CHAPTER- IV

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN INDIAN
PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE

In the previous chapter, we have discussed the relationship between sustainable development and future generations in detail. And we know that if development is to be sustainable in the long-term, there needs to be a balance between the four dimensions and we have already discussed these dimensions in the previous chapter. We all know that environmental ethics is one of the most important modern environmental conservation and sustainable development tools. It is also a global issue to its implications in development, but some people in the underdeveloped and developed countries are not aware of its importance. Considering the necessity of environmental ethics, it is very easy for all to carry out their duties and responsibilities properly that may lead to sustainable development which we could hope for a healthy environment for our generations as well as future generations.

While discussing future generations, we assert that we have a duty to conserve natural resources because they are essential to all human life both at present and in the indefinite future. Here the moral emphasis fall less on our responsibilities to other species or to nature in itself, and more on the duties we have towards it, in virtue of the obligations we have towards future generations. Whereas obligations to future generations have major significance, they can also affect choices that do not have their major impact on future generations. Say for example, if one has a choice between allocating funds to medical programme providing acute care for persons presently ill or for preventive programmes, obligations to future generation might incline in favour of funding preventive programmes.

4.1: Sustainable Development, Future Generation and Culture:

In our previous chapter, we have discussed that culture is a key issue and one of the dimensions of sustainable development. The aim of culture in sustainable development is to raise the significance of culture and its factors in local, regional and global sustainable development. Culture is an important aspect of sustainable development, as it refers to how do we understand and appreciate natural resources and each other. However, the role and meaning of culture within the framework of
sustainable development is relatively unclear both in science and policy. Culture has been treated as a component of social sustainability and sometimes as a fourth pillar of sustainable development. However, the term culture is becoming more powerful along with the increasing ecological, economic and social challenges to meet the objectives of sustainable development. Within the community development, culture is defined broadly as being “the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes the modes of life, the fundamental rights of human beings, value systems, traditions and beliefs”\textsuperscript{117}. The accumulation of cultural capital, both tangible and intangible, is what we inherit from past generations and what we will pass onto our future generations. Indian philosophy and culture have strong foundation for environmental protection and it has a holistic approach towards environment, sustainable development and future generations. Indian culture shows greater concern and deep respect towards nature and emphasizes the holiness and purity of life for both at present and future.

Indian culture is the culture of various religions living together in harmony. The cultural and spiritual heritage of this civilization is both vast as well as rich. But there is nothing sectarian or regional about it. It is so universal in its appeal and so wide-ranging in its approach that it belongs to the whole world. Its setting is no doubt Indian, but its content is such as to cover all aspects of human life, irrespective of geographical units and historical expressions. It is both universal and timeless and, as such, applies to peoples of all ages and of all countries. A good environmental sense has been one of the fundamental features of India’s ancient philosophy. History reveals the fact that the civilization of India had grown up in close association with nature. There has always been a compassionate concern for every form of life in the Indian mind. This concern is projected through the doctrine of \textit{Dharma}, preached by every religious school that flowered in our land. \textit{Vaiśeṣika Sūtra} defines: ‘\textit{Yataḥ abhyudaya-niḥśreyasa-siddhiḥ saḥ dharmaḥ}’\textsuperscript{118}

“\textit{Dharma} is that from which results the accomplishment of exaltation and of the Supreme Good.” ‘\textit{Abhyudaya}’ means knowledge of the essences. ‘\textit{Niḥśreyasam}’ is final cessation of pain. That from which both of them result is dharma. The compound


of the two words, rendered as ‘niḥśreyasa’ by the path of ‘abhyudaya,’ belongs to that class of compounds which are formed by the elision of the middle term: or it is a tat-purva compound ablative formed. This dharma will be later on described as being characterised by forbearance. If it is the effect of constant contemplation and other practices of yoga and is the same as adṛstam (the invisible, potential after effects of actions or Merit and Demerit), then it is producible by positive performances. Riṣis of the Vedic era perceived the value of maintaining a harmonious relationship between the needs of human and spectacular diversity of the Universe. To them, nature was not only the mother that sustained life but also the abode of divinity. For them sanctity of life includes not only the efforts to seek salvation (mokṣa), but also to seek it by developing a sacred attitude towards spiritual significance of nature. Human beings in Indian culture, was instructed to maintain harmony with nature and to show reverence to the presence of divinity in nature. So there is divinity or spirituality in nature.

True philosophy must be simple and at the same time capable of explaining the vital problems which science can’t explain. Indian seers do not believe in theories, which cannot be carried into practice in everyday life. What they believe is applicable to life and therefore, Indian philosophy had been during these thousands of years of existence, truly practical. “Its chief concern has not been to conceive a philosophical scheme like a toy machine to play with, but to make of it a chariot in which man could ride.” According to Radhakrishnan in the Vedas, we find a deliberate attempt to enunciate the ultimate truth through sacred incantations. Further it was articulated as rituals for repeatedly reminding humans of the need to sustain and foster ecological balance.

Indian culture and civilization deals with an ethics of environment that is concerned with a harmonious relationship between human and nature. This culture seeks to identify and evaluate the distinctive ecological attitudes, values and practices of human beings by making clear their relation with the intellectual and ethical thought within scripture, ritual, myth, symbols, cosmology, and sacrament.


Due to dualistic and materialistic philosophy in the West we learn that we are essentially different from others, we are superior to others and others are inferior to us, we are the ruler and others are the ruled, we are the enjoyer (bhoktā) and food-object of the world is enjoyed (bhogyā). (Bhoktā is the jivātmā who is the enjoyer) who is the inner self of the object of enjoyment (bhogyam is the body obtained from parkriti). Owing to this damage we use to think that the so-called flora and fauna are essentially different from us, we are superior to them, we are ruler and they are the ruled, we are to enjoy and they are to be enjoyed. We may consider this attitude as anthropocentrism.

In our day to day life, we in fact maintain a double standard behaviour. Human beings are not satisfied unless and until they beat a non-pet cat that has taken his milk. But one and the same human become highly satisfied by feeding milk to his pet cat. Similarly, a man gets angry with his family members if he sees that even small amount of water from the tank of his own house is misused. One and the same man, on the other hand does not bother to close the municipal water tap even if he sees that water is flowing hour after hour without any use. We behave in opposite ways because we think that this is mine and that is not. This type of thinking is the outcome mainly of the Western dualistic and materialistic teaching. So, far as our discussion is concerned, probably we have discovered the root cause of environmental degradation. The question remains, how can the root cause be eliminated? How can people be made free from such influence in question? In reply to this question it can be said that as the state of darkness can be wiped out by its opposite state of light, so the influence of dualistic and materialistic teaching can be prevented by the influence of its opposite type of teaching i.e., monistic and spiritualistic. The individualistic or purely subjective attitude can be eliminated through the holistic one. This type of lesson can be given through Indian ideology underlying in the Vedas, the Upaniṣad, the Purāṇas, the Mahābhārata, Śrimad Bhagavadgītā, and Vedānta philosophy.

In the past two decades philosophy, especially Western philosophy, took an applied turn. Philosophers at present are venturing into the value dimensions of science and technology, engineering and business. The ethics of environment in particular, is widely discussed by philosophers and humanist, scientists and statesmen. Discussions on environmental ethics in recent Western philosophy generally centre on the following issues:

(a) Whether ethics is purely human-centred or anthropocentric,
Whether the scope of ethics include all sentient creatures, not just humans alone,

(c) Whether ethics is ecocentric, i.e., whether non-human objects such as plants, animals, rocks, and rivers also have a moral standing.

The positions of Indian philosophy on these three issues are as follows:
(a) Ethics is not just human centred, but *Dharma*-centred;
(b) All life is sacred and ethical relationship between humans and animals is one of equality, and
(c) Natural objects like rivers and hills, trees and rocks are sacred and therefore deserve respect. Indian philosophy maintains that ‘humans are in nature ’ and rejects other positions like ‘humans against nature’, ‘humans and nature’, ‘humans guide nature’, etc.

Indian philosophy does not accept ethics as ‘man-given’ or ‘God-given’; nor is ethics ‘human centred’ or ‘God centred’. Ethics in India is dharma centred. As early as the *Rigveda* morality was conceived of as an aspect of *Ṛta*. Ṛta is the eternal law of the universe which, when applied to nature, becomes natural law and when applied to living beings, become moral law. From the time of *Upaniṣad*, the Vedic concept of Ṛta becomes the concept of dharma. The nature of dharma is said to be subtle, says the *Mahābhārata*.122 Dharma has the same connotation as Ṛta, but the implication and application of dharma is widely discussed in later Indian literature. Dharma means ‘that which holds together’. It is the eternal law which governs every aspect of universe. It is the very foundation of the universe itself. It is all encompassing, manifesting itself in every aspect of nature or life. Even God does not give us dharma; he is the ‘immutable protector of the eternal dharma.’ The *Gitā* explains:

Tvam aksaraṁ paramaṁ veditavyaṁ
Tvam asya viśvasya paraṁ nidhānam
Tvam avyayaḥ śāśvata dharma goptā
Sanātanas tvaṁ puruṣo mato me. 123

This means, You are the Supreme Ultimate Truth knowable by the Vedic scriptures. You are the only support of this universe. You are the imperishable

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preserver of eternal righteousness. You are the everlasting, Supreme Ultimate Personality. This is my conviction.

Indian ethics is dharma-centred, therefore, not anthropocentric but universal in nature including in its fold not only humans but also all living beings and the physical environment. Starting with the assumption that human beings are the paradigm for having good and interest, recent discussions in the West raise the following question: ‘what kind of beings can have good, interests, preferences, etc.?’ because Indian ethics starts with the paradigm that existence itself has value, the question whether non-humans have intrinsic value or are conferred value by humans is never raised. The Yajur Veda, for example says: ‘the person who sees all animate and inanimate creation in God, and God pervading all material objects, falls not a prey to doubt’.

\begin{verbatim}
Yastu Sarvāṇi Bhūtāni ātmayevānupaśyati, 
Sarva bhūteṣu cātmānam tato navijigupaste, 
Yasmin sarvāṇi bhutāni atmaivābhudvi jānatah, 
Tatrako mohaḥ sokaḥ ekatvam anupaśyataḥ.\textsuperscript{124} (Yajur Veda 40.6)
\end{verbatim}

This means, He who sees all beings in the very Self and Self in all beings feels no hatred or contempt or revulsion towards any object or being because there is no other. For the man of realisation all beings become the self, for such a man of unitary experience there is no delusion or sorrow. Such a man of realisation becomes free from ignorance and sorrow.\textsuperscript{125}

In Indian thought, the fundamental moral belief which governs the relation not only between human but also human and non-human species is the concept of ahimsā. The concept of ahimsā or nonviolence as it developed in Indian culture is closely linked with notions of karma. Karma means one’s actions in sacrificial process. The first principle of Indian ethics is ahimsā paramodharmaḥ, means ‘ahimsā is the supreme religion’; and mā himsyāt sarvabhūtāni, means ‘do not kill any living being’. The expression sarvabhūtāni is important here as it refers to all living beings and not to human beings alone. The reason for this ethical commandment implies the doctrine of ‘unity of life’, a doctrine which recognizes not only ‘brotherhood of humans’, but also brotherhood of all living creatures. It is the same life principle which exists in all life forms i.e. from amoeba to human. The life forms do not differ in kind but only in the degree in the process of evolution.

\textsuperscript{125} N. Sahebrao Genu. Axiological Approach to the Vedas, Northern Book Centre.1986, P. 102.
One may wonder, what is the nature of this life principle which connects all living creatures, including human? The response is it is consciousness. Even the essence of Brahman is also consciousness. Thus, God, human and all living creatures has the same essence which is consciousness. Indian culture, therefore, does not maintain ‘man is made in the image of God’, as it maintains, that ‘God, man and all living creatures have the same essence, viz. consciousness’. In their essential nature, God is identical with human and all living creatures.

4.2: Environmental Insight in some Indian Philosophical System:

Indian tradition provides a solid foundation for adequate concern and deep respect for nature, biosphere and ecosphere. Indian environmental thinking reaches its apex in the philosophical Sūtras of the six school of Darśana, or a way of life. Let us discuss the ecological insight in some of the best known schools i, e., Nyāya, Sāṁkhaya, and Advita Vedānta. These schools are intended to regulate our conduct in tune with the cosmic order.

The Indian philosophical thinkers see nature as root of all existence. Nature is considered as an entity from which everything has evolved. So human being is a part of nature. Nature is not considered merely a physical world which is separate from human. Human is not considered as essentially spiritual and alien to nature. A closer examination of traditional Indian philosophical systems reveals their complex and often sophisticated nature. In this wide variety of beliefs and attitude, human, animals, plants, God and earth are all subject to cosmic laws and the place of humankind in the universe is variable. Let us explain a brief environmental concern in Nyāya Darśana.

Nyāya:

Nyāya philosophy is primarily concerned with the conditions of correct thinking and the means of acquiring a true knowledge of reality. We are taught in our schools that Acharya Jagdish Chandra Bose discovered that plants have life. But in Kiranāvali Udayana shows that trees have soul. He opines:

\[ \text{Vṛkṣādayaḥ pratiniyata- bhoktradhisṭhitāḥ,} \]
\[ \text{Jivana-marana-svapna-prajāgaranā-rogā-bheṣaja-prayogabīja-saajasīyānubandhā-} \]
\[ \text{nukūlopama-pratikālāpagamādibhyāḥ, prasiddha-śarīravat}^{126}. \]

This means,

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‘Trees have sentient agent in them, because have life, death sleep, awakening, disease, application of medicine, seed, feeling for the members of its class, approaching favourable and going away from unfavourable,’ like any known human body. Udayana further says that one need not doubt whether plants do have these features noted in the ground (hetu). Because plants do have life (ādhyātmikavāyu). In fact he inferred it from the fact that trees sucks water poured at its root. This sucking is also inferred from the growth and healing up of cuts in the trees which are directly verifiable. If this chain of cause and effect relationships is not accepted then that will demolish the entire structure of reality, because that will imply that even without a cause there can be an effect.\textsuperscript{127}

Further, in connection with the inference of sentient agent on the basis of the comparison of human body with a house Udayana points that one must accept a sentient agent in plants. This clarifies the form of inference as follows:

\begin{quote}
Śarīrāvayava-vṛddhi-ksatabhanga-saṁrohane prayatnavannimittake, vṛddhitvāt, saṁrohaṇatvāc ca grhakudya-vṛddhivat tat-saṁrohaṇavac ca\textsuperscript{128}.
\end{quote}

This means, the growth and repair of the parts of the body are caused by some sentient agents, because it is a growth and because it is a repair, like the growing of the walls of a house and like the repair of them. Like Śrīdhara, he too anticipates a fallacy called anaikāntika in the case of plants and trees where there is hetu (vṛddhi etc.). But there is no sādhya (i.e., ātman). Thus, he firmly refutes by saying that in case of trees, there has to be a particular sentient agent\textsuperscript{129}. Udayana does not bring God to explain the phenomenon of growth and healing up of cuts in a tree.

\textit{Saṁkhya:}

\textit{Saṁkhya} the most prominent school, is actively engaged in disclosing the fact of nature, has prominently explained that the proper attitude for the science of nature is detachment from the sense appetites, so as to let the subjectivity of nature appear as it is, before it has been distorted by human interference.

According to \textit{Saṁkhya} Philosophy, \textit{Prakṛti} is the material cause of everything. It is the vital source of every being. Human beings as conscious beings are conditioned by the natural world. The interaction between physical world and human being is a

\textsuperscript{127} Ibid. P.40. “Na ca ete sandigdhāsiddhāḥ, ādhyātmikavāyu-sambandhāt. So’pi mūle niṣiktānām apām dohadasya ca pārthivasya dhātor abhyādānāt. Tad api vṛddhi-bhagnaṣatasanrohaṇābhhyāmiti. Anyathā kāraṇam vinā kāryānupatti-prasange sarvaṃ idam āmūlavisīrṇam āpadyeta iti saṁksepaḥ.”

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid. 89. Dinakarī on Siddhāntamuktāvalī verse No. 38. Paraphrases ādhyātmikavāyu as prāṇa.

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid. Na ca etad vṛkṣādigata-vṛddhyādinā anaikāntikam, tatrāpi bhoktr-viṣeṣā-dhiṣṭhānasaya iṣṭatvāt.
logical necessity. Prakṛiti is necessary for manifestation of consciousness. The Mula Prakṛiti is constituting of three guṇas, i.e., sattva (luminosity), raja (activity), and tama (turgidity) and these three are the source of entire process of evolution. These guṇas pervade the whole beings. They evolve into this creation that is full of diversities; because of reflection of cosmic consciousness (puruṣa), unity evolves into diversity. Like rest of the creation, human beings are one of the evolutes. So, the creation is full of diversities and contained in Mula Prakṛti. The only difference between the objects is of a degree of guṇas.

What is environmentally noteworthy in Sāṁkhya’s theory of evolution is that, though the universal is viewed dualistically, spirit and matter are held together in a teleological balance. Further, unlike some systems in which spirit and matter are polarised as good and evil, the Sāṁkhya system suggest no such moral dualism. To the contrary, both the design and function of Prakṛti are aimed at the liberation of Puruṣa. Sāṁkhya Kārika mentions:

“Vatsa vivrid dvi nimittam kshīrasya yathā pravrithir ajñasya
Puruṣa vimoksha nimittam tathā pravṛttiḥ pradhānasya”\(^\text{130}\)

“As the insentient milk flows out for the growth of the calf, so does nature act towards the emancipation of spirit.” Hiriyanna comments: the noteworthy point here is the physical accompaniment of man as well as his environment is either hostile or indifferent to his attaining the ideal of freedom. Through them rather, Prakṛti is ever educating him into a fuller knowledge of himself with a view to securing that result. Nature therefore, cannot in the end, be said to enslaves spirit. In fact, it behaves towards man as a “veritable fairy Godmother.”\(^\text{131}\)

**Vedānta:**

The modern society whether national or international has enough resources and technology ensures the existence of every human beings on earth. The physical, intellectual, material, and spiritual, inputs are necessary for full and healthy life. But this life also has a position in its expansion or development. In this context, the necessity for an alternative philosophy of life becomes intense. And because of the universal values that it enshrines, the Vedānta represents precisely an integrated and


universal philosophy. *Vedānta* is basically based upon the great source of knowledge, the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavad Gītā*, a testimony to the magnificent spiritual endeavour to solve the problems of present society. It provides insights which can be of crucial value for the survival of humanity in this nuclear age. The basic principles of *Vedānta* provide the framework for a philosophy to sustain the emerging global consciousness on our planet.

The first important concept of *vedāntic* knowledge is that all life is pervasive *Iśabhāsyam idam sarvam yat kiṅça jagatyāṁ jagat* i.e. whatever exists where ever it exists is permeated by the same divine power and force. This is in a way parallels the realization of modern science which rejects the incurable dichotomy between matter and energy and accepts whatever exists is really the same energy although it may appear in different form of matter, particle or wave. So the theory, towards which the scientists are desperately proving, has already its spiritual counterparts in the concept of the all-pervasive *Brahman* of the *Upaniṣads*.

*Advaita Vedānta* recognizes *Brahman* as the ultimate reality, pure cosmic consciousness. Everything in this world has evolved from *Brahman* by operation of law of duality; *Brahman* expresses itself in the form of manifold particular *“Akoḥam an bahu bhavishyayam”*. He is not the creator of many, but became many. The whole world is pervaded with *Brahman*. The first verse of *Īśavāṣyoṇaḥ* says, “The entire creation is pervaded with God, regardless or visible or invisible, even a trace of creation, there is essential unity of all existence. Diversity is only phenomenal and unity is real. The divine is all pervasive. So every being in universe should get equal respect and we should not have a feeling of mastery over other species of universe. It concludes the idea that other things and beings do not have instrumental value for human being. The ideal ethical code expounded in the second part of this *Vedānta* Philosophy is that true enjoyment consists in renunciation and not in acquisition. The plausible inference in the light of *Vedānta*’s outlook is that human being is a part of nature and governed by basic laws of nature.”

### 4.3: Environmental Consciousness in Hinduism:

The word Hindu has two different senses. The term Hindu is inherently a non-Indian construct, first coined by Persians to describe those persons living on the other

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side of the Indus River. Another definition of Hinduism links the term to a cluster of religious faiths and theological schools that ascribe truth to the earliest of India’s sacred texts, the Vedas, the Upanişads, Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata, Gitā, Pūrāṇas, Manusmṛti, Arthaśāstra and the various texts and traditions stemming there from. This definition would include several million persons living outside India. It would, in a sense, also include many persons of non-Indian descent who ascribe to the monistic Vedānta philosophy and to the many practitioners of Indian physical and spiritual disciplines such as Yoga. The term Hindu could also refer in a general way to the people who live in the sub continental region.

Hinduism is a accumulation of religious, philosophical, and cultural notions and practices that originated in India, categorized by the belief in reincarnation, one absolute being of multiple manifestations, the law of cause and effect, following the path of righteousness, and the desire for liberation from the cycle of birth and death. Hinduism cannot be neatly slotted into any particular belief system. Unlike other religions, Hinduism is a way of life, a Dharma, that is, the law that governs all action. It has its own beliefs, tradition, advanced system of ethics, meaningful rituals, philosophy and theology. It also believes in truth, honesty, non-violence, celibacy, cleanliness, contentment, prayer, austerity, perseverance, penance, and pious company. Hinduism also worships spirits, trees, animals and even planets.

The question “how was the attitude of the Hindus towards nature” has been shaped by their religious attitudes to the creation and as well as towards the environment. What we need to understand is what role a Hindu once was playing with respect to human nature relationship. Hinduism suggests how should we treat other human beings and how are we related to nature. These values make up an ethical orientation of a sustainable society. Hinduism thus, generates an ethics, which underlies fundamental attitudes and values of Indian culture and society. This reminds us the famous statement of Lynn White when he says: “what people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them. Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny that is by religion”133.

For the contemporary thinkers, the important content of the current environmental crisis is spiritual and ethical. It is here where Hinduism plays a role in

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cooperation with other individuals, institutions and initiatives that have been engaged with environmental issues for a considerable period of time. Despite of some practical and theoretical differences with other religions it responds its ecological attitude in a remarkable and creative way. It not only rethinks its theology but also reorient its sustainable practices and long-term environmental commitments. In doing so, the very nature of Hinduism and of ethics is being challenged and modified. This is true, because of the reexamination of the other world views created by other religious believers and practices, which may be critical to our recovery of sufficient comprehensive cosmologies, broad conceptual frameworks, and effective environmental ethics in the twenty first century.

In ancient times, human race might first have perceived various events happening in his surroundings, such as, touch of solidity, an experience of heat, fluidity and pressure which he might have associated with their respective bedrocks, namely, earth, fire, water and air. Looking at the sun, the moon, stars and planets would have made him believe about their substratum, i.e. space, existence and significance. The powers of nature, like storm, thunder, rains were closely related with one another. The oldest and sacred Indian Literature Ṛgveda speaks about different deities associated with the said events as having similar characters. The first recognition of a cosmic order or law prevailing in nature under the guardianship of the highest God is to be found in the use of the word to denote the ‘order’ in the moral world as truth and ‘right’ and in the religious world as sacrifice. The earlier Vedic thinkers, had developed the concept of ‘cosmic’ nature, believed that there is a particular order in the universe and the nature has its own system of manifestation. The nature and natural powers move in a definite periphery and there is regularity in all natural phenomena. This unchangeable regularity of nature was termed as ‘Ṛta’ by Vedic thinkers. It is told that not only the natural phenomena, but the deities controlling them are produced by ‘Ṛta’.134 The unalterable law in nature later on developed into a complete law of action or Karmavāda which laid stress on the doctrine that ‘as you sow, so shall you reap’. Thus karma regulates not only the present but also the future; the chain of moral causation links the three points of time in a being’s existence, viz, past, present and future.

One of the most fundamental doctrines of Indian religious thought is the doctrine of *karma*. It is found in all the Indian systems of religion and philosophy, and is one of those features of Indian culture which are known to every Indian. It is also one of those most ancient doctrines that are common to *Jainism*, *Buddhism*, and *Hinduism*. It is closely related to the notion of transmigration or metempsychosis. In fact the theory of *karma* presents us with the Indian endeavour to explain the problem of suffering and happiness in the world of living beings. It is a moral law of causality which explains the causes and effects of actions.

The idea of transmigration of soul was known to some ancient Greeks and Egyptians. According to some scholars, the Greek philosophers like Pythagoras and Empedocles may have been influenced by the Indian theory. But the detailed philosophical and moral analysis of the law of *karma* is found especially in Indian systems.

Any action, either physical or mental is called *karma*. The word includes both the cause and the effect. It may be mentioned that the Sanskrit word *karma* includes both sacred as well as secular deeds. Thus the word includes the performance of religious rites, official duties, business, moral actions, and so on. The word is also sometimes understood as fate referring to certain consequences of acts in a previous existence.

The general conception of *karma* is that good deeds bear good fruits, and evil deeds bear evil results. The law of *karma* conditions the course of transmigration and influences the state of life in each existence. Theoretically there is no escape from the results of *karma*. The inexorability of the law extends to all kinds of actions mental as well as moral.

The law of *karma* is based upon the moral principle of causality. It is based on the series of acts and effects in which each act is followed by its effect. This effect which is called the result of its antecedent act becomes the cause of its succeeding act in return. Thus an act is an effect from one point of view and the same effect is the cause of another act from another point of view. So every new effect produces another effect for which it serves as a cause. This is called the law of *karma*:

“The law which regulates the action of *karmas* is based upon the principle of cause and effect, so that the saying ‘as one sows so must he reap’, presents the whole doctrine in a nutshell. Every action, whether mental or physical, is a sowing of the ‘seed’, or in the
technical language of the Hindu philosophy, an engendering of *karma*. In the act of sowing the seed, or engendering the karma, the soul has the choice of acting or refraining from action, but when once the seed is sown or karma engendered, its freedom is replaced by an inevitable liability to bear its consequences. The harvest which is sown must be reaped, gathered, and assimilated in its unabated fullness. This is what constitutes the bondage of the soul. *Karma*, therefore, is a kind of force which compels the soul to bear the consequences of its right or wrong actions, and this force originates in the very action itself which is performed by the soul and at the very moment of its performance.\(^{135}\)

Indian culture is noted for its respect and consideration of natural world. This includes flora and fauna of earth, and creatures in the sky and under the sea. Indian philosophy sees divinity in all living creatures. Animal deities therefore, occupy an important place in Indian Philosophy and culture. Hence, we observe human intellect’s developing perception from concrete to abstract, from crude to subtle. Here lies the peculiarity of Indian culture that since the dawn of human culture people here have been feeding and nourishing animals and insects in nature. In Indian theology, it is said that animals, birds and different living entities are treated with respect and obligation, because the Supreme Being, God was Himself incarnated in the form of various species.

In Hinduism, not only, useful animals like cow and fishes but poisonous reptiles like snakes are also affectionately fed along with insignificant insects like ants. In Hindu mythology, Lord *Viṣṇu*, for maintaining the universe has been shown retiring on the body of the king of snakes “Śeśāṅga” and rides on the back of birds’ king “Garuda”. Lord Śiva, the *God* of the great dissolution enjoys garland of snakes around his neck. The goddess of wealth, *Lakṣmi* rides on owl while the goddess of learning *Saraswati* rides on a swan. These are a few instances which can fully testify to the fact of intimate and harmonious relations among all living being of the world.

Not only animals are intimately related with human beings in Hinduism but also trees are. Hindu idea of the whole world is like a forest. To keep this world-forest intact Hinduism describes everything in terms of divinity and in relation to the ultimate reality. Every physical object symbolizes some aspect of reality. Amongst these the forest symbolizes the divine attribute of ‘totality’, combining all life forms together in a

single interdependent whole. In the *Gitā* lord compares the world to a single banyan tree with unlimited branches in which all the species of animals and humans. Indian consciousness is full of trees and forests. If we look for example the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, we can find that it is full of such descriptions as if people were always under the trees. The bond between people and the trees is very strong. Hindu tradition describes that there are three basic categories of forests. One is Śṛivan: the forest, which provides prosperity, Tapovan: a place for the sages who seek after truth, Mahāvan: the greatest natural forest where all species of life will find shelter. Each of these categories must be preserved.

It is popularly believed that trees are animate and every tree has a *Vṛkṣa Devatā*, a tree-deity. God exists in different part of a tree. *Bramhā* is in the roots, *Viṣṇu* is in the body, and *Śiva* is in the branches. In every leaf there is a heavenly being. That is why trees should be treated with respect. In Hindu tradition this respect is given by tree worship, with prayers and offerings of water, flowers, sweets and sacred threads. The tree symbolizes various attributes of God.

Man for his survival essentially depends upon tree. Man uses wood for various purposes without thinking their well-being and value. But our ancestors know that trees and animals were absolutely necessary for the benefit and good for humans. They knew that man due to his selfishness use nature without thinking their interests. They also knew that future generation would suffer due to man’s disassociation and delineations from nature. Therefore, they linked each religious rites and worship with nature. Through religious principle they developed an emotional bond with nature. They loved and worshipped each part of nature not because of their purpose but because they themselves are one with all of nature. It is believed that if we take a tree to build a house, we must plant five trees for future. Whenever we take, consume, or eat, we must consider whether we left something for others, for God, for nature, for the poor and for the future generations. This is inherent in the concerning *purāṇas* and epics in Hindu Philosophy and culture.

In the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patanjali we can see some intimate relationship between man and nature. In this *bhāṣya* a plant is described as the source of food, energy, cloth, shelter, medicine etc. Plant represents nature or environment that supports the idea that a growth of plant is the growth of environment. All living organisms directly or indirectly dependent upon a plant. Thus, ancient man was aware of to protect plants and
the environment. The role of plant was undoubtedly the major one for the development of environment and maintenance of ecosystem was also intrinsic in their mind.

Like humans, plants do possess sensibilities of hearing, saying, smelling, testing and touching. They have their faculties of sensing, sorrow and joy, declares the Sage. The same thing has also been discovered by Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose the greatest scientist in the later development of science.

In gratitude to the Bodhi-tree under which he received his enlightenment, the Buddha bade his all monks not to harm trees because they, too, possessed sensate existence. Similar sentiments are expressed in the Epic literature. Through intuition Manu appears to have made the discovery, now known to science, that trees and plants when subjected to injury, exhibit reactions which can be photographed. Manu says:

*Tamasā bahurupena veshtitāh karmahetunā
tagassamjna bhavantyete sukhaduhkhasamanvitāh. (Manu Samhita 1.49)*

that means “All trees and plants are full of consciousness within themselves and are endowed with the feelings of pleasure and pain.”

One needs to realize that a healthy human race depends on a healthy environment. The value system in Hindu philosophy is based on maintaining harmony with environment. They worship earth, water, fire, air, sun, clouds, trees, cows, and many more as their Gods and Goddesses. Hindu philosophy loved and worshipped each part of nature not because of their purpose but because they themselves are one with all of nature. It is also believed that if you take a tree to build a house, you must plant five trees for the future. So, whenever we take, consume, or eat, we must consider whether we left something for others for God, for nature, for the poor and for the future generations. This is inherent in the traditional Indian culture. This kind of thinking supports the definition of sustainable development, which has been defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

4.4: Environmental Consciousness in Kautilya’s Dañdaniti:

The relationship between human being’s and their natural environment is already discussed in Hindu scriptures and they give some codes of conduct to maintain

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environment properly. One of the codes of conduct (dharma) is maintaining proper sanitation. In the past it was the duty of every one to maintain proper sanitation and violation of this act is a punishable offence. Ancient Hindu society did not permit to throw dirt and wastage on a public place, and violation of this act is a punishable offence. Kautilya’s Arthaśāstra describes,

The punishment of one-eighth of a pana should be inflicted to those who throw dirt on the roads. For muddy water it is one-fourth. If both are thrown then the punishment should be doubled. If latrine is done or thrown near a temple, well or pond or sacred place or Government building then the punishment should be increased gradually by one pana in each case. For urine punishment should be half.\(^{138}\)

Kautilya specifically says that the notified carnivorous and herbivorous animals, birds and aquatic animal as well as animals in the notified areas are neither to be caught killed nor molested. A fine is levied on one indulging in entrapping, killing or molesting fishes and birds which do not live on other animals: the fine is doubled, if animals were involved. In the case of animals which prey on other animals, and of open forests the fine is heavier. A part of the confiscated living animals are to be set free in the sanctuaries. This may suggest Kautilya had knowledge of biological control. The Sūnādhyakṣa (superintendent of abattoir) is in charge of looking after this.\(^{139}\)

Kautilya firmly believes that human beings have no right to use animals for their luxury, is borne out by his statement that skin, hair, bones and other things are to be collected from the dead animals.\(^{140}\) In other words no animal shall be killed for any of their parts.

According to Kautilya, causing pain by killing smaller animals is a cognizable offence to be punished with a fine. If the animal should bleed, the fine is doubled. In case of bigger animal, the fines are to be doubled along with compensation of cost of medical care.\(^{141}\) The animals of sanctuary strolling into fields and eating crops are to be driven back without hurting them. Only rope and canes are to be used. However,


\(^{140}\) Ibid. “Kāraṇa- mṛtasya aṅka-carman gomahiṣasya….. śrṇgāsthīni cāhareyuḥ.” 2.29, P.167.

permission is accorded to kill a wild animal if perhaps; the situation is likely to go beyond control.

In Indian civilization not only fauna is respected but also flora is. Since the evolution of man on this earth, trees and plants have been used as different purpose in different cultures in different ways. But also the worship towards the trees is also from prehistoric period. Besides animals and birds, trees and plants are also protected in different ways in Indian culture. Some of the plant, trees and flowers have been proved having medicinal power. Some of the trees are well known for their spiritual power and some again are well known as an abode of God and Goddesses. Cutting of trees has been stated as punishable offence in Padma-Purāṇa. Kautilya’s Arthaśāstra prescribed various punishments for destroying trees and plants:

For cutting off the tender sprouts of fruit trees, or shady trees in the parks near a city, a fine of six panaś shall be imposed; for cutting of the minor branches of the same trees, twelve panaś, and for cutting of the big branches, twenty four panaś shall be levied. Cutting off the trunks of the same, shall be punished with the first amercement; and feeling shall be punished with the middlemost amercement (Kautilya’s Arthaśāstra III 19:197)

As per as plant kingdom is concerned, many Indian festivals, Such as, Holi and Onām are celebrated soon after the harvesting of crops. These festivals and rituals significantly indicate a common underlying bond of unity in the different forms of life on earth, howsoever subtle it may appear.

In Indian civilization, an approach of a gardener has been accorded instead of a botanist who is chiefly interested in the dissection of a flower, about the functions of roots, stems, leaves, the process of pollination etc. in order to explain the reason for the survival of a plant or tree. Whereas a gardener while looking at a plant, feels intimate relationship with it, enjoys its growing, producing flowers and fruits and becomes sad to see its decay. This is an established fact that human beings and other animals depend directly or indirectly on plants. So the plants are indispensable for maintaining life on earth. In Chhāndogya Upaniṣad we find the above mentioned fixation of nature in a lucid manner, by alluding five life winds in human body. Inhalation of oxygen is called

143 Padma-Purāṇa, 56, 40-41.
there as ‘Prāṇa’ while ‘Apāna’ stands for breathing out. ‘Prāṇa’ and ‘Apāna’ together constitute the principle of life in a living being.

**Hathayoga** refers to a set of physical exercises and sequences of asanas, designed to align your skin, muscles, and bones. The postures are also designed to open the many channels of the body especially the main channel, the spine so that energy can flow freely. The *Hatha yoga* mystically describes the alphabets ‘Ha’ means ‘Sun’ (Pingla Naddi) and ‘Tha’ means ‘Moon’ (Idda Naddi) respectively. Through the former flows ‘Prāṇa’ life wind, while through the latter flows ‘Apāna’ life wind. And a rhythmic balancing of the both is called ‘Hatha Yoga’ a preparatory stage leading to further higher levels of Yogic experiences. *Hathayoga* is a powerful tool for self-transformation. It asks us to bring our attention to our breath, which helps us to still the fluctuations of the mind and be more present in the unfolding of each moment.

### 4.5: Prevention of Pollution and Sustainable Development:

Indian culture and scriptures reveals a clear conception of the eco-system. Indian scripture shows important parts of codes of conduct and defined human being’s relationship with environment. One of the codes of conduct (dharma) is maintaining proper sanitation. In the past it was the duty of every one to maintain proper sanitation and violation of this act is a punishable offence.

Traditional Indian society does not permit to throw dirt and wastage on a public place, and violation of this act is a punishable offence. *Kautilya’s Arthaśāstra* describes the following:

The punishment of one-eighth of a panas should be inflicted to those who throw dirt on the roads. For muddy water it is one-forth. If both are thrown then the punishment should be doubled. If latrine is done or thrown near a temple, well or pond or sacred place or Government building then the punishment should be increased gradually by one pana in each case. For urine punishment should be half.

The *Dharmaśāstra* of *Manu*, *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* and *Arthaśastra* of *Kautilya* expose their sensitivity towards environment. Particular attention is given towards agricultural practices (farming and animal husbandry), technique of excavation (mining and well digging) as well as references to time based upon an awareness of

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146 Samkaracharya’s *Chhandogya-Bhadsya*, Gita Press, Gorakhpur, I, 3.3. Also I.7.1.
seasons and planetary movements. *Dharmaśāstra* deals with religious, secular and ethical responsibility towards others and customary practices (*ācāra*), legal procedures (*vyavahāra*), and expiation (*prāyaścītta*). *Arthaśāstra* is designed as handbooks on polity for the rulers, emphasize public administration and foreign relationships, civil and criminal law. If we take both the *Śāstras* together we can say that both provide us with clues and discerning levels for appreciation and awareness especially among the ruling classes, of the natural environment, on which so much of the Indian economy has traditionally depended.

For Hinduism cremation of the dead bodies and maintaining proper sanitation of human habitat are considered as the essential acts. In 200 BCE Caraka mentioned *Vikṛti* or pollution and diseases. In the *Vimānāsthānam* in his *Samhitā* Caraka says that air pollution is the main cause of many diseases:

The polluted air is mixed with bad elements. The air is uncharacteristic of the season, full of mixture, stormy, hard to breathe, icy cool, hot and dry, harmful, roaring, coming at the same time from all the direction, bad smelling, oily, full of dirt, sand stream creating disease in the body and considered polluted (*Caraka Samhita, Vimanastanam III 6:1*).  

Caraka talked about water pollution and says that water is considered polluted when it is excessively smelly, unnatural in color, tasted and touch, slimy, not frequented by aquatic birds and aquatic life is reduced and the appearance is unpleasing. (ibid verse 6.2)

The healing property and medicinal value of water is universally accepted in the Hindu society provided that it must be pure and free from all pollutions. An ancient Hindu thinker like Manu was aware of the reasons of water pollution. He says that,

\[napsa mutram purisham va ssthivanam va samutshrijet\]
\[amedhyaliptamanyad va lohitam va vishani va.\]

that means one should not throw urine or faeces into the water, nor saliva, nor blood, nor poisonous things, which clearly proves serious concern against water pollution.

Disposal of wastages or any polluted objects in to the water is prohibited and violation of this act is a punishable offence. The *Prāyaścīttaṭṭva* mentions that, one  

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150 Ibid.  
should not perform some acts near the holy water of the river Gangā: i.e. remove excrement. Brushing and gargling, removing ceriman from body, throwing hairs and dry garlands, playing in water, taking donations, performing sex, attachment with other sacred places, praising other holy places, washing cloths throwing dirty cloths, thumping water and swimming.  

Those who involve themselves in doing such unsocial activities and pollute environment directly or indirectly will be cursed. The Padma Purāna describes that a person, who is engaged in killing creatures, polluting wells and ponds, tanks, destroying gardens goes to hell. In general on pollution the Mahābhārata describes that from pollutions two types of diseases occur in human beings, the first is related to the body and the other is to mind and both are interconnected. One follows the other and none exist without the other.

4.6: Environmental Justice:

When the society is anthropocentric in nature, where materialism, individualism, subjectivism, egoism is the order of the day, when the greedy propensity of humans’ counts the most and overlaps their basic needs, when the society reaches its glory days in terms of ‘can’ instead of ‘ought’, the point of justice appears in a much more relevant manner. We find that there are various formulations of justice in the East and West. The question remains, what is justice? Justice in the relative sense means what is just. The reflection of just vision of individuals is a sign of justice. Just vision is the true reflection of humanity that can be fulfilled with the trio-concepts, such as, liberty, equality and fraternity. When we are talking about liberty, equality and fraternity, we are essentially talking about social justice. What do we mean by environmental justice? Environmental justice is the fair treatment and significant participation of all people regardless of race, colour, sex, national origin or income with respect to the development, implementation of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Thus, environmental justice is served when people can realise their highest potential. Unlike social and political justice, environmental justice is much wider in scope; it incorporates every biotic animal and even it can be extended to future generation as well. Thus environmental justice signals the expansion of the class of

\[152\] Prāyascittatattvā, 1:535
those who are the beneficiaries of justice. The word ‘environment’ of environmental justice actually refers to a condition on the pursuit of justice. ‘Environmental’ can be understood as modifying ‘justice’ in much the same way as ‘sustainable’ can be assumed as modifying ‘development’. Thus, the only permissible paths to development are those which are sustainable. Environmental justice unlike traditional or classical concept of justice is environmental friendly or environmental preserving. The cause of concern of environmental justice is to redress inequitable distributions of environmental burdens. Therefore, the root causes of environmental injustices include institutionalised racism, the co-modification of land, water, energy and air; unresponsive, unaccountable government policies and regulations; and lack of resource and power in affected communities.

The relationship between human beings and nature involved the seers of the Vedic period in a manner incomparable to any other religious and cultural traditions. The Vedic seers acknowledged that the material causes of this creation happened to be the Pancha Mahābhūtas. Traditionally they are enumerated in the following order as earth, air, space, water and light-fire. These five Mahābhūtas are cosmic elements which create, nurture, and sustain all forms of life thus they play an important role in preserving and sustaining the environment.155

The Atharva Veda is perhaps the first of its kind of scripture in any spiritual tradition where the respect to the earth has been propounded. The Prithvi Sukta maintains that qualities of earth such as its firmness, purity and fertility are for everybody and no one group or nation has special right over them. It has been said that human greed and exploitative propensities have been the main cause of environmental destruction.

According to Hindu scriptures, people must not demand or command domination over other creatures. Eco-spirituality and eco-care need that the whole universe is seen as an extended family, with all living beings in this universe as members of the household. This concept, also known as Vasudhava Kutumbakam, refers to all human beings as well as other creatures living on earth as members of the same extended family. Only by considering the whole universe as a part of our

extended family, we can individually and collectively develop the necessary maturity and respect for all other living beings. From the above discussion, it may be said that people of India have a rich religious, social and cultural heritage of environmental justice.

4.7: Environmental Sustainability:

Though sustainable development and ecologically appropriate lifestyle are a relatively new concept in the Western world to overcome the environmental crisis, but it has been an integral part of the traditional Indian culture and philosophy for ages. The sustainability of Indian culture has been made possible by virtue of its cultural diversity which in turn is on account of the diversity of ecosystems. The very mechanism for the sustainability of diversity is however in the traditional Indian value system where much is retained even today.

Hinduism with its deep notions of trusteeship of natural resources and reverence for nature as a sustainer of humanity had encapsulated, the contemporary idea of sustainable development. The assets of nature are there for humans to use for their sustenance and development is in harmony with the needs of other beings. But the assets of nature are held in trust and human has the responsibility of this trusteeship. This, in essence, is the modern concept of sustainable development and Hindu ideology provides a strong philosophical base to it.

We have already discussed that environmental ethics had always been an inherent part of Indian religious precepts and philosophy. The relationship between man and nature is at the Centre of Vedic vision and those Holy Scriptures precisely talk about human’s responsibility to preserve environment. Reverence of sun, moon, earth, air and water was not only primeval human’s response to the fear of the unknown but arose from the deep respect shown to the forces of nature which sustained and preserved human life on earth. The Upanishads provide a vision of cosmic devotion and concord with the natural environment. The concept of sustainable development is there in the Upaniṣad. The Iṣa Upaniṣad speaks of how we should consume only according to our needs. The first verse of the Iṣbhāṣya Upanisad justifies this position:

\[ Iṣbhāṣyaṃ idaṃ sarvam yat kim ċa jagatyāṃ jagat, \]
\[ tena tyaktena bhunjithā, mā grdhah kasyaśvid dhanam (Isa 1) \]

that means “everything animate or inanimate that is within the universe is controlled and owned by the Lord. One therefore needs to accept only those things
necessary for himself, which are set aside as his quota, and one must not accept other things, knowing well to whom they belong.”

The above verse also says that Reality pervades everything. The part that is assigned to someone can alone be the source of one’s joy. To covet the wealth of another is to display utter ignorance of the fact that the tiniest part of the universe is impregnated with whole. The injunction here is to develop harmony with nature and not to exploit the resources of nature for one’s own selfish purpose. The idea of inter-generational equity, one of the salient features of sustainable development is most graphically brought out in the Śrimad Bagvadgitā. According to Gitā, he who prepares food for himself, he who seeks nourishment from his own selfhood he verily eats sin. Such is the beautiful exhortation of Sri Krishna to Arjuna. According to Him, it is the sacrifice, which is the sustaining force of all creation.

What we see today before us is not just an ecological crisis or diminishing resources but the entire world is in agony as the inherent harmonious inter-relationship and interdependence between mother earth and all her inhabitants are changing to hatred, gradual extinction and destruction of several inhabitants of the planet. The Darwinian concept of “survival of the fittest” is the predominating culture today promoting selfish motive “only me and not you”. Application of science and technology based on objectification based paradigm and Darwinism has thus, inflicted an exploitative attitude degrading nature and from human to subhuman. This attitude has also deteriorated radically the ethical values in human beings. Now the question is, what is the way out? Any human-made problems can be rectified only by human and not by changing technology. It has been rightly stated by one of the greatest scientist and philosopher, Albert Einstein of the 20th century, that: “Problems cannot be solved by the level of thinking that created them.” Indeed there is an urgent need to transform the consciousness of individuals towards their betterment which can subsequently prevent further injury to mother earth.

The Vedas are as much the source of moral values system as the source of much of the traditional knowledge and religious cultural practices. Harmonious existence of distinctly different entities, made possible only with tolerance, acceptance of difference

\[\text{Isavasya Upanishad, Hymn 1.}\]
and openness to things or aspects that are external to the system, is a main tenet of moral value. Nature, and every aspect of earth, is considered divine manifestation of God. Human is seen only as a trustee of the earth and its resources. Appropriate moral guidelines are interwoven into the way of life, of human beings.

There is also a concern for the future generations linked with it. Trusteeship is a socio-economic philosophy that was propounded by Mahatma Gandhi. It provides a means by which the wealthy people would be the trustees of trusts that looked after the welfare of the people in general. This concept was condemned by socialists as being in favor of the landlords, feudal princes and the capitalists. Gandhi’s philosophy of life provides a sustainable development paradigm which is symbiotic with nature and ecosystem. In Gandhian frame of reference economy, ecology and spirituality are interrelated. That is why Gandhian economy is often referred to as ‘economy of environment’.158

The pattern of development has to be eco-development so far as Gandhi’s philosophy is concerned. According Gandhi, such development is economic development based on ecological principles like environmental harmony, economic efficiency, resource (including energy) conservation, local self-reliance and equity with social justice. Natural resources have to be protected and sustained not only for humankind, but also for other species; and not only for this generation, but also for generations to follow. To manage and sustain the earth’s resources, the approach must not be centred on any one species like the human being, but should encompass the entire life-support system. Thus, people will have to work with nature, and aims at not wasting resources unnecessarily, nor interfering with other species. According to Gandhi sustainable development and better quality of life is simple. To quote:

‘Material economic growth (within sustainable limits), together with population control, for the poorer sections of any society and for poor nations; and on the other hand, there is need for non-material growth and continued population control for the affluent sections of any society and rich nations.’159

Adoption of this principle would also be a major step towards inter-generational and international equity in resource allocation and consumption.

Gandhi believed that the rich people could be persuaded to part with their wealth to help the poor. Putting it in Gandhiji’s words “Supposing I have come by a fair amount of wealth either by way of legacy, or by means of trade and industry I must know that all that wealth does not belong to me; what belongs to me is the right to an honourable livelihood, no better than that enjoyed by millions of others. The rest of my wealth belongs to the community and must be used for the welfare of the community.” The resource is provided for humanity as a whole in space and for all times and not for this generation or that. It is totally incompatible with this notion that any one generation adopts such a lifestyle that it causes the loss or reduction in the quality or quantity of the resources that nature provides. Indeed this would almost amount to sacrilege and also theft from future generations of their rightful inheritance.

The epics and scriptures teach the intimate relation and the attitude of human race with nature and its forces. Among the customs of all ancient people were natural resources whose purpose was to acknowledge human’s dependence on the natural forces and reward of his environment. Primordial people adored and worshiped natural power due to a feeling of assertion, they felt kinship without being akin to nature. It is no coincidence that the utilitarian attitude prevailing in the modern age has spawned a civilization out of touch with the beneficence of nature. God gives a role of guardianship of earth but did not confer on humans’ absolute sovereignty. Their wanton domination is destructive for the very conditions necessary for their existence. The only way in the present circumstances is to thrive on our old sentimental legacy, increase our awareness and broaden the frontiers of empathy. This is possible only by increasing rationality, so that human mind may be trained to feel more identified with the rest of nature. “Love and be loved” needs to be the very creed of human society.

It will not be a prudent step for the present to reverse the process of modernization to preserve environment. What we can emphasize is that in order to build a national environmental conscience and ecological wisdom, we have to draw upon those religious, ethical and spiritual values and beliefs which have been proven eternal. Such tendency and attitude will be of great help in transforming society from its current pre-occupation with materialism and consumerism to a conserve society.

Various laws enacted for environmental protection can be strengthened by a moral and spiritual awakening.

Indian culture and philosophy is also very important to rescue human kind from excessive greed, inordinate ambition and selfish pursuit of frauds of life. Welfare of all beings “bahuja sukha bhujana hitaya” is the salient feature of Indian philosophy. This slogan seeks the welfare of all creation, not only human beings but also of what we call the lower creatures. Indian Philosophical tradition believes that man is not apart from nature and therefore, it believes in compassion for all living being and preaches us that while we are working for our own salvation; we must seek to develop both elements of our psyche, in the inner and the outer, the quietest and activist. Indeed, both are two sides of same coin.

In short, it is these valuable concepts and teaching of Indian philosophy which provides us a comprehensive worldview that will greatly help to solve the problems and the challenges of globalization. Gradually a world of civilization is being born, and it has to be born if mankind is to survive in this nuclear age. Although science and technology have given us tremendous power but at the same time we must never forget that the worship of power of science is not enough, we also need to recapture wisdom, compassion and understanding. We can now survive only if we have an alternative ideology to the one which has led mankind to this position and we boldly stand at in harmony with that ideology, the rich tradition of Indian Philosophy provides such an alternative worldview and if even at this late hour we can imbibe some of its universal truths, we can perhaps reverse the mad rush towards destruction and begin the long, slow climb back to sanity. Let us close than with that immortal Indian values which provide the basic framework of their approach to tackle the problems of current challenges in Indian context and in the context of globalization as well.

In the way of concluding this chapter, it can be said that concept environmental ethics, sustainable development and preservation of natural resources for future generations was already in Indian philosophy and culture. We all know that Indian culture paves the way of religions living together in harmony. The cultural and spiritual heritage of Indian society is harmony both vast and rich. But, there is nothing sectarian or regional about it. It is so universal in its appeal and so wide-ranging in its approach that it belongs to the whole world. A good environmental sense has been one of the fundamental features of India’s ancient philosophy. Indian civilization had grown up in
close association with nature. There has always been a compassionate concern for every form of life in the Indian mind. The seers of the Vedic era perceived the value of maintaining a harmonious relationship between the needs of man and spectacular diversity of the Universe. To them, nature was not only the mother that sustained their life; it was the abode of divinity. Sanctity of life to them included not only the efforts to seek salvation, but to seek it by developing a sacred attitude towards spiritual significance of nature.

Traditional Indian culture stated that environmental ethics is concerned with a harmonious relationship between man and nature. Indian philosophy and culture seeks to identify and evaluate the distinctive ecological attitudes, values and practices of human beings by making clear their relations with the intellectual and ethical thought within scripture, ritual, myth, symbols, cosmology, and sacrament.

In ancient times, the human race might first have perceived various events happening in his surroundings, such as, touch of solidity, an experience of heat, fluidity and pressure which he might have associated with their respective substrata, namely, earth, fire, water and air. Looking at the sun, the moon, stars and planets would have made him believe about their substratum, i.e. space. The powers of nature, such as, the storm, thunder, the rains were closely related with one another. The oldest and sacred Indian Literature Ṛgveda speaks about God associated with the said events as having similar characters: the first recognition of a cosmic order or law prevailing in nature under the guardianship of the highest God is to be found in the use of the word thanks to denote the ‘order’ in the moral world as truth and ‘right’ and in the religious world as sacrifice. The unalterable law in nature later on developed into a complete law of action which laid stress on the doctrine that ‘as you sow, so shall you reap’. Hence, we observe human intellect’s developing perception from concrete to abstract, from crude to subtle. Here lies the peculiarity of Indian culture that since the dawn of human culture people here have been feeding and nourishing animals and insects in nature. Diversity in nature complements itself, i.e., every component complements another. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, “the earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s need but not for every man’s greed.”

Nature has created enough to meet the requirements of every living creature, but there is an essential element of give and take that we

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cannot forget. We must remember that in reality, sacrifice and enjoyment are two sides of the same coin. Today, however, we have erroneously set our sights on enjoyment alone, and avoid any form of giving back. Our enjoying benefits without contributing back to the environment are equal to theft. This is clearly mentioned in Chapter 3, verse 2 of the Gitā, where Lord Krishna explains to Arjuna that the Gods will shower Arjuna with worldly pleasures and luxuries if he is industrious. His labour will be richly rewarded. The Lord clarifies that it is possible to enjoy the same benefits without using one’s labour, but then it would cease to be a reward, and thus doing so would be nothing short of theft.

This spirit of give and take is also underscored in a verse from the Ishavasyopanishad that mandates that only after contributing productively should one seek gratification. This is actually the most fundamental tenet of environmental conservation. However, the Mahabharata was the last phase of true environmental preservation and soon after the nature loving Yadavas along with their king Lord Krishna perished. An era of environmental destruction began anew and this started the final Dark Age called the ‘Kalyuga’, which continues into the present day.

However, with time a gradual distance grew between man and his environment. The human mind is inherently hedonistic, and seeks greater happiness and pleasures. These desires slowly resulted in man indiscriminately hunting animals, fishing in the rivers beyond the water’s natural regenerative capacities, and also in the manufacture of different types of weapons. The utensils, tools, spinning wheels, handlooms, furniture and weaponry that have been found by archaeologists helps us reconstruct the lifestyles during this era.

The ancient man also believed in cosmic law. They felt that the imbalance in any part of the nature affects the life as a whole and therefore, a trial to maintain harmony among the members of the universe was felt a necessary. According to them man is a son of nature, the relationship between man and nature is interdependent. At that time man took help from nature without harming nature. Kautilya’s Arthaśāstra represents in many ways human’s attitudes towards nature. While the human society depends entirely on the nature for its existence and enjoyment, Kautilya appears to underline the principle that there must be a judicious and intelligent use of nature.

In the ancient period man was fully devoted towards nature. At that time humans’ attitude towards nature was soft and cordial and nature was worshiped by man
in many ways. During Vedic times, human lifestyle was totally depending on nature. At that time people believed that nature possesses wonderful powers which can deliver well or bring harm to them. Vedic philosophers believed in the theory of “as the man, so the universe”. They believed that human life is comparable to the whole universe and man does not live in isolation but leads a collective life. This reflects the affection of man towards nature in Vedic period.

Vedic tradition beholds a rich ethical foundation. The highest ethical standard that Vedic people ought to apply comes from the concept of “Sarva Bhuta Hiterata, the welfare of all living beings. Since the highest goal of Vedic people is to be uniting with God and everything is the manifestation of God, so its ethics are wholly based on the welfare of all beings.

“Sarve bhavantu sukhin, sarve santun nirāmayā
Sarve bhradrāṇi paśyantu mā kaścitdukha bhagbhavet”162

Above mentioned is a prayer in which ‘the happiness and well-being of every being is wished and desired. The welfare of every being is the pathway, which leads to the welfare of oneself helping in the attainment of salvation’. For everyone to lead a balanced and disciplined life in Vedic tradition, there has been laid an ethical code of conduct to follow. There are several virtues prescribed in Vedic texts which are supposed to be followed by. Some of them are as such as directly can be helpful in environment protection.

The philosophical position that everything that exists is an emanation from and is, in essence, Brahman leads the Indian Philosophers to use the language of ‘Man is Nature’, ‘Man in Nature’ and not ‘Man against Nature’. Since it is the same divine that is manifested in Man and Nature, the Indians also avoid all issues of domination and subordination in ecological ethics.

What has been noted in this chapter is that the ancient human were fully devoted towards nature. Their attitude towards nature was cordial, loving and caring. They felt nature as their source of destiny. Accordingly they take care of nature from their own heart. The relationship between man and nature was inseparable. In a nutshell it can be said that the attitude of ancient man towards nature is non-anthropocentric. They devoted nature through prayers, through worships and various customary

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162 Brhadāranyaka Upanishad 1.4.14.
manners. We can develop an ecological paradigm and strategy which is based on the concept of *Vasudheiva Kutumbakam* to formulate a global environmental ethics and sustainable development for future generation.