoveries and developments.

Keywords: Ancient india, Vedas, Environmental awareness

Introduction

Environment plays a very significant role in human civilisation. Human beings have close relations with the biosphere in which they live. Environment provides the necessary and sufficient conditions for sustaining human life. Today, the environmental crisis is a tremendous problem as alteration in environment has become a threat to collective survival. Developed countries are facing serious problem due to environmental imbalances but the problem is almost similar

in case of all developing nations. Therefore, now-a-day's environmental problems are the topic of discussion on every table top. Environment has always played an important role in establishing human civilisation; all civilisation evolved near water bodies as it provided pure water for drinking and irrigation and also facilitated transportation.

Environmental deterioration is a pretty serious problem in India which cannot be ignored. Population is increasing at an alarming rate which leads to several kinds of environmental issues in the country like various kinds of

pollutions, temperature change, climate change, deforestation, siltation, insanitation which is a serious threat to quality life and survival. These contaminations further leads to several water borne disease as well as cancer so these environmental issues are matter of great concern and this can be controlled not only by modern technology but by amalgamation of both modern and ancient knowledge bank.

Ancient Indian literature is very rich in knowledge of *paryavaran* (environment). We neglected the instructions of the scriptures, sometimes out of total ignorance of the contents of these works and at other times out of incapability to follow the real intention of the authors of these scriptures. Now it's high time to revive knowledge of ancient Indian literature and along with modern techniques we can combat this issue.

Science and Technology in Ancient India

Each and every atom of nature is marvel of science and technology we have to decipher it. The nest of weaverbird is so precise that we wonder how it is possible, but it is here. Dwellings of ants and white worms are as comfortable and safe for all weathers as our modern structure. Web yarn is stronger than same thickness of steel. If these little creatures can make these things, why not human beings of ancient times can make such things as available today. Ancient science and technology should be discussed with these things in mind.

Science and technology in ancient India was highly developed. Our science is based

on sensory perception. We cannot imagine calculation of eclipses without telescopes and other instruments. The date and time calculated by ancient astrologers were as precise as calculated with modern day gadgets that we are not ready to accept. Indian scientists were called Sages, Rishis and Maharishies. They have rendered precious contribution to the scientific knowledge and enriched the treasure of knowledge and wisdom of humanity.

The word "Rishi" is defined as "*Rishayahmantradrashtrah*". During the state of deep meditation Rishis used to perceive Mantras i.e., knowledge in capsulated form. This was source of all knowledge. There are different source of evidences that proves the enriched knowledge of Indian science and technology monuments, carving on cave walls, corpses preserved in deserts and glaciers, terracotta, pots and coins, material found in graveyards and pyramids etc., knowledge available in old scriptures. It is an accepted fact that literature is the most reliable source of uninterrupted flow of knowledge of human being from ancient times. Account of foreign ambassadors who visited in ancient times. Indian scientists preserved and documented knowledge in the form of hymns and sutras. Ancient Indian literature is incredibly prosperous in knowledge of all aspects. Western scholars have translated vedic hymns ignoring the existing rules of translating vedic hymns. Due to this, description of aeroplanes were declared as an object of poetic imagination. But precise description is enough proof of their actual existence: Ribhus were developers of aeroplanes (Rigveda4/36/1). Structures found in the Indus valley civilisation

is enough evidence that town planning, road and water resource systems were comparable to modern day's architecture and town planning (Kenoyer, 1998; Wheeler and Wheeler, 1966). Metallurgy: Rust proof monuments like *Ashok Stambha* prove that metallurgy was highly developed (Singh, 2008; Annual Report, 1954). Indian system of medicine, Ayurveda is another landmark of high scientific base of ancient India. It is fascinating that endocrine glands as depicted in the book of yogas are exactly as described in modern anatomy. They were well aware of the hormones secreted by these glands. They have identified large number of medicinal plants and developed a system that these be a part of our life.

Environmental Preservation in Vedas

Environmental preservation is probably most discussed topic these days. Vedic rishis were well acquainted with the disastrous outcome of various types of pollution. Point which is conveyed by our sages deciphered the functioning of universe and formulated sutras for wellbeing of mankind. On this background I present some sutras to prove that Indian Maharishis were well aware of the impact of environment on human existence and what should be done for preservation of its natural qualities. Elaboration of environment found in ancient texts under air, water, food, soil, flora, fauna and forest Purity of air. Hymn 7, 9, 11 respectively (*Prithavi –Sookt*: Atharv 12th kand) explains Love of Motherland and its preservation: First hymn 7 explains may *Prithivi* (the Earth) be always protected by Gods with utmost care. "May she grace us with sweet nector, may she bestow upon us

splendor and divinity." Second hymn is, "On whom water flows continuously with eternal motion, may She with multiple streams pour milk for us, may she bestow us with divine brilliance. "The third hymn explains" O *Prithvi*! O motherland! Your auspicious woods, hills and mountains, your black, ruddy, brown and multicoloured spread may be our abode of pleasure. We may dwell here unslain, unwounded and unsubdued."

|| *Om Shanno Devirabhishtaya Aapo Bhawantu
Peetaye Shanyorabhi Sravantu Nah* ||

Jal Sookt: Water Hymns in which sages expresses concern importance for purity of water: "O water! Pleasant water may be propitious for achievement of our goals and our safety. The water may bestow upon us divine pleasure and affluence on us" (Atharv veda 1/6/1; Rigveda 10/9/4; Yajurveda 36/12). Water mass away from human dwelling is susceptible to pollution by various reasons viz., innocent animals, humans, natural dust and biomass as well as by enemies. For fresh water we must counter these agents. Sages suggest that fresh water source should be near residential houses: "I bring this well disinfected and disease destroying water. By drinking pure water I will be safe from death. I dwell in house with grains ghee, milk and fire." (Atharva Veda 3/12/9)

Veda also provides "Evidently two types of air are flowing up to oceans and towards distance places from oceans. One provide us strength and another carries away whatever there is polluted." (Rigveda, 10/137/2). Must remember that pure fresh air is precious medicine, which is beneficial for our heart like medicine, and it is pleasant. This increases our longevity (Rigveda 10/186/1)" *Asvatha saravrikshanam*" in Bhagwat Gita means

“*Mei vriksho me Peepal hu*”. This explains significance of *peepal* trees as they provide oxygen to us. Thus, tradition of not cutting a *peepal* tree has become our culture such was there insight about environment.

All are well aware of noise pollution. These days, people use loudspeakers incessantly during festivals and cause noise pollution. Lighting of crackers also causes noise. There are sources of noise which are beyond control of common man. But some of them can be eliminated by individual and social effort. Great sage says, “Our tongue should utter sweet voices, there should be sweetness and melody during worship and chanting of prayers. There may be melody in our heart” (Atharva Veda 1/34/2).

Upanishad says this universe was created by the wishes of the almighty “*Ekoaham bahu syam*” is a very popular *sutra* of Upanishads. It details how the creation of universe happened. Upanishad says, “creation happened by the *Sankalpa* derived from Brahma. Advaita Brahma thought or willed “I am one, let me multiply” (The Chandogya Upanishad of the Samaveda, Tripathi and Ghildyal, 2013). Now compare it Big bang theory. There is great similarity between the two. Big bang accepts material creation Indian sages accept mental creation. This identifies the difference between the concepts of modern and Indian. If we apply these Sutras we can obtain the scientific facts in modern terms.

Environmental balance is maintained by each and every creature on this earth. Each life form is important. Protection of all creatures is a norm of Hindu religion. According to Hindu mythology the God has fourteen *avtar* or birth which signifies the divine forms in birds, animals and in this way their life become secure. Cow considered as Mother and cobra is worshipped on the eve of *Nagpanchami*. Killing of animals and birds that acted as scavengers were religiously banned according to the Vedas as they were associated with some God like eagle with God Vishnu (Sarmah, 2015).

Conclusion

It is incredible that Vedic time's people regarded the environment and nature in a holistic way and valued each constituent and entities of nature by vigilantly protecting them. Therefore, Indian Saints had full knowledge of environmental pollution and prescribed acts for avoiding environmental contamination. They have already mentioned several causes and impact of environmental deterioration. This article will bring awareness about environmental protection which is mentioned in ancient India vedic literature and other sources. Ancient Indian sages were having sufficient awareness related to environmental imbalances and moreover vedic prayers invokes heavenly involvement to sanctify and protect the environment.

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