unearth the hidden treasure of affirmative ideologies on material world, found in *Tirumandiram*. It is hoped that the right understanding and interpretation of concept of *Māyai* and its evolutes expounded in *Tirumandiram* would enable us to face and to respond to the global issue of environment, at least ideologically.

**CHAPTER 5**

**ECOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS**

Philosophy is born out of natural inclination to question, search and find out ‘why,’ ‘how,’ and ‘what’ of everything. The result of such search is speculation of reality through critical, abstract, yet affective thinking. The study of philosophical systems not only enables one to know of the speculative process of persons or communities in the distant past but also trains the contemporary mind for better logical thinking, mental discipline, ability for analysis and synthesis, critical reflection on social and political realities.670 By the study of various philosophical systems and traditions, people are mentally alert and can understand things better and analyze problems more quickly and accurately. Philosophy trains people to think and reflect on the realities of the world. In this sense it provides persons with a methodology to analyze things that affect their life and society, and discover their causes and search for possible solutions. Dwelling on the philosophical systems of the past, one encounters the wisdom of the people over the centuries and their ways of solving the problems of life. Therefore, dealing with the concept of *māyai* in *Tirumandiram* definitely has a purpose.

---

Every cultural and religious tradition possesses a unique worldview of its own. The behaviour of a particular group of people is rooted in their philosophy of life. A deeper study of the worldview enables one to have an access to the thinking patterns of the generation gone before, to develop a better understanding and appreciation of the guiding principle of their life. Any such study undertaken is not merely to glorify the past and bask in the greatness of one’s own tradition. It should necessarily lead to transformation of the present situation, in making adequate changing in order to build a better society. Transformation is possible only with a critical reflection accompanied by appropriate interventions. Ultimately ideas change persons and societies. Philosophy is meant to teach people the art of critical reflection on humanity, society and its value systems.

Every society is in need of change and any society that does not undergo change is destined to be stagnant. Beneath every case of social transformation there is a philosophy of life and a philosophical thought that initiated the process of change. Contemporary human society needs such a change at the wake of ecological crisis – a change in its world-view, a change in its perception of the world, a change in its relationship with nature and a change in its life style.

When a critical reading of ancient classical texts is done with ecological perspective, one is sure of enhancing the human relationship with nature. Ecology of pre-modern India was not based on scientific knowledge but on reference and love for nature. In engaging religious traditions to respond to the environmental crisis, it is our firm conviction that world religions must take the lead in working towards a solution. Ecologists since few decades showed how

---

few religious traditions contributed to ecological degradation by their human centric bias on the nature. In recent times ecological awareness proved that re-visioning within those religious traditions that were blamed could be beneficial. Besides, opening up oneself to different religious traditions of the world enables one to find a solution to ecological crisis. Concrete proposals for global responses to the crisis could flow from the heart of these traditions.

Though there is no explicit reference to ecology in ancient religious literatures, such as Tirumandiram, yet traces of concern for ecological well being of all are definitely found. Ancient culture and tradition of Tamil Nadu throw profound ecological thoughts concerning inter-connectedness between human existence and ecology. Religio-philosophical concepts in Tirumandiram could be certainly brought in for sophisticated discussions on ecological concerns. Showing a way of dealing with the ecological crisis, Tirumandiram is found to be rich in content. Pluralistic realism expounded in it and the affirmative concept of māyai in Tirumandiram could be a possible pointers towards perfect ecological harmony between human and nature.

5.1. Necessity of Matter

Down the ages, in the history of ideas, humans have viewed nature differently due to their lived-in experience with nature. Every way of viewing and valuing of nature has a specific practical consequence. In a country where geographical configuration with rich diversity provides a variety of species and sustains them, human beings experience the nature as something that provides

---

674 William Irwin Thompson, “Pacific Shift,” 25.
675 The ancient texts and authors are relatively silent about ecological crisis as the issue did not arise those days.
human beings sufficiently and abundantly. Indian mind conceives nature as a benign force and a womb that gives life-sap to all, sustains and guards them all. Nature is considered to be positive, good, life giving and life sustaining. This approach towards nature allows human kind to acquire the capacity to contemplate, to understand and experience human life in the world. Such a positive view of nature provides an ambience for the human beings to acknowledge nature as a foundational reality in which they grow into a refined status of what we call as culture. “Thus the more a human being experiences nature the more he or she becomes himself or herself.” Nature leads one to understand that life is a progress and its potentiality of becoming more or of growing into fullness. This fullness would be characterized as a human quest for liberation from the bondages, namely moksa or release. If the purport of any philosophical system is towards human liberation, the concept of matter culled out from the human experience of nature plays a definite role. Even to have a concept of matter, community needs material objects. Matter matters after all in everything.

In reading the concept of māyai in Tirumandiram we do come across such a clear cut notion emphasizing the necessity of nature. The whole world with its material objects and bodies, is considered to be a place for life to manifest itself and unfold all its potentialities. The purposive existence of such nature is to create an ambience for the souls to grow into fullness, for the malams to get matured and for the Lord to interact with souls in his grace and compassion shown towards the well being of the souls. Śaiva Siddhānta concept of the natural physical world as a home for the souls to live and work out their liberation emerges from such a positive outlook on the nature. Such a

677 Ibid., 7.
678 Still fresh are the epistemological discourse of ‘a priori’ and ‘a posteriori’ from where the human derive knowledge. We lean towards the realist conception of means of knowledge that somebody knows by affective thinking.
positive view of nature has engendered a holistic vision of reality that respects environment and upholds the ecological balance.

The necessity of matter for human liberation as found in *Tirumandiram*, could be well seen in the light of few other systems of philosophy in India. For instance, in Advaita Vedanta terminology ‘māyā’ would mean as a idea of superimposing on reality our own biases, notions, and ego-centric convictions. Māyā would refer to human tendency to perceive reality with self delusion. Hence, for spiritual liberation as realization of self, one has to discriminate what is true and real, namely the self and what is non real, namely the contingent, passing and impermanent physical objects. Rejection of the empirical reality as indeterminable from the transcendental point of view, would make mukti possible. Although indirectly there is a positive attitude in above said interpretation of the māyā advaitic vedantic system, the concept of māyai in *Tirumandiram* has a direct appeal for necessity of matter in human liberation. In monistic view of reality, the philosophy of one Absolute forms a basis for environmentally sound ethics as it affirms that all beings and non beings are separate only apparently and essentially they are only the emanations of the one reality. The doctrine that the material universe is actually the universal consciousness itself, is supposedly said to provide a philosophical basis for veneration of the natural world. Lance E. Nelson is of the opinion that monistic interpretation of the world leads to a-cosmism and world-denying.

From the absolute (paramarthi) perspective, the world is simply not there. Advaita’s non-duality is, in fact, only provisional. From the empirical (vyavahārika) perspective the world is admitted as an inexplicable appearance, neither real nor unreal, neither different from nor identical with Brahman. But this is not a world affirming doctrine.

---

Such an interpretation might also foster devaluation and disregard for the world with consequences for human attitudes toward nature. Against such traditions, Šaiva Siddhānta concept of material world in Tirumandiram is deliberately world affirming.

Whereas in Sāṁkhya system, prakṛti would be considered as nature referring to material existence. The goal of the religious quest is to control or tame prakṛti to free one’s spiritual nature. There is a tendency to denigrate the material world and to achieve spiritual liberation one has to renounce the world. Emphasis on taming, overcoming, transcending or escaping from the material world, would characterize many of spiritual quest in many traditions. Yet, expression of positive attitude toward the natural world cannot be overlooked. Concept of māyai in Tirumandiram presses its demand deliberately arguing for the necessity of matter.

5.2. Affirmation of Material Reality

Tirumandiram does not neglect the material reality in its manifestation of physical body and the material world. In rejecting or negating one thing we do not really achieve anything. It would lead only to skepticism or negativism. That which is negated will always bother us. The wisdom of the Tirumandiram lies not in the negation of the world but in affirming its real nature and going deeper in to the very nature and purpose of it. The Lord has created the world and the body out of māyai, the primordial stuff for the necessity of the liberation of the world. One cannot deny the existence of the world either directly or indirectly. It is a matter of fact that the world exists. Reality of the world is not just empirically perceivable alone, but also its existence is

---

681 Adherents of different traditions would give a contrary opinion about the above conclusions with details of subtleties in understanding of material world that might indirectly affirm the material reality at one point or the other. Dwelling on each of them would be out of the scope of this thesis.


ultimate; for it came into and would go back to its own source and destination namely, māyai. The change of form and the destruction of the manifestation of the differences in the forms do not mean that they cease to be at one point or the other. The matter remains eternal as God and the soul are. This affirmation of the world has a tremendous positive implication for the contemporary human society to respect and uphold the nature.

5.2.1. Sacredness of Physical Nature

Vedic tradition has been observed to have deified the natural forces and objects, giving them a sacred character. Even popular religions in India have still such pantheistic outlook of natural world. That the world is pervaded by divine powers is very clear in reverential approach of human beings towards the objects of the world.\textsuperscript{684} The idea of sacredness of the land is very much expressed in a variety of ways. In \textit{Tirumandiram} we find a strong tendency to affirm human body and physical world. The human body has within itself Holy water and is also the Holy temple. “\textit{uḷḷatin uḷḷe uḷḷa pala tīraṅkaḷ...}”\textsuperscript{685} Within this body are many Holy waters, and the Lord is within oneself and those who fail to search him within one’s body are like fools who search in the pond for the gold dropped in the deep sea.\textsuperscript{686} \textit{Tirumandiram} emphasizes that the human body is sacred temple of the Lord where he resides. The sense of sacredness of the material world and physical body is what lacks in the contemporary mechanistic world view today. \textit{Tirumandiram} concept of world highlights the sacredness of matter.

5.2.2. Sacredness in the Secular

Realizing sacredness of materiality is the task of religious philosophical tradition, such as Śaiva Siddhānta. Neglect of spiritual dimensions in material aspects of human life is the concern of the ecologist. Exhortation “to try to seek

\textsuperscript{684} Kinsely, “Reflections on Ecological Themes,” 230.
\textsuperscript{685} \textit{Tirumandiram} - 509 – 519.
\textsuperscript{686} \textit{Tirumandiram} – 513.
and find God in and through nature and things of nature,” and the emphasis that experience of God is not only through prayer, meditation, rituals, holy scriptures and beliefs, but also through the nature in which humans have their bodily existence, could be the contribution of religious traditions. It is imperative to acknowledge the positive qualities of the earth as a common property for all and finally to discover correct relationship of humans and nature. In dealing with ecological crisis, adherents of various religious and philosophical traditions, profusely quote scriptural and doctrinal passage that promote and propagate love, respect and friendship with nature. The enumeration of such high ideal thoughts and insights from the traditions are welcome. Nevertheless, mere details of deeper convictions and insights would not be sufficient to address the present day crisis. “Citing scriptural passages is of no use unless they can stimulate us to initiate concrete deeds towards the amelioration of environmental conditions.”

Having been aware of such far sighted vision of practical implications of such an approach to body and natural world, we submit our limitations of elaborating only the insightful thoughts of Tirumandiram with regard to human nature relationship. Further insights and techniques of working out the practical implications of such a wonderful approach to body and world for the human emancipation would be a scope of yet another research project. Tirumandiram has not just stopped with metaphysical and epistemological approach to realities of soul and material body, but also emphasized practical ethical principles and approach in terms of yogic practices, where the mind and body are united for the sake of liberation.

5.2.3. Nature as Purposive

The earth is not by chance or by accident. It was created by God, with a purpose of human liberation. Hence, the earth with its physical body and objects become the locus where the pilgrimage of the seeker to one’s ultimate

687 Augustine Thottakara, Eco-Dynamics of Religion (Bangalore: Dharmaram, 2000), 7.
689 Augustine Thottakara, Eco-Dynamics of Religion, 12.
good of liberation, takes place here and now. The physical world helps one in his/her passage to regaining the original status of being. As in the words of Augustine Thottakara, “… human beings as spiritual aspirants (sādhaka) should encounter created world with gratitude and love.”690 The physical world is a ‘property of God,’ ‘product of māyai with the Divine purpose,’ and ‘a common heritage of whole of humankind for generations to come.’ The modern and contemporary human generation should ensure that the generation next has the right to have this human ancestral heritage. Moral responsibility is on the whole human generation today to care for it, use it as we live and leave it safe for the next generation.

We are handling with not an anonymous and nameless property. We did not create the earth. It has been handed over to us by our ancestors for use, for sustaining our life and for completing our life span in her bounteous lap in peace and happiness. While using it for our survival and happy living, we have the grave moral responsibility of dealing with it with love, respect and care, and transmitting it to the future generations intake and undamaged, if not enhanced and improved, for their use, for their survival and happiness… Nobody can do what he/she wills with the nature.691

5.3. De-Mythicising Utilitarian Value of the Materiality

The question of assessing a value to world confronts us very much in our contemporary situation. Usually nature is valued just as an aggregate of things for our consumption. The nature has been valued only as a resourceful entity for the consumption of human needs and wants. Nature is considered to be an unlimited resource.692 Of course, Nature is available to provide for the human needs, but not for human greed and wants. The present day environmental awareness created many deliberations in this aspect. The earth’s resources are exploited and consumed so much so it is fast running out of its

690 Ibid., 10
691 Augustine Thottakara, Eco-Dynamics of Religion, 9.
fuels and resources.\textsuperscript{693} Consequently, the earth would be deprived of its resources to provide for the next generation. We are responsible for the next generation to have its needs met by leaving the earth still with sufficient sources to provide for the human generation to come. Even in such ecological concerns, the Earth is valued as precious thing to be safeguarded and protected with human responsibility, only because it is and would be useful as a commodity for the human beings to consume of, betraying the utilitarian attitude of the humans.

Merely using the world for human good might bring in dangerous consequences from such utilitarian and consumerist tendency. The world cannot be viewed just as a resource for the human greediness but could be used for providing human needs. Mere utilitarian attitude towards the physical world needs to be checked in, if need be corrected. Tools can either to be used or abused. That the world is a means or tool for the humans for their use, would imply also that the world is at hands of humans either for good use or abuse. The choice is left with the rational human beings.\textsuperscript{694}

Positively, Siddhanta assertion of the world and all its physical objects as only useful means to liberation of the souls, in a way reminds the souls in \textit{sakala} state that world is to be used only as a means never an end in itself. The souls in \textit{sakala} state have the tendency of becoming one with (\textit{cārntatan vaṇamātal}).\textsuperscript{695} Hence there would be a danger of identifying the soul with the physical world and thus forgetting that the world has to be considered only as a means to be used for the purpose of liberation. Again, the danger of considering the world as the goal would be detrimental to the souls in their efforts to release themselves of its bondages.

5.3.1. Intrinsic Value for Nature

Humans do not consider the earth to be an evolving organism, having its own intrinsic value. Some of the mechanical materialist thinkers have contributed in such a scheme of thinking. 696 “The story of the universe is one of progressive evolution.”697 Darwinian thought forwarded a vision that humanity and the material universe is always in a process of becoming. The life forms in the process of evolving into a better adapted species, are not ‘finished products.’ Human beings along with environment undergo a change in process of evolution. “From a realistic point of view, we cannot compartmentalize environment and the organism.”698 The value of nature is that it has a law of self-preservation and avoids competition. For instance, similar species living in the same habitat avoid competition by dividing the habitat into ecological niches. Concept of māyai enhances the nature with its own intrinsic value within.

5.3.2. Physical world as Life Promoting

The ecological problems can be treated with the reference to Siddhānta tradition of ascribing the physical world with five elements, pañcabhūtas, namely earth, water, fire, air and space. The earth with land and water inhabits various species. India especially is considered to be one of the richest countries in the world with both inorganic and organic natural resources, variety of species, plants and lots of forest.699 When the forest areas became specific target for industrial development, economic plantations, mining and urbanization, the earth has been exploited and could no longer provide for the

696 For instance, scientists like Newton who viewed the world as a big machine with all parts working as they are designed with certain laws of nature. Carvaka philosophy of the combination of four elements to evolve into world are worth noting here.
698 Ibid., 126.
sustenance of the human beings and other living beings.\textsuperscript{700} Exploitation of renewable forest resources has been increased to unprecedented measures that a degree of deterioration has shot up so high.\textsuperscript{701} Due to population explosion and human ruthless exploitation of these natural resources that are valuable economic means of sustaining life here on earth, the physical world is facing a crisis of projecting itself as a means to liberation.

Before the very question of serving as a natural means of liberation for the spiritual aspect of the human being arises, the question of sustaining human life here on earth becomes very crucial. The metaphysical and spiritual notions of upholding the physical world as useful means to human beings for liberation would be very theoretical and thought provoking in entertaining our human minds of higher ideals of our own traditions. Hermeneutically critiquing such a lofty ideal for our present day bare reality of natural resources being exploited and plundered to cater to the wants of human greed, becomes a necessity.

The ecologists insist that the world has to become really a home (\textit{oikos}) for human beings. Making use of technology humanity should make this world a real home, not a grave.\textsuperscript{702} In the age of technology that has created the ‘threat to survival,’ human society should be aware and sensitive to nature, the resources it offers, its renewable rhythms, the protection it affords to all living beings, and the scope of serving them as means for their liberation. Today ecological problems are well intertwined with the survival of human beings in the world.\textsuperscript{703} In such a situation, speaking highly of the concepts of upholding the world as a place of working out human liberation needs to be critically looked into for their contemporary relevance and significance. As Yvon Ambroise rights observes, “If humankind does not become aware of the way it

\begin{footnotes}
\end{footnotes}
is undermining its own safety, health and very existence itself, the ecological problem will overtake it like a deluge leaving no traces of human existence.”

Concept of māyai loudly proclaims that the natural world is to be preserved and maintained not just because of its utility for humanity’s liberation but primarily for its survival without which liberation cannot be worked out.

### 5.3.3. Nature as Spiritually Valuable

Liberation of the human beings is the primary reason for God to create the world through His infinite love and compassion for human beings. It is God who created the world and so humans are to make use them only for their emancipation, and not for any other purpose. Since they have not created the world, they cannot be the owners of the world. Body and the world have to be used for the greater purposes of human liberation and for the service for the humanity. The better use of the world and body for the sake of liberation is warranted.

### 5.3.4. Nature as Means not End in itself

In treating the physical realities as spiritually valuable, Tirumandiram proclaims a very important message for the contemporary world of ideologies and spiritualities. The body and the world are to be utilized as the means not as an end in itself. Very often in a quest for asserting the material aspects of body and world many traditions have misunderstood it as the end of everything. As if nothing else is, matter occupied the minds of those who gave thought to the purpose of human life. The human destiny does not end in just the physical and material aspects of life alone. The mistakes of those traditions that stressed the reality of matter as the end itself, are now revisited in the understanding of Tirumandiram on matter and its evolutes. Physical and worldly objects cannot be treated just as the end, but only as means.

---

Tirumūlar's understanding of matter as a necessity for human liberation is a better position as opposed to view of nature as non-reality. Care is to be taken to restrict such a view to go to the other extreme of making nature so distancing and alienating from humans. If the world has to be used for human purpose, the bad consequences would follow like humans becoming slaves to machines and structures that they themselves have created, especially when these things are economically and hedonistically beneficial to them.  

Concept of māyai in Tirumandiram does not propagate absolutism of material reality but pluralistic realism. Mere naturalism or bare materialism is far from being realistic. Material reality is to be asserted realistically, not absolutely. For, hardcore materialism leads only to material absolutism. It would only promote material reductionism which envisions that nothing but the matter alone exist and that everything is reducible to matter.

5.3.5. Body as a Blessing

As a living religion, the Śaiva Siddhānta upholds the saints and their experiences. Many times they are alleged to be condemning the human body outright. Although we come across here and there, the saints condemning births etc., it is only in so far as these delude us. They feared the cycle of births as a separation from the Lord. But they regard human birth as an unique opportunity for release. As Tirumūlar explains, “If the body perishes, the soul also comes to grief; there will be no enlightenment either. Hence knowing how to take care of my body, I tend it thereby taking care of my soul.”

Again they welcomed the cycle of birth, if vision of the lord is guaranteed. Appar sings, “Even were I to be born a worm, grant that Your Feet will be ever lodged in me.” And again, he says that human births are welcomed if he is priviledged to

---

706 “clk;ig tsh;j;Njd; caph; tsh;j;NjNd. – Tirumandiram – 724. clk;gpDf Kd;dk; Of;nfCwpUe;Njd; clk;gpDf;Fs;Ns cWnghUs; fz;Nld;.; – Tirumandiram – 725.
707 Karaikal Ammaiyar prays, “Grant me freedom from births; but if I am to be born, grant that I should ever think of you.”
see the sweet-smiling Lord. He regarded the human body as the temple of the Lord. Tirumūlar through the concept of māyai in Tirumandiram regards human body as a blessing and a grace-filled medium through which one works out his/her liberation.

Modernized medical professionals treat the human body just as non-living entity without considering it as a living organism. Human body has been interpreted differently throughout human history of ideas. Cartesian philosophical notion, for example, considered body and soul as two separate substances with only an extrinsic relationship. A similar mechanical interpretation is also worth mentioning here. Hence, in the treatment for sicknesses tendency prevailed to treat the disease, not the person, not the whole person, but the body and its parts. Today health care practitioners have gone far in reversing the attitude towards the body as machine. Every human person has his body to communicate his self in love to the people he encounters. The fundamental task of healing professionals is not only to heal but to foster the capacity of the persons to exercise the nuptial meaning of body. In other words, the human body is to be treated as an expression of the person, including their social and spiritual self. Tirumandiram by upholding the affirmation of body, is keen in promoting dignity of human body. Human being is an embodied self with a live body. The earthly life in the body is a journey and a pilgrimage for purification of the self. The human body is the expressed sign and instrument of the whole person. The reality of man is symbolized in the various functions and activities attributed to body and its parts. The body and its parts are the means of expression of the whole person. The body is not mere

---

709 Ibid., 123.
710 Bernard Haring, Medical Ethics (U.K: St. Pauls, 1991), 47.
outward reality but a real visible integral symbol of the whole person.\footnote{713} Hence, man can not express himself outside his body. Human body is not a mere object but an expression of personhood, deserving all the respect and dignity. Such a new holistic approach to human body is a major shift that calls each individual to respect his body, promote its values and prolong a health life, so that purpose of the self in the human physical body upon this earth is achieved.

Since the human body is the expression of person, the respect for person, defending and promotion of man, his primary and fundamental right to life and his dignity as a person as the essential values. Everyone aims at the service of human inalienable rights and his true and integral good of human life here on earth. Modern science and technology that overrules the dignity of human in bodily existence are to protect the human dignity.\footnote{714}

5.4. Decentralizing Anthropocentric Bias

5.4.1. Caution for Consumerist Tendency

The contemporary society has a set of attitudes and value options which are considered to be the causes of ecological problems.\footnote{715} Consumerism seeks only immediate satisfaction of needs. Some of them are only artificial created needs, without considering the consequences on oneself, or on society or nature, having only a short sightedness and focusing only on temporary satisfaction and on momentary pleasure.\footnote{716} Commercialization of everything has become uncontrolled and unbridled. It is only with the profit motive with individual and collective greed. Commercialism seeks to subordinate everything to making money as a means of securing more comforts.\footnote{717} The concept of the world as effective and right tool and means for human liberation

\footnote{714} T.O. Donnell, Morals in Medicine, 55.
\footnote{715} Vincent Sekhar, “Place of the Sacred in Shaping Eco-perspectives,” 173.
would caution us to treat the physical world as a commodity to be commercialized and used for profit making.718

5.4.2. Avoiding Human Selfishness

Selfishness as individual and as community is also another factor contributing to ecological crisis. Self oriented activities have only led to seeking goodness only for one self against the others. The whole community in terms of racial, ethnic and caste loyalties, tries to look for its own security and goodness against the other community. In a wider sense, community as a whole would be interested only in its growth, progress, development and sustenance, against the welfare of other living beings and non-living things. Thus ‘self-centric’ notions would lead to rejection and negation of all other things that are ‘non-self.’ This ‘non-self’ may be characterized in terms of other fellow human being or other living being or other non-living being. Explaining and making meaning with certain value judgments on the non-human sphere of life would be characteristic feature of anthropocentric understanding. All the things or non human beings derive meaning only in reference to human beings. The concept of world in Tirumandiram may subscribe, if interpreted wrongly, to such a view indirectly that the world has no meaning without human beings and the purpose of human liberation.719

5.4.3. Traces of Anthropocentric Attitude

It goes without saying that ultimately it is human beings and their attitude to and use of nature that are at the root of ecological problems. Human presence and interrelation to the world of nature are not determined just by a stimulus-response relationship like that of animals, rather by a process

719 Tirumandiram – 400.
mediated by intellect, judgement and freedom and conditioned by their view of
the world, of their role in it and so on.\textsuperscript{720}

Human beings, with their claim of superiority over the other things of
nature due to the faculty of reason, are to be critical of the position they take as
rationally great, in a present burning crisis. This aspect of superiority of human
being has led to lack of due respect for nature which results in aggressive
plundering of natural resources and progressive decline in the quality of life.\textsuperscript{721}
Rationality has to enable them to be broad-minded, far-sighted and responsible
for the attitudes, concepts, thoughts and actions of their past. Rationality
would necessarily involve responsibility towards what they have done and what
they have to do.\textsuperscript{722} Rationality reminds also of avoiding indifference to what
happens around us and of challenging to be sensible to the environmental
degradation.

The root of environmental crisis is the crisis in human value system. As
Joseph Peruma puts it, “The ethic of modern materialism is the worship of the
self. One values one’s own self. Other things and persons are of value only in
as much as they can be somehow used and manipulated.”\textsuperscript{723} It would be true of
Siddhanta concept of self and the other, the world. The self becomes the centre
of discussion that goes to the extent of valuing the world as the tool to be used
for humans. In as much as it is useful for one’s liberation, the world becomes
valuable.

Anthropocentric outlook is too narrow and is untenable because in
biocentric vision humans identify themselves as members of the earth’s biotic

\textsuperscript{720} Amaladoss, “Ecology and Culture,” 40.
\textsuperscript{721} Ajita Kullu, “Ecological Evil: A Christian Response,” \textit{Journal of Dharma}, 33. 2 (April-
June 2008), 184.
\textsuperscript{723} Peruma, \textit{Motherly Earth}, 116.
community. It is the gravest sin of humanity – the sin of ego-centrism.\textsuperscript{724} It not only denies others of their personhood, but implies an awareness of a common bond with other life, depending on the other members, living and non living, of the biological system of nature. Life is to be a web of interdependent parts and so every individual organism is respected for its own sake.

Human relationship with nature is getting more and more imbalanced these days. The superiority of human being is detrimental to harmonious relationship. In the light of present day crisis of ecology, we need to involve and insist on a ‘philosophy of interconnectedness and interdependence.'\textsuperscript{725} Instead of utilitarianism, altruistic attitude need to emerge. The welfare of the environment is eventually the welfare and well being of human society too. As everything in the world is interrelated, taking care of the other and being interested in the other would be very much beneficial to human beings also. Human-Nature symbiosis is envisioned so that a right understanding of relationship is enhanced. A sort of eco-consciousness is needed today to consider the universe as a unified system of interconnected and interdependent parts.\textsuperscript{726} A profound transformation of anthropocentric mentality would save the world from a possible future catastrophe.

\textbf{5.4.4. Towards Eco-centric Vision}

Eco-centric consciousness celebrates the interconnectedness of reality and the intrinsic value of all that exists. Certain times religious consciousness tends to devalue this world in terms of giving much importance to transcendental realm. At the same time, revamping the sacredness of the world is very much possible and workable in religious consciousness. Technological consciousness tends to reduce everything to mere means and has a strong power to create a godless world. Eco-consciousness is a discernment of the

\textsuperscript{725} Peruma, \textit{Motherly Earth}, 116.  
\textsuperscript{726} \textit{Ibid.}, 128.
depth dimensions of nature, seeing the world as holistic, self-transcending, sacred and worthy of our admiration, care and empathy. Only this right vision, namely eco-centric vision would solve the ecological crisis. While eco-centrism gives primacy to household that consists of life and its environment, anthropocentrism would speak of life in isolation from the environment. Anthropocentric vision incorporates the whole of the universe into human self, whereas eco-centrism envisions the self as a part of the universe. Present day degraded environment would not be able to furnish a suitable home for life.  

5.5. Towards Harmonious Human-Nature Relationship

In any sort of relation between human and nature, there is human perception of nature. “Man’s perception of the nature determines his relation with the nature.” Human notion of nature is one of the important issues in ecology and in environmental protection. Those with an attitude of superiority over nature and with thinking that nature is there to satisfy human desires, relationship with nature is that of domination and exploitation, degradation and reduction. For anyone or any community that thinks that human is a part of nature and is to respect nature, the relation is totally different. Human perception of nature determines a kind of human relationship with nature.

We strongly believe in human capacity of transformation for the better world. Nothing is impossible, if man has firm determination to achieve the end. Task before us is to create an environment in which humanity realizes the nature of things and brings back the lost vision of wholeness. Man is expected to know the things as they really are. Knowing the nature of things is of great

---

importance. “Harmony within one’s own self and between self and the universe or nature is highly expected from the very beginning in Indian thought.”

5.5.1. Need for a Paradigm Shift

As shown earlier, human perception of the universe and the concept of material reality have a great influence in human-nature relationship. Certain concepts of nature have become ideological problem for ecology both in Western and Eastern societies. For instance, mechanistic world-view of the universe, negation of materiality as illusion and superiority of spirit, etc. are worth noting. Few such notions have led humanity to total negation of the world and to be careless about protecting it with a justification that nature is self-preserving; it is cyclic and self-sustaining; it would protect itself. Every problem is a symptom of a greater problem. “… most of our problems, including those related to ecology or environment, arise due too either lack of true discernment of reality or due too misconception reality.”

Focusing only on a limited area of a problem and forgetting the overall issue is totally unwise. Instead of treating the periphery of the ecological problem with the proposals for change of life-style and eco-friendly means of living, our concern is the change of ideology and concept of nature. Evidently, human activities became responsible towards ecological crisis. Human activities emerge from human nature, driven by human attitude and determined by certain ideology. Changing one’s life style would not be effected unless one

---

731 We do not wish to elaborate on this due to limited scope. One could bring in evidences of Indian situation concretely to prove that these notions have led to the problem of ecology. It is an interesting story of a tradition that glorifies itself in the form of respecting the nature and yet has a sheer neglect of natural environment. Ideally and religiously the notion of illusion must have played a greater role in actual degradation of nature. In the West due to the mechanistic world view of the scientific era, we have deeper impact on ecology. Needless to say, the dominant religious tradition in the West too has a major role in ecological crisis.
gets the world view changed. The ecological problem brings the present community to awareness that besides changing one’s acting upon the nature, attitudinal changes are must. Focuses first on the change of viewing, would be followed by justified action. The solution is not from the point of view of the outer environment that focuses on scientific solutions.733

5.5.2. Māyai as Common Material Essence

Human existence in physical body is understood in its material connectivity to the natural world. Physical body itself is a combination of fundamental elements that are responsible for existence of other things in nature. Inherent relationship is established between human existence and nature by virtue of sharing the fundamental material principle called māyai. Material nature participates in the formation, existence and continuation of human personality.734 Tirumūlar is emphatic about it in asserting māyai as the common material essence of human body and natural world. This ‘cosmic ecology’,735 where every living being and every minute thing is significant, is derivable from Tirumandiram. Even the tiniest thing contains the essence of māyai.

Human existence and destiny inextricably linked with environment.736 Human beings are essentially in close proximity with nature. By extending Tirumūlar’s concept of māyai and the purpose of human body and physical world as created for human liberation, one could say that human beings are by necessity ‘dependent upon’737 and interconnected with their environments.

734 Ibid., 62.
737 Note of clarification: We are careful about using the notion of human dependency on nature. Traditional interpretations would vive with the idea as reducing the importance and
Philosophical view of interdependency with nature,\textsuperscript{738} determines the ‘how’ of human conduct towards other living and non-living beings in nature. In a freely extended meaning of ‘interdependency’ between human and nature, *Tirumandiram* could be interpreted as promoting meaningfulness of both human being in *sakala* state and nature. Human beings work out their liberation in and through the medium of physical body and material world, thus, by achieving one’s destiny of being freed from bondages their human existence becomes meaningful. On the other hand, being a medium for human beings in their process of liberation, the destiny of nature is fulfilled. Nature’s purpose of being created in the gross form is accomplished only by human beings. Inevitability of nature for the holistic welfare of human beings is again reiterated in such ‘interdependency.’\textsuperscript{739}

In interrelations between humans and nature, a relation of mutuality is enhanced where the existence of the one is supported by the existence of the other. It cannot be a predatory relation where the existence of one harms and kills and eventually makes the other non-existence, in which case, it may turn to be a relation where there may be the non-survival or non-existence of both in the distance future.\textsuperscript{739}

Human organism is intrinsically, essentially, and more intensely related to the physical world.\textsuperscript{740} It is true that human beings have foundationally depend on the elements and organisms of the world in which they live. Without keeping harmony and balance of interrelationship with other fellow beings, vegetation, animals, atmosphere, earth, water and air, human life cannot

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Kinsely, “Reflections on Ecological Themes,” 237.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
survive. Calling into question the western notion of distinction between the subjective and objective reality, Tirumandiram identifies the human organism with that of the cosmic world. In line with tantric yogic thought pattern, Tirumular describes human body as a miniature replica of the universe. The body contains the entire cosmos in distilled or miniature form. The backbone represents mount Meru the central pole connecting different regions of the physical world. As Meru connects heaven, earth and the underworld, backbone connects the passionate, sexual, lustful dimension with the cerebral. The seven dynamic centers namely cakras lie along the central axis of the backbone. So there is a “careful, conscious attempt to relate the human organism to the wider world, to affirm that in essence and in specific detail the human organism corresponds to the structure and nature of the cosmos at large, to affirm that the human organism is thus intimately and intensely related to the wider universe.” Human-nature relationship in Tirumandiram is not that of dichotomized as one is superior or inferior. Neither there is a sense of superiority nor a sense of domination of one over the other in such a realistic vision of micro and macrocosm having a similar essence.

5.5.3. Love for and Life with Nature

Ancient traditions have an attitude of reverence towards ecology, while modern scientific tradition tends to minimize such reverential feeling towards ecology. Love for nature is so deep rooted in Tirumandiram that one cannot overlook this aspect, particularly in a context where the entire world is experiencing ecological crisis. Tirumandiram is full of illustrations and injunctions exhibiting ecological concerns and the expressions for maintaining a balance among animate and inanimate beings. Life of Tamil people in the

742 Tirumandiram – 385; 2122; 2123.
743 Tirumandiram – Tantra Four – Section 9 - 13 deals with various descriptions and functions of charkas.
classical period itself is indicative of living in harmony with nature and in nature. Every activity and thought of Tamils are very closely associated with natural surroundings and illustrative of living in nature. Their life is a living example of such a praxis cum theory. The people of Tamil Nadu adore nature and her every living and non-living aspect. People lived peacefully for centuries in harmony with land and nature. The pre-modern community professed a philosophy that allowed each part of nature and animals their rightful place as co-sharers. Their religions emphasized the necessity for considering each ant, each leaf, and each drop of rain, each bird and animal as holy.  

5.5.4. Spirit-Matter Continuum in Living Human Person

A comprehensive view of ecological insights gives a reflection on human-nature relationship. Ecological consideration of nature that proposes a better relationship of spirit and matter, humanity and nature, certainly gives an immanent value for the nature endowed with power within. Nature is not understood nowadays as something to be humanized, to be lived in, to be appreciated and to be in harmony with. The same attitude is also extended to the understanding of the human body that serves as a link between the human being and nature. Body is considered simply as a tool and not as an integral part of oneself. Human beings living here on earth should be understood as both body and soul. The duality of body and soul is once again tries to make the perennial problem in the history of human thought. The western society has catered to the understanding of this basic dichotomous worldview and has given rise to the phenomenal growth of science and technology. The dichotomy between soul and body shaped the attitude to matter which is seen as something

749 Explanations are needed more on the deliberations of spirit-matter dualism in history of human thought. However, due to limited scope we skip them.
out there, something not part of humans and something to be used or abused for the sake of humans. This dichotomy once again encourages a sort of selfishness that sees the other as an enemy, to be exploited, dominated and opposed.\textsuperscript{750} Human-nature relationship becomes one of domination and exploitation for the well being of humans. Justification of this attitude is done in terms of value system in religio-philosophical sphere.

Reducing the Śaiva Siddhānta understanding of identifying the human being only with soul negating the body as something to be used for the sake of soul’s liberation, may contain within itself such a dichotomy. Exploring into Tirumūlar’s concept of human being would give us a new vision. The query is extended to a level of asking whether Tirumūlar’s Siddhānta system understands human being just as soul alone, or the unified entity of body and soul. Atleast in sakala state, human being is affirmed to be a unified being with both spirit and matter. “... sakala pukalū mala muvakaiyum puṇarntō...”\textsuperscript{751} The sakalas are the beings soaked in the the three malaṅkaḷ. Being with the material body in the physical world is the specific characteristic feature of souls in sakala state. Hence human being living in the empirical world, as understood from above statements in Tirumandiram, would be said to be having spirit-matter continuum.

5.5.5. Notion of Liberation: From Individual to Community

What we do mean by human liberation could not be just reduced only to sphere of spiritual liberation. Śaiva Siddhānta concept of liberation should also be included in the socio-economic sphere - in liberation of poor and marginalized. Liberation talked in the religio-philosophical realm should affect the ways and means of human liberation in terms of socio-economic fields too. Ecological concerns for human environment for the better life of human society cannot neglect the commitment to the liberation of the poor and justice to

\textsuperscript{750} Amaladoss, “Ecology and Culture,” 49.

\textsuperscript{751} “rfyf; GfYky \%tifAk; GzHe;NjhH...” Tirumandiram –2230; “Kk;kyq; $b Kaq;fp kaq;FNthH...” – Tirumandiram - 2244
them. The world in which we live and for which we raise concerns in terms of ecology, is divided into rich and poor nations, developed and underdeveloped countries, powerful and marginalized societies, and so on. Therefore, situating the ecological crisis with Śaiva Siddhānta concept of human liberation and articulating ecological concerns for the world of today, becomes critically important.

Surely the concept of the world as the habitat of human life and the caretaker of human liberation, would have an implication for the liberation of the least and the last of human society. As Arockiasamy categorically states,

If the perspective of the poor of the world and commitment to their justice and liberation are ignored in the perception and articulation of the ethical obligations and responsibility for the environment of the earth, the latter would be an ethic of ecology ideologically biased in favour of the affluent and advanced countries and classes of the world.

The concern for the protection of environment needs to be critically analyzed in terms of divide between the powerful and advanced societies and the marginalized and poor human communities. The affluent and powerful countries have experienced fast depleting the scarce resources of the earth through their greediness, thereby ignoring the limits of natural resources and denying the poor of the world to have these resources for their own decent human existence. The cry of these societies for the whole world about the universal danger of running short of resources, betrays only their primary concern to defend their level of affluence and standard of advanced life in their fear of possibility of losing it in the near future. Although they try to hide that fear in their shouting for the ecological concerns, this survival anxiety syndrome of protecting their level of affluence and progress shows itself, equating such an attempt of survival in their present state of affluence with that of the struggle of the poor for their basic needs of human life. In most of the

753 Ibid., 32.
writings on ecological problems we do not have a perspective on justice to poor nations, critical awareness of the greedy and unjust depletion of the scarce earthly resources. While the poor of the world struggle for their basic needs the ecologists of the affluent societies are concerned of safeguarding their present state of life without giving up their attitude of greediness and becoming aware of their contribution to ecological crisis.

It could be imperative for us who deal with the concept of world as the means to liberate human beings. While the human beings in the poor state of life are struggling for the needs of human life, the appropriateness of speaking and working out human liberation in the spiritual realm is to be critically analyzed. Understanding the sorry state of millions of people in their struggle for decent human existence deprived of the resources of the world, as a compelling consequence of one’s own karma should again be critiqued. Without commitment to justice to the least and the last of humankind and due relatedness to our fellow human beings, working out one’s own individual liberation would be at stake. Tirumular’s social concern for the human society as a whole confirms this notion.

While being aware of the dominant world view that shapes our attitude towards the physical world, the critical perspective would articulate clearly on whose interest is the safeguarding the world’s resources. The liberation of the poor, the marginalized and the exploited, cannot be overlooked in our deliberation of human liberation that is possible only in and through the physical realities.

As every individual is given ample time, experience and opportunities it needs to realize, it is an obligation on the part of the soul to serve God in

---

754 Ibid., 34.
755 KR. Arumugam, “The Social Concern of the Tirumandiram,” The Yoga of Siddha Tirumular, 401-438, gives an excellent picture of such a concern for the marginalized and caste wise discriminated people.
helping other souls in their evolution.\textsuperscript{756} The whole world is not meant for any individual avarice and greedy wants. It is meant for many other souls to work out their release. Each one has to have an access to the world for one’s own good. None can be deprived of the earth’s resources. The question of justice is very much found in \textit{Tirumandiram}.

\textbf{5.5.6. Summing up}

From the beginning of present millennium, the awareness of ecological crisis drew an immediate attention of many naturalists, environmentalist, scientists, politicians, economists, statesmen and religious persons. None can turn a deaf ear to recent cry of global warming and the climate change.\textsuperscript{757} As ecological problems arise out of certain world-views and ideologies, the solutions also could be sought by reframing them or finding an alternative world-views. Mostly ecological problems are the result of an attitude that has less regard and respect for nature. The ecological problems are often looked at from different perspectives in terms of pantheistic, utilitarian, dominating and exploitative attitudes.\textsuperscript{758} Pantheistic view justifies finding the divinity within the matter and upholding sacredness of the matter. Utilitarian attitude values the world just as it is useful to humans. Dominating and exploitative course of human action emerges from the superior outlook of humans against the matter. Hence, it is a bounded duty of academicians to trace out the ideology or world-view governing human attitudes and activities towards nature and to unearth the alternative, constructive ideologies available in hidden, unknown or less emphasized traditions.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{756} Natarajan, \textit{Tirumantiram}, 64.
\end{flushleft}
With such a passion to bring forth alternative vision of human-nature relationship, the study dwelt on the Śaiva Siddhānta concept of māyai and its evolutes as expounded in the Tirumandiram. It engaged its readers not only in metaphysical speculation about the world but also inspire us to right action towards resolving ecological problems. Our attempt is neither just to describe the notions of maya and its evolutes as found in the Tirumandiram text nor to deal elaborately the problem of ecology. Efforts are made to enquire into a contemporary crisis of ecology in the light of concept of māyai in Tirumandiram, in order that we might be able to determine the perspectives through which we could approach the present crisis and to look for a suggestive remedies towards the adoption and cultivation of more corrective perspectives. The findings of the study throw light on reasons behind ecological crisis and ways ahead in overcoming it. Ancient wisdom of India, in Tirumandiram of Tamil tradition, offers both the interconnectedness of different elements of ecology and traces of causes of ecological disorder. We need to work towards a holistic vision to look into and beyond the life, so to preserve and conserve the environment, without which human wellbeing and liberation would only be an utopia – never realized ideal dream. The possible solutions offered for the wellbeing of every living creature on earth seem to have a central focus on human care and concern.

CONCLUSION