

# eco consciousness in vedic civilization

## SAKSHI KOKNE

Undergraduate Student,  
Department of Industrial Engineering,  
Shri Ramdeobaba College of Engineering  
And Management, Gittikhadan  
Nagpur, 440013(MS) INDIA  
9370312382

## SHIVANI MANAPURE

Undergraduate Student,  
Department of Industrial Engineering,  
Shri Ramdeobaba College of Engineering  
And Management, Gittikhadan  
Nagpur, 440013(MS) INDIA  
8767278429

## ABHIPSA THAKUR

Undergraduate Student,  
Department of Industrial Engineering,  
Shri Ramdeobaba College of Engineering  
And Management, Gittikhadan  
Nagpur, 440013(MS) INDIA  
9370529001

## Dr. V.H. ASUDHANI

Associate Professor and  
Head and Department (Humanities)  
Shri Ramdeobaba College of Engineering  
and Management, Gittikhadan  
Nagpur, 440013(MS) INDIA  
9503143439

**Abstract** - World is passing through one of the worst ecological crisis environmentalists are of the opinion if serious efforts are not taken to avert the situation, many species from the earth would disappear forever. Environmental threat has intensified in the last few centuries it is interesting to study how Vedic people looked at ecological issues, how they sought to integrate eco conciseness with daily routine, how they satisfied their daily wants without causing damage to the environment whether their practices can be revived in the modern time to provide a solution to the contemporary eco crisis these and many such questions constitute the basic theoretical frame work for the present study. The attempt is made to understand the role collective traditional wisdom as reviled in the Vedic text with regard to eco conciseness.

**Keywords** - Eco crisis, Environmental Conservation, Vedic text, Traditional Indian knowledge, Animism

## INTRODUCTION

Hardly anyone one would differ that the two greatest dangers that confront the contemporary mankind are 1. violence arising out of nuclear power. 2. eco crisis. The first seems to be the result of unmindful Ness and irrational political policies, whereas the second that is ecological crisis is the result of our irresponsible behavior, in fact in the postindustrial society human being's behavior is governed by greed they want more and more comforts and luxuries it is to be noted that the resources of earth are limited if we continue to exploit them for our unending greed ultimately the environment would be caught in the crisis. When we say environment here, we refer to all flora fauna and other natural resources. We all are aware of the great dangers that loom large on the horizons threatening the very existence of mankind.

One question that is to be persistently asked, why in the last few centuries we have come to such a crisis? if we try to look into the past, it would be a surprise to many that for thousands of years especially in Indian subcontinent environment was well preserved. If we look at the Vedic civilization that epitomizes the greatness and glory of Indian past, we come across many practices that they had made an integral part of their life and these practices proved to be very useful for the protection and conservation of the environment. Ecological crisis was something unknown in the past.

## Eco Crisis In Global Challenge

The fight against poverty and managing climate change are the two biggest problems facing humanity in the twenty-first century. On both, we need to take immediate action and plan to keep doing so for the ensuing decades. The current financial market crisis and economic depression are fresh and recent. All three issues call

for immediate and decisive action, and they can all be resolved jointly with worldwide efforts that are focused and coordinated. Before we go on to the shorter term, it is crucial to comprehend the scope and gravity of the two long-term problems as well as their close connection. Unmanaged climate change would irreparably harm development prospects in many parts of the world, and climate change action that impedes development will never create the global coalition needed to support such policies. We are all too aware of how poverty affects people worldwide. The potential dangers posed by climate change, to which the poor would be more exposed to and vulnerable, may be less generally acknowledged. Our generation will be defined by how we respond to climate change and the fight against poverty.

### Causes of Ecological Crisis

- A species or population faces an ecological or environmental crisis when changes to its environment threaten their ability to survive. Among the significant causes are:
- Abiotic ecological factor degradation (for example: - increase of temperature, less significant rainfalls)
- increased predation-related stressors
- Increase in the number of people (i.e., overpopulation)
- Rare ecological crises are viewed as a potential catalyst for quick development in the evolutionary theory of punctuated equilibrium.

### Objective of the Study

- This study emphasizes on, if Vedic practices are followed today so we can save the environment.
- This study is critically analyzing Vedic practices of eco consciousness.

### Vedic Practices of Eco-Consciousness

#### Rivers

The importance of rivers was well appreciated by our Indian ancestors. They told the people that they should respect Ganga as much as they respect their own mother. Once people started respecting river as a mother it is quite clear that they are not going to pollute its water, that is how eco consciousness or environmental sensitivity was inculcated among people and this is well reflected in the following shloka.

"यावदस्थीनी गंगायां तिष्ठन्ति पुरुषस्य तु।

तावद् वर्षसहस्राणि स्वर्गलोके महीयते।।" (भगवद् गीता बटारा उधार)

#### English Translation:

If the name of Mother Ganga is uttered even from a distance of a hundred yojanas, the accumulated sins of all the three births of the soul would be destroyed. (Bhagavat Geeta batara udhar)

#### Animals

Through the centuries Human life has always depended upon animals for food and other tasks. Animals provide meaning and importance to the human existence. Even today despite all the technologies at our disposal you cannot simply dispose existence of anyone's right and ancient Vedic people understood this fact very well and they knew that animals are important part of our life and therefore they sanctified their presence in the following shloka.

अनागोहत्या वै भीमा कन्ये मा नो गामश्वं पुरुषं वधीः । अथर्ववेद १०. १. २९

#### English Translation:

It is a great sin to kill innocents. Do not kill cows, horses, and people. - Atharvaveda 10. 1. 29

In this shloka it is quite clear that people, horses and cows are put on the equal level. In other words, murdering or killing horses or cow is as heinous as that of killing people, this makes it clear that our ancestors loved animals like human beings they were not strangers but they were considered to be part and parcel of the family itself, once you start loving animals as your family members then the question of killing them does not arise at all this is something great that the modern humanity must understand. When we talk of protecting the wildlife we heard to remind ourselves over and over the great wisdom of ancient India where this artificial distinction between one life and the other life did not exist. We all are the different forms of manifestation of that great life the brahma, therefore the environmental degradation was something unknown in the ancient time. Today many of the species are endangered just because of the unending greed of human beings, once we believe that they are not separate and they are not inferior to human beings this kind of consciousness will go a long way in protecting our environment.

घृतं दुहानामदिति जनायाग्रे मा हिगंसीः - यजुर्वेद १३. ४९

**English Translation:**

Do not kill cows and bulls who always deserve to be protected - Yajurveda 13. 49

आरे गोहा नहा धो वो अस्तु - ऋग्वेद ७ ५६ १७

**English Translation:**

Cow slaughter is a heinous crime equivalent to a human murder and those who commit this crime should be punished. - Rigveda 7. 53. 17

“तस्मात् यज्ञात् सर्वहृतः संवृत्तं पृसादज्यं पसुन्तनसक्रे वायब्यनारण्यं ग्राम्यश्च ये” । (ऋग्वेद, १०/९०/८) २.

Hinduism upholds the principle of animal and bird protection. According to Hindu mythology, these animals' lives are made secure by the gods' fourteen avatars (births), which include Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Nrisingha, and others. On the eve of Nag Panchami, the snake is worshipped, while on the occasion of the Balabhadrapuja, cows are praised. According to the Vedas, it is forbidden to kill some animals and birds that behave as scavengers by consuming dead animals and trash. Today, it is necessary to adhere to the fundamentals of the ancient era.

**Trees**

Our ancestors did not make any distinction between human beings, plants and the trees or animals, in their opinion trees and plants were also the extension of our own existence. In order to inculcate love for the trees they imparted holiness to them, symbolically they would say that the plant of tulsi or the tree of pipal should be worshipped. Once people started worshipping the tree or tulsi plant they form a sort of attachment with those trees, it is a matter of common knowledge that if you have an attachment either with the person or a tree you are less likely to create any harm to that and that is why the deforestation was almost unknown in the ancient time. Therefore, this is an important lesson that has to be learned by the modern people if they really want to develop eco consciousness.

अश्वत्थो देवसदनस्तृतीयस्यामितो दिवि ।

तत्रामृतस्य चक्षणं देवाः कुष्ठमवन्वत ॥- अथर्ववेद ५.४.३

**English Translation:**

It was prohibited to cut Vatvruksh because gods live in this tree and no disease where this tree is situated. - Atharvaveda 5.4.3

Now a day's according to modern scientist the peepal and Vatvruksh consume carbon dioxide from the air and give us oxygen and thus balance the air.

### English Translation:

This Rigvedic hymn says that don't cut the trees, because they remove pollution.

तुलस्याः पल्लवं विष्णोः शिरस्यारोपितं कलौ । आरोपयति सर्वाणि श्रेयांसि वरगस्तके ।

### English Translation:

Tulsi leaves were offered on the head of Shri Vishnu, that is, Tulsi is the best boon for the devotee by God. (Tulsi Stotram 8)

The tulsi plant is revered. During the Samudra Manthan ritual, some nectar drops are said to have fallen to the ground, according to Skandapuram (churning of ocean). They were used to create Tulsi. Shri Brahma presented it to Shri Vishnu. Since Shri Vishnu enjoys tulsi, it is offered to him specifically. When discussing the significance of tulsi, Padmapuran argues that giving flowers made of gold, stones, or pearls is not even one-sixteenth as significant as giving Tulsi! Sight, touch, meditation, reverence, planting, and consumption of Tulsi can erase sins from numerous ages.

### Sun

This shloka explains the significance of presence of right temperature on the earth. Without the heat of the sun various worms and insects would have destroyed human life itself. It well known scientific conclusion that the right degree of temperature that earth receives from the sun has made the life possible.

उद्यन् आदित्य रश्मिभिः शीष्णो रोगमनीनशः ।

Atharvaveda 9.8.22

### English Translation:

The rising sun destroys the diseases of the head with its rays.

### Environment

Vedic people were aware of the role of environment in our life, they knew that without the natural objects like rivers the sun, trees even animals the survival of human beings is impossible therefore they always cared for the conservation of environment. Modern research has

establish the point that interdependence among various species is a key to sustainable development.

मधु वाता ऋतायते मधु क्षरन्ति सिन्धवः ।

माध्वीर्नः सन्त्वोषधीः ॥

Rigveda, 1/90/6

### English Translation:

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.

### Literature Review

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## Conclusion

The present study has made an attempt to understand the working of eco consciousness in the Vedic times. The study has made an attempt to bring to the front various practices adopted by the Vedic people to conserve and preserve environment. They did not consider environment merely to be the matter of satisfying the requirements of human beings, they believed that entire environment was sanctified; each specie how so ever tiny it may be, each plant, each tree every element of nature be it water or fire had its own peculiar identity and existence interdependence and mutual interaction is the only key for sustainable development. Vedic people sought to integrate eco consciousness with the routine of people by inculcating in them the simple practices of respecting and worshipping flora and fauna without which life is impossible. Far from being considered such practices as superstitions, they must be regarded as a part of our ancestor's traditional wisdom that enabled them to live life without causing damage to the environment. If the Vedic practices of conservation of the environment are revived today, they are sure to provide an effective solution to the eco crisis. It is in this domain that Indian traditional knowledge can show the way forward to the world.

