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## Environmental Awareness with Reference to Vedas and Puranas: A Study

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### ANNOTATION

The environment, which is everything that naturally surrounds us and influences how we live our everyday lives on earth, is something that we are all very acquainted with. Everything, including the oxygen we breathe, the water we use on a daily basis, and the vegetation, creatures, and other living things in our immediate surroundings, is a part of our environment. There has been a constant reliance on environment ever since man first appeared on the planet. Humans have never been able to dominate their surroundings, and this is true even today. Instead, they are heavily affected and governed by natural occurrences. This study aims at exploring the environment conservation as presented in the ancient Literatures; study the environmental awareness as found in the Vedas. It also discusses the environmental awareness as found in the Puranas.

**KEYWORDS:** environment, awareness.

**Introduction:** The idea of ecology was one of transcendence to the old Indians. According to Indian philosophy writings, all of creation resides within the same spectrum of existence but differs in terms of awareness. The allusions in the old texts reflect this idea of unity. For the weather, water, oxygen, dirt, ground, vegetation, trees, and creatures, they revered nature. Through their artistic creations that emphasised the beauty of nature, they revered these as sacred and expressed their reverence. The ancients were taught to only use the natural resources required for survival and no other purposes by these moral principles that showed a sincere respect for the environment. This idea was given such weight that to act differently amounted to committing a serious transgression that could not be atoned for.

It can be said that pre-vedic Indus valley culture people in northern India about 5,000 years ago had an ancient knowledge of the ecosystem. This is clear from the historical data collected from the principal towns of that culture, Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. Their building of open homes, clean streets, numerous wells, toilets, public showers, and enclosed subterranean sewers demonstrates their keen knowledge of cleanliness and sanitation. Numerous inscriptions discovered there demonstrate their adoration of plants as a type of tree deity devotion.

Respect for the ecosystem has always been a fundamental aspect of Hindu culture, dating back to the early phases of the Hindu civilisation. Our ancestors believed that God was present around them because of the natural world, and they saw the powers of nature that influenced their lives as being expressions of the Supreme Being, also known as Brahman. People revere nature, including forests, mountains, waterways, the

cosmos, and the metaphysical realm. All of it is now lost. Hinduism has the power to prevent worldwide extinction. Hinduism is capable and powerful. But today, no one seems to care about our outstanding ones. In its Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, Sutras, and other holy writings, Hinduism makes numerous allusions to the veneration of the deity in nature. In order to honour their waterways, mountains, forests, creatures, and the land, millions of Hindus repeat Sanskrit prayers every day.

**Statement of the Problem:** Environment is granted significance in Indian folklore and epics by being revered as gods. The Vedas are the main sources of pathways for mistaken environment to attain real viability as well as moral improvement for the economic man. It takes a holistic approach to human excellence and contentment, embracing both material and spiritual ideals in their unique and symbiotic union. The Vedas will help to educate a person's interior spirit so that they can uphold moral principles, discover their real mission in life, and protect the environment. From the standpoint of growth, the Vedic societies are distinctive. Each predatory power is met with equal energy by nature and the surroundings. Early on, environmental protection was regulated by a number of religious and societal traditions. Every element of nature was revered and given the greatest significance by the populace. Therefore the problem arose here is “Environmental Awareness with Reference to Vedas and Puranas: A Study”

**Significance of the Study:** Since we are all acquainted with what the world is, it is everything that organically encompasses us. There has been a constant reliance on environment ever since man first appeared on the planet. Indian writing from antiquity contains a wealth of information about the world. The fundamentals of natural balance were first set millennia ago by the Vedic, Puranic, Jain, and Bhuddist faiths. Being mainly devotees of nature, the Vedic peoples were very concerned with the ecosystem and its administration. There are many allusions to a wide variety of vegetation and wildlife in the Vedas, Brahmanas, and Upnishad. The current research will be very important because it examines the environmental consciousness contained in the Vedas and Puranas.

**Objectives:** The present study aims at the following objectives-

- To study the environment conservation as presented in the ancient Literatures
- To study the environmental awareness as found in the Vedas
- To discuss the environmental awareness as found in the Puranas

**ANCIENT LITERATURE ON ENVIRONMENT CONSERVATION:** Indra (who is regarded as the God of rain, thunderstorms, lightning, and battle), Agni, Varuna, Vayu, Maruta, Surya, and goddesses like Usha, Aditi, Saraswati, etc. are some of the Rigvedic deities that are initially connected to various elements of nature. The Pancha Mahabhutas (five great elements), according to Hindu thought, formed a network of life, which is manifested in the structure and interdependence of the universe and the human body. According to Hinduism, the five fundamental components of the environment—air, space, water, fire, and earth—are all descended from Prakriti, the original energy. The bhutayajna, one of the five rituals required of a Hindu householder, involved daily gifts of sustenance to animals, birds, and other creatures, likely in an effort to preserve a natural equilibrium. Many puranic texts, including Skandapurana, offered recommendations for the kinds of plants that could be grown and in what directions. For instance, according to Skandapurana, the middle should be seeded with a Vilva tree, and the other four corners should each have a Vilva tree. Four Banyan trees, 25 Ashoka trees arranged in a circular, an Amla tree on one side, and four Banyan trees in each of the four ends should all be planted. The Varaha Purana says that he never enters purgatory if he places an Asvatha, a Pichumarda, a Banyan, ten Jessicas, two pomegranates, a Panchamra, or five mangoes in order to

raise consciousness among the populace. It is amazing how the people of the Vedic era venerated all of nature's elements and beings by meticulously protecting them. They viewed nature and the ecosystem holistically. "May the waterways stay pure, do not damage the waters; earth is my mother, I am her son; do not harm the ecosystem, the water and the vegetation... Invoking heavenly assistance to honour and safeguard the ecosystem, this Vedic supplication declares that tranquilly is to the weather, the soil, the harvests, and flora.

Primal nature worshippers, the Vedic people focused primarily on cultivation and livestock care, and they were deeply concerned with the ecosystem and its administration. The Vedic literatures, including the Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyak, Upanishad, Samhitās, and Upavedas, are replete with allusions to various environmental features. The Vedas detailed a wide variety of vegetation and wildlife and urged people to maintain nature, defend it, and take care of the ecosystem and the natural world. They suggested creating a comfortable atmosphere with sweet breezes, delicious waterways that flowed, sweet plants, sweet days and nights, sweet soil particles, sweet fruit-bearing trees, sweet light, and healthy livestock for the advantage of people and other living things. The understanding of seasons among the Vedic peoples encouraged cultivation, and the Rig Veda specifies five seasons. The Atharva Veda places a strong emphasis on water cleanliness and discusses how to safeguard household livestock as well as wildlife. The earliest poignant environmental prayer is without a doubt the Vedic song, the Prithivi sukta, from the Arthava Veda, which is devoted to the earth deity. All of the Vedic educational establishments were situated in the jungle, a tranquil setting that fostered religious concepts and wise reasoning.

### The environment in vedas hymn:

The Rig, Sama, Yajur, and Atharva are four of the Vedas that are known to us. We learn natural principles and protection from these Vedic Shloks. People in the Vedic era valued the ecosystem and practised environmental principles in daily living. Some points are ....

*"Do not harm the environment, do not harm the water and the flora, earth is my mother, I am her son, may the waters remain fresh, do not harm the waters—-. Tranquility be to the atmosphere, to the waters, to the crops and vegetation."*

*"mātā bhūmih putruhan prthivya:"*

This Vedic prayer invokes divine intervention to bliss and protect the environment. To protect environment the Rig Veda says-

*"madhu vātāḥ rītāyate madhu kṣaranti*

*sindhavaḥ mādviḥ naḥ santuṣadhi.*

*madhu naktamutusāsu madhumatpārthiva rajah*

*madhu kṣorastu suryah mādhirgābo bhavantu naḥ"* (Rigveda, 1/90/6,7,)

"kincideva tu viprāya dadyadasthiman vadhe.  
Anasthananaiḥ himsayah pranayamena  
śudhyati."

(Manu -samhita-11/142)

Hinduism upholds the principle of animal and avian protection. According to Hindu legend, these creatures' lives are made safe by the gods' fourteen avatars (births), which include Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Nrisingha, and others. On the night of Nagpanchami, the snake is venerated, and on the occasion of the Balabhadrapuja, cows are praised. According to the Vedas, it is forbidden to kill certain animals and birds that function as scavengers by consuming dead animals and trash. It is need of the day to follow in the root steps of the ancient period-

In the Bhagavad Gita, lord Krishna says that "this Prakriti of mine is divided eight fold thus: earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, intellect and also egoism.

*Bhumir apo'nalo vayuh kham mano buddhir eva ca  
ahaikara ityam me bhinna prakrtir astadha.*

The exterior and interior components of the world are both necessary for human existence. Earth and water are examples of exterior factors. whereas interior elements primarily include the intellect, air, energy, and space. As mother earth bestows affection on all living things on it, the Atharvaveda's love for the earth is exceptional (Prithivisukta). "mata Bhumi Putrohom Prirhivyah," which translates as "Earth is my mother, I am her son," is how the Vedic seer gravely proclaims the lasting familial loyalty of humankind to Mother Earth. The term "Mother Earth" is used to refer to all of nature's offerings, but especially to the plants and vegetables she has given us. Her gifts are desired for abundance in all spheres of life and the accomplishment of all just goals. It is agreed upon that humans will protect the Earth from all environmental transgression and will not permit her to be subjugated. One of the songs contains a heartfelt supplication for the protection and conservation of the hills, the snow-clod plains, and the entire brown, black, and scarlet land, which India has well protected.

**Hindu Purans and Environment:** The ecosystem, vegetation, and wildlife were also very important to the Puranas. They believed that plants could experience joy and sadness (Vidyasagara 1876: 231 ff.) and believed that planting trees was fortunate. A tree is said to grant the benefits of having a boy to an individual without children. The fact that trees like pipal, bel, ber, neem, and others are listed in the Padma Purana as being the home of deity and should not be chopped down suggests that people honoured trees as a result of their attempts to preserve forests and flora through their religious beliefs. Even the execution sentence was outlined in the Agni Purana for wetland contamination. The Manusmriti forbade violence to animals and said that whoever kills a cow will perish as many times as there are hairs on its skin. A great concern for the protection and safeguarding of nature and the natural world can be seen in the fact that all ceremonies, rituals, and practises were created by humans, as were the epics, Puranas, Dharmasutras, Dharmashastras, etc.

**Manusmriti and Environment:** An old legal document known as the Manusmriti forbade animal abuse and stated that whoever kills a cow will perish as many times as there are hairs on its skin.(Krishna 2017, 137). It states that since water is considered to be communal property rather than individual property, no one should contaminate the water. Additionally, he discusses atmospheric pollution. It is forbidden to toss impure materials into a fire because the fumes they produce may be toxic. Going for atonement after committing an environmental transgression is the greatest environmental ethics according to Manu; a high level of self-punishment includes self-realization. For an elderly man, an expectant woman, or a kid, this penalty is lenient in cases of pressing necessity. A further statement from the Manusmriti is that "He who harms innocent beings in order to satisfy his own desires never finds happiness, neither in life nor in death." The earth's

vegetation and wildlife as well as species in the heavens and under the water are among these harmless entities.(Krishna)

**Conclusion:** The theory of environmental management in ancient India was primarily codified in ancient precepts found in numerous writings and holy texts. The early Indian perspective on nature was a synthesis of societal consciousness, natural principles, and spiritual and intellectual thought. Early Indians gave nature top priority after understanding its significance and worth. They also developed strategies to prevent environmental contamination and safeguard nature from being destroyed. The environmental principles of native protection applied not only to the average person but also to monarchs and emperors. In our primitive civilization, environmental protection was highly valued. Ancient Indians had a keen understanding of survival and the environment. It aids in resolving particular environmental issues as well as the contemporary concepts that are very useful today. Environmental preservation, which was important in our old Indian culture, has now become its own topic with an interdisciplinary emphasis, and it is imperative to educate the next generation about it.

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