Chapter 2

Indian and African Cross-cultural
Philosophical Analysis
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*Asking skillful question is an art and humans use it as a powerful tool.*

2.1 A General Outlook on Human Quest

As humans we have a natural yearning for continued existence, one of our strongest disposition is the instinct of self-preservation. We also have a strong natural desire to know, by nature we are curious. Human quest on one hand is continuously to unravel the truths of existence and origination of things. And on the other hand is to discover the authenticity of life as a composite whole with various parts. Thus, humans seek answers to basic questions about: What is our origin? What is the ultimate destiny? Why are we here? What happens to us after life? Are we completely part of nature or do we transcend it? Is the difference between oneself and the other beings in environment a difference in degree or a difference in nature? Is there a force over and above humans that controls all these? If there is such a force can it be known? These and similar questions have led to deep reflections all over the world. So, to reflect on such questions in search of explanations or answers is to philosophize. Human history depicts the fact that, born as one of the beings on this planet, we have always engaged with this quest regarding human person and about the physical universe. In other words, there is no part of the world where humans have not philosophized. So the tendency to philosophize is part of human nature, hence every human is a philosopher, who in the course of life, reflects on fundamental philosophical questions. For instance, as humans we have differences in our opinions, ideas and beliefs; further this has made us to engage and reflect on the meaning and value of life. As a result philosophical stimulation takes place due to the encounter with life, society and the environment. Those who, in any civilization, particularly struck with “wonder” at the marvels and complexities, and frequently devoted reflecting on them, constitute as the philosophers of these civilizations. This brings us to the
on-going debate in philosophy that is the distinction between knowledge and wisdom. Often it is stated, wisdom is not identical with knowledge. Heraclitus, one of the early Greek philosophers, is credited with the comment that the ‘learning of many things does not suffice of itself to make a person wise.’ So mere acquisition of knowledge cannot make any one wise; it will not even make one an intellectual, similarly a true intellectual is not one whose mind has become a store house of facts. Thus an intellectual is one who, through education, has developed the frame of mind that is capable of processing facts and extracting their significance for human life. Kwasi Wiredu remarks, “such an intellectual’s participation in the affairs of the society is thoroughly imbued with the desire to bring the intellect to bear upon human problems, so as to liberalise and humanise and in a word, enrich life.” (2009, p.141)

In spite of this, when it is stated that wisdom is not the same thing as knowledge, it is to be remembered that a person cannot become wise on an empty mind too. Ancient seers and thinkers believed and had general outlook in life and its traditions. They exemplified in their appropriate judgement, matured careful selection and keen observation. A wise seer was steeped not only in the values and ideals of the society but also in the general principles underlying them. For instance, in the past, in order to solve a dispute, people would rush to a wise person. Because they were sure to expect an impartial judgement from him, as he knew the relevant customs, appreciated the importance of general rules and was capable of a disciplined survey of facts. The application of general rules to the solution of any sort of problems can never be carried out mechanically. This is the reason, says Wiredu, ‘knowledge of rules without insight into their supporting reasons is not good enough.’ Apparently, it is clear that knowledge is indispensable to wisdom. Quoting a Platonic phrase, one might even say that wisdom is nothing but humanly oriented knowledge with an account. Similarly, a person of wisdom is one who is skilled in evolving knowledge to serve the purposes of human relations.
Further, there is a way we can reconcile the relation between wisdom and knowledge. An intellectual has knowledge and appreciates its relevance to the broader needs of the society, but lack the skill of organising personal relations amicably. On the other hand, the wise person is a master of personal relations, but a novice of any particular branch of knowledge. Both, however, have one thing in common that their particular excellences consist in a certain way of going beyond mere knowledge of facts. In such a domain, a philosopher enters with a search to understand and evaluate the principles underlying the reasons essential in social relationships. How, then, does a person attain a general and integrated outlook of the world in which one is a mere part of the whole system? So, the role of philosophers is to explore the nuances of human beliefs, ideas, imagination and creativity. As these together work towards finding meaningfulness in life. The world is a collection of organic beings rather than mechanical commodities. Our existence and the relationship we share with other beings are unique. It is a deeply embedded virtue of life. If this is true, then what causes turbulence in our relationship with others including nature? Clearly, the choice is not between having and not having a philosophy but rather between having one that is consciously fashioned or an inherited and largely unexamined one. Indeed, no philosophies and philosophers base their opinions and beliefs in vaccum. Their interaction within a given culture, society, nation and its people is essential to put forth their profound knowledge into force. Especially it is necessary to emphasize on this inherent diversity of nature of the elements that constitute culture, namely, human and also human-nature relationships within given cultures.

2.2 Purview of Culture

Culture stands for a sphere or an area that has several divergent elements. Although there are various connotations of the term culture. Here two main features of it shall be considered. Firstly, the word ‘culture’ is indiscriminately used to characterise a ‘person’ or a ‘society.’ Consequently, it stands for a group of properties to form a character as exemplified in the
behaviour of the particular individual or society. Secondly, ‘culture’ also means those activities or functions that are witnessed to constitute the cultural behaviour of an individual or that individual’s society. Presently, culture is looked upon as a domain of created products that individuals in group possess, multiply and constantly improve. This is further divided into two major elements: those which are simple and the other which are derived or formed out of the simple ones. Every culture, on one hand, that is, in a simple culture there are three sets of components, namely, a) things or objects; b) ideas; c) values or laws. On the other hand, in the derived type there consists a fusion of things, ideas and values that a culture and behaviour of individuals bring about amongst them. Here, let us consider ‘Environment,’ which itself is a dynamic sphere, an all encompassing bioregion comprising of all living and non-living things occurring naturally on Earth. It incorporates the interaction of all living species. It consists of climate, weather, natural resources that get affected due to human advancements and economic activity.

Similarly it is also essential to clearify the meanings of its two equivalent terms called ‘ecology’ and ‘nature.’ ‘Ecology’ studies interaction between individual organisms and their environments, including interactions with both biotic and abiotic species. It includes a wide variety of sub-fields, philosophical analysis of ecology focuses on population, community and ecosystem. And ‘Nature’ is usually defined as an all inclusive geocentric sphere (within & beyond) driven by divine synergy, as carrying in its circular movements the stars, the Sun, the planets, and the Moon and as also influencing the sublunar world. Marta Vannucci rightly states, “ecology is the study of each individual’s and each species’ requirements and of their limits of tolerance in realtition to environmental factors.” She defines ecology is “the study of the distribution and abundance of species and individuals.” (1994, pp.88,89) Thus, the environment, including inter-relations among individuals, among individuals and other
species and among species themselves, is evidently a decisive factor in determining the presence or absence and abundance of individuals and species.

In order to take responsible environmental action, we need thoughtful reasoning over environmental issues. All of us require a clear and conceptual understanding of the terms we use, the values we advocate, and our beliefs about what we consider morally appropriate. Do we have responsibilities towards the environment? What should these responsibilities be comprised of? From what sources could they be derived?

For all the above mentioned purposes, it is essential to examine the basic terms and concepts, such as ‘environment’, ‘ecology’ and ‘nature’ that are insightfully addressed within a simple as well as a favorably derived cultures. Thus culture and environment are an inter woven pursuit within the philosophical discussions that has a way of altering the beliefs and actions of humans.

2.3 Culture and Environment

Humanity emerged from individual to families, into population, into communities and ultimately into civilizations. It was culture that shaped the human race, reshaped it into a variety of orderly organisations. Culture is a human interacting pattern with other human and non-human beings and the physical environment. There is a moral crisis and crisis of human values in the society which is heading towards irrevocable inferno. It is essential in this context to recapitulate the words of seers, thinkers and philosophers helping us to draw a distinction between the societies built upon the foundations of material gains and moral values. Eventually we must take decisions by realising which shall collapse and which shall sustain and last for posterity. Thus a cultural life is independent of spatio-temporal existence in a peculiar sense. It is life directly and primarily related to the order of values and only indirectly and secondarily to the order of factual existence.
Similarly, environmental philosophy is one such area of interest for many, that brings together this nurturing of wisdom that we gather with respect to ‘environment’, ‘ecology’ and ‘nature.’ The scope of it is to develop wisdom about the environment, especially with respect to our own action within the environment. Human actions to the natural world arise from both our ability to consider our place in relation to nature and from the fact that we can exercise enormous power for good or ill, over it. We consume resources; we pollute the environment with waste products; we create landscapes or reclaim land from the sea. Although we are ‘natural’ in origin we cannot hide behind the ‘natural’ and deny responsibility for our actions and their consequences. The ability to manipulate the natural world in accordance with our own ends goes together with the ability to reason about our exercise of that power. But as it would appear that our ability to reason about our responsibilities still trails behind our ability to manipulate nature!

We are aware of two central debates on environment i.e. anthropocentrism and non-anthropocentrism. Non-anthropocentrism engages in the study and arguments raised in the fields of land ethics, biocentrism, ecocentrism, ecofeminism and so on. Similarly, in anthropocentrism it implies the presence of nature’s bounty is for human well-being. The present research takes the stand on the wider application of anthropocentrism. The researcher is well aware of the common concern and ideology between the two. The analysis is drawn from the contributions made by scholars who have dealt with this aspect of anthropocentrism. Because environment is incomplete without human engagement, as both fulfill each other.

Considering the anthropocentric argument in a wider sense within the domain of environmental philosophy, we understand the fact that indeed humans are the integral part of the environment. It is how human thinks, decides and what one does with regard to one’s environment. Vannucci addresses a highly enigmatic question: How human evolved as humans: thinking, discriminating, thought-communicating? She chooses to answer by stating
that “everything is sacred by virtue of its own nature because energy pervades everything, thus the lofty tree is worshipped as well as the humble grass on which we sit and the one that helps ignite the fire: all and each one play their role in the cosmic symphony.” The Upanishads say there is only One Brahman without a second. It is the quintessential essence of everything. This Self is Brahman, which is the substance out of which all things are really made. That which is everywhere, is also within us, and what is within us is everywhere. This supreme entity fills all space, expands into all existence, and is vast beyond all measure of perception or knowledge. On account of self-luminosity, non-relativity and universality, Atman and Brahman are the same. This identification of the Self with Absolute is not any act of bringing together two differing natures, but is an affirmation that absoluteness or universality includes everything, and there is nothing outside it, nor beyond it. This philosophy is not just ancient in its antiquity but the truth to be realized and experienced here and now.

In the Indian and African traditional societies, philosophy is of the inherited type. Especially in the Indian tradition, an accumulation of thoughts were transmitted through oral convention and eventually formulated in the most profound texts catering to people of various language background. While in Africa these intellectual thoughts took the forms of folk lore and scripting them into written thoughts have been a very recent feature. Nevertheless, the point is ‘philosophy’ whether oral or written, is to be approached in a spirit of openness and with a sense of freedom. In philosophy one forms the habit of asking for the reasons, other people’s assertions and make sure that people have legitimate solutions for it. As a result a widespread cultivation of this habit by encouraging dialogues among as many philosophies of the world, lies the hope for the improvement of human relationships.
2.4 India’s and Africa’s Colonial Past

Culture is as old as history, yet its contemporary distinction lies in its omnipresent hold over diverse aspects of life. Culture is the crux of academic, psychological, social, anthropological and philosophical analyses with the impact of post-structuralism, communitarianism and cultural studies. Debates in these areas acknowledge cross-cultural dialogue. Kanchana Mahadevan expresses that “cultures with history of oppression reveal that what is at stake is not just cultural-expression, rather they aim at remedying their unequal relationship with hegemonic ones.” (2006) Accordingly we have to find opportunities and provide the scope as well as the space for exercising cultural rights. Eventually this could give rise to invention of new identities that are flexible and egalitarian.

In the cross-cultural study of India and Africa, it is inevitable to ignore the fact that both these nations have had a formidable history of colonial rule for quite a long period of time. As we are aware colonialism and colonization basically mean organization and arrangement. The two words derive from the Latin word colère, meaning to cultivate or to design. Indeed the historical colonial experience does not and obviously cannot reflect the peaceful connotation of these words. But it can be admitted that the colonialists (those settling a region), as well as the colonialists (those exploiting a territory by dominating a local majority) have all tended to organize and transform non-western areas into fundamentally western constructs. V Y Mudimbe, in his book, The Invention of Africa, while looking at this process, uses three main bases to account for the modulations and methods representative of colonial organization: (i) the procedures of acquiring, distributing and exploiting lands in colonies; (ii) the policies of domesticating natives; and (iii) the manner of managing ancient organizations and implementing new modes of production. Thus three complementary hypotheses and actions emerge: the domination of physical space, the reformation of natives’ minds, and the integration of local economic histories into the western perspective. These complementay
projects constitute what might be called the colonizing structure, which completely embraces the physical, human and spiritual aspects of the colonizing experience.

Human existence has been the concern of philosophers, poets, religious thinkers and mystics from the dawn of civilization. The study of human personality in the west lays due emphasis on the social, political and economic aspects; on the contrary, in India, human existence is of primary importance. When one draws a comparison between Plato, taking an instance from the west, and Buddha, Lao-Tzu and early Vedanta from the east, it will ascertain the difference in their modes of perception.

The twentieth century being an age of humanism, consciously or unconsciously, with a relative difference in the east and the west, made a radical shift of reference from the Divine or ultimate authority to human. In the twenty first century, largely for all practical purposes, human beings are the measure of all things. In the modern age, the sense of human autonomy is very deep, without delinking the relevance of God. In the east, the destination of a seeker largely remains spiritual. So its injunctions to know a person have come to an understanding that the human self is deeper than perceptions, thoughts and feelings. As a matter of fact, Indian view of human personality is essentially a spiritual one. As it will be discussed in the following section, some of the prominent living faiths of humankind had their origin in India: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. Besides, Indian culture has influenced a large part of western thought and art and affected other parts of the world as well. People of different ethnic background, languages, and cultures met on Indian soil; though had occasional clashes, they have settled as members of a common civilization whose primary characteristics are faith in an unseen reality, of which all life is a manifestation. Therefore, the concept of a human cannot be confined only to the metaphysical world. The role of trustee is assigned to humans on the Earth, ‘bestowing on them a free personality.’ The concept of
accountability gives them a free choice to perceive a particular way in shaping their destiny; they do not disappear completely in the ever-moving wheel of creativity.

2.5 Culture and Environment in the Indian Context

India being the cradle of the world history’s most prolific civilization, has witnessed the progressive confluence of Harrapan and Mohenjo Daro social and cultural settlements. Then comes the inexhaustible works of the Vedic seers and sages. Eventually resulting in the compilation of Vedic texts and Upanishadic compositions. The period of Epics and Folklores, is significant by itself. The Indian Orthodox and Heterodox schools of thought had profound impact in describing the ontological, metaphysical, epistemological, aesthetical and axiological concepts to the world. These together determine the quintessence or the foundational crux of Indian philosophy. Today, engaging one’s interest only on the study of these contribution cannot give us the purview of Indian way of life. Because Indian culture is a composite whole of this and comprising of many other traditional influences. It is essential to understand the contributions of Persian, Mughal, Greek, French, Dutch, Portuguese and English cultures. As these together forms as the spirit of belonging to Indian mosaic of conceptual/scriptural, mythological/cultural, religious/ethical and transcendental accounts. Ancient Indian metaphysical concepts have traced long ago the idea of Supreme Power/Reality in nature. Philosophical seers through their intuitive perception and experience believed in a way of life that was close to culture and environment that was much secure, sane and sacred. The thinkers visualized culture and environment as all encompassing - plants, trees, animals, water, air, fire, soil, etc., integrated with each other. Cultural values were conceptualised at the backdrop of environment, similarly environment provided the scenic basis for culture to form, shape and reform, reshape. Such a mutual interdependence flourishes a community.
Vedas contain reference to a wide variety of animals and urge humanity to safeguard their well-being. Protection of animal welfare is considered important for proper human welfare. Three-fold divisions of animals are seen in the Vedas in terms of those of the air (vayavya), those of the jungle (aranyā) and those of village (gramyā). With regard to plant life the Vedas call upon the human beings to safeguard and nourish plants and trees. The Vedas mention about plants and trees in comprehensive way. The Vedas hail the trees, the roots, the panicles, the corona, the branches, the leaves, the flowers and the fruits. The texts mention about plantation techniques and talks about the need for plant and creepers to grow upwards. After reading the content of these texts, we need to pledge and remind ourselves that ‘One shall not damage the roots of the plant. Herbs have remedial powers. May fruit-bearing plants ripen.’ Vannucci spells out the Vedic verses contextually in the Life-Hope principles (personified by Lord Savitṛ) and in the Matter-Energy principles (embodied in Lord Agni). “Vanaspatē may you whom the sharp hatchet has brought for great auspiciousness, grow up with hundred branches, with thousand branches may we raise to greatness” (Rig Veda III; 8). Thus the practical Vedic people recognised and revered the presence of God in everything in the universe, just as “fireness in fire”, the idea of “life in living” once it was conceived, was the most mystifying thoughts the Vedic seers ever had. It is logically speculated by the Vedic thinkers who reflected over the most precious possession of human life, in particular and the generation of new life, in a wider spectrum. Firstly as an idea of something that exists but is imperceptible, such as the energy and the power of fire, then eventually as a concept comprising in a body makes it appear different before and after death, the curiosity of living and the concept of life must have developed into the characterization of Lord Savitṛ. Vannucci adds that,

‘the concept of Hope is implicit in the concept of Life,’ Savitṛ as the essence of being alive, controls and directs living beings; it is compared to a mother, the human mother Aditi, who is the ever effulgent, who vivifies, stimulates, regulates movement and life processes.
Similarly, Savitṛ impels life processes and the act of living in the right direction and is in close association with Ṛta that is all the law and order of the cosmos, inclusive of the law of all matter, ways and means that make life possible. In the Gayatri Mantra:

Om Bhuur-Bhuvah Svah
Tat-Savitur-Varenyam ī
Bhargo Devasya Dhimahi
Dhiyo Yo Nah Pracodayaat ā
d

Savitṛ is associated to, and is identical with Surya who is at the root of the web of life on Earth. As a result, Savitṛ is considered as a very ancient God by many authors. As Vannucci, rightly puts forth, ‘the original God or Gods are born of abstract ideas that evolve into concepts that later become anthropomorphic and are finally encompassed in the religious cannon by rites and rituals.’ (p.160) Savitṛ has also an ethical aspect, the expression of making humans free from disease, hazards, greed, aggression, as prayer offered to Savitṛ can be an encouragement to humans to use life meaningfully and responsibly. Further it is stated here:

All Gods are alive, hence they cannot resist Savitṛ’s will. Savitṛ is genderless like Agni. Perhaps combines the attributes of both sexes because the act of living, the essence of life and the physico-chemical processes that sustain life are genderless and irrelevant of sex-attributes; living is a magic in itself, exclusive and never duplicated. (pp. 160,161)

In short, let us thank the energy of Agni and to Savitṛ’s magic, life is maintained and regenerated through their power and intervention.

Traditional Indian thinking is spiritualistic with a firm belief that man has a soul within him as his real being. So an individual has to adopt a moral point of view which helps in reaching towards the higher, spiritual plane, the plane of his real inner being. With regard to the same, one of the important aspect studied is “why should I be moral?” In the Indian context being moral means leading a conscious life within the the framework of certain principles of conduct. Such a moral institution of life creates an awareness of the distiction between ‘what is’ and ‘what ought to be.’ Hence, by being moral, I am being human. In Indian thought morality is recognised from the very early age of the Vedas, as the most basic element in
human life. It is of both social and personal kind. As we understand, moral codes are
engrained in the very being of the universe and humans have to simply to adapt it from there.
In the Indian philosophy the Vedic cosmic principle of Ṛta is the foundation of morality.
According to Kedarnath Tiwari, “Ṛta as a principle of eternal moral order involved in the
universe gives the first idea of morality.” Further he adds:

Thus morality as an institution of life does not have its origin from a kind of social contract or from any
such contingent agency…It has in a sense a divine origin. (2007, p.4)

In Indian thought the moral ideal is equated to the Universal law. It is a central idea
underlying Vedic culture. It operates in material as well as moral and spiritual realms. In other
words, it is a law which operates not only in the human behavioural context as the moral, but
also as the operative supreme universal law of nature, Ṛta is understood as the principle which
was not only in charge of the changing seasons, but also a guiding principle for all human
actions.

Ṛta is an important feature of vedic mantras. It means uniformity of nature or the ordered
force of things such as indicated in the regular alternation of day and night. The Vedic gods
are not only to be seen as the maintainer of cosmic order but also as the upholder of moral
laws. This is the reason deities are referred to as Rtvān and Rtvāvari. They are kind to the good
and cruel to the evil. The gods were looked upon as the keepers of this moral order. They
were ṛtajāta (born within the moral law), ṛtajna (knower of the moral law), ṛtapa (protector
of the moral law), ṛtasyagopa (guardians of ṛta). Thus the Vedic gods were the custodians of
the moral law to which they were themselves subject. An individual was considered the good
man who followed the law and whosoever either opposed it or disobeyed it, considered evil
doer. Later the term ‘evil’ came to be associated with that which was in opposition to this
moral order. It was called ‘anṛta.’ Anrta stands for untruth, incorrect and immoral. So the
personal interpretation of the moral law implied rta as that which is morally right and the
impersonal interpretation of the moral law implied it as that which is morally wrong.
Kedarnath Tiwari says that, “for the Indian mind, consciousness of morality, as distinguished from non-morality, in man is that of his being a man whose actions may be branded as right or wrong on the basis of certain principles of conduct commensurate with his dignity and distinction.”

Gradually by the time we come to the Brahmanas, rta was identified with performance of ritual sacrifices. It was considered a means of attaining not only worldly goods and happiness in the present life but also happiness in the life hereafter. Thus it became obligatory to perform sacrifices. Violation of rta would invite pain and suffering for one-self. Thus welfare and pleasurable life became associated with the moral life. Therefore, as a matter of fact, rta is a three-branched order – a cosmic order, a ritualistic order and a moral order.

Quite often we find emphasis to personal moral order repeatedly used. But it is necessary to recognize the social moral order in the sense of being an essential mechanism to be introduced in the society to guide the people to make appropriate choices. Rta primarily signifies ‘to move’ and through movement emerges the meaning ‘to fit or to arrange.’ Kedarnath Tiwari is of the opinion that, “the movement or activity and order or organization including law seem to be the two basic elements constituting the Vedic concept of Rta.” It is well-defined that rta gives us the basic understanding of moral way of life.

In order to get a clearer meaning about the actual nature of moral life, again like Rta, Dharma too has its evidence in Vedic teachings. The origin of Dharma can be traced back to Rta. Both Rta and Dharma denotes a moral foundation of the universe without which the universe will fall apart. Dharma means to hold, to bear and to sustain. In this sense ‘Dharmas’ implies not only moral virtues and duties, but the whole set of customs, laws, rules, rituals, religious beliefs and practices recognised as approved or settled in the society for people to follow. It is by following the above mentioned observances that the social fabric of the universe is supposed to be sustained together. Thus in the Indian thought, Dharma is used in a very wider
context. John Mackenzie is of the opinion that, in the ancient Vedic period, ‘there was no distinction drawn between moral, religious duties, usages, customary observances and law, and dharma was applied to the whole complex of forms of conduct that were settled or established.’ Similarly K.V. Rangaswami Aiyangar writes regarding the various senses in which the term ‘Dharma’ has been used in the ancient Indian tradition, “‘Dharma’ is used in so many senses that it eludes definition. It stands for nature, intrinsic quality, civil and moral law, justice, virtue, merit, duty and morality.” Correspondingly, P.S. Sivaswamy Aiyer remarks: “the contents of dharma, as evidenced by its use in the various treatise on dharma, are virtually coextensive with the entire sphere of human behaviour and whose numerous and vital prescripts descend to the minutest details of life and conduct.”

Indian philosophy gives equal importance to Rta. It has a special place in social philosophy. The concept of Rta includes the impression of duty. Rta literally means ‘a debt’. It also implies responsibility and obligation. A debt or a loan that needs to be paid back. For instance, we have taken so much from our environment it is our moral duty to return the debt or loan. Indian philosophy discusses three main kinds of debt: Deva rta (Divine debt), Rishi rta (debt of the sages) and Pitru rta (debt of the ancestors). These three are purely meant for fulfillment of duties. The gods, sages and ancestors play a significant role in our lives. We must make efforts to pay back in order to free ourselves from these debts. In the present time, apart from these, we are highly indebted to our environment for bestowing upon us with all its nurturing riches. These conceptual ideas in the ancient times along with the understanding of environmental preservation and conservation were natural and spontaneous. So the moral and social fibre of the society was intact because philosophy was entwined with the environment.

The concepts of Rta and Rta constituted in vedic writings gave a strong foundation for the people born in this soil with a sense commitment. Perhaps this is why we have added to the existing three kinds a fourth one, which is called as Pariyavarna Rta. Recalling Gandhi’s
famous quote “The earth, the air, the land and the water are not an inheritance from our forefathers but on loan from our children. So we have to handover to them at least as it was handed over to us.” Hence performance of duties towards our ecosystem become all the more relevant and is the mandate to secure our future generation.

For Indians Rta, Rna and Dharma are very powerful philosophical concepts with a lot of ethical significance giving rise to meaningful environmental relevance. It is due to the influence of other political dominance, social strife, cultural chaos, that humans have lost a connect with these concepts. Since environment and morality are at stake, a philosophical analysis helps us to redefine, redraw, rethink and recreate its meaningful injunctions in today’s context of environmental crises.

In order to have a significant shift in the focus of our moral interest with regard to environment we need to embark on a journey to experience the fabulous gospels that has made the Indian soil so fertile. There is a growing demand for a comprehensive environmental ethic, which is both rooted in our moral traditions and sensitive to environmental concerns. “Within the framework of environmental philosophy and environmental ethics there are alternative understandings of “nature” in Indian traditions of thought, particularly philosophy.”

one of the major issues in environmental ethics has been to rethink the theological basis of human-nature relationship. The ideas of oneness of nature in Indian Philosophy can be classified into three main themes. The first is based on substantive oneness of nature across all creation or cosmos….nature seen as substantively one. The second stream of thinking explains the process of diversification and differences in the order of creation using different concepts such as the three gunas of Samkhya, different realms of beings, or combination of aggregates. The third view explains the idea of a world of interrelations between all beings and the environment wherein a moral oneness is possible. Bamdur (p. 84)

In addition to this, the Vedic and Upanishadic scriptures highlight the role of metaphors as an important point in the evolutionary process. A metaphor indicate how the lower bio-diversity in nature can help with the evolution of the higher bio-diversities. It is due to the basis of the
use of metaphors in the Vedic tradition and to a very far extent, nature is deified and known via natural metaphors of fire (āgni), air (vāyu) and water (apah).

Ancient Wisdom praise water as the energy giver and a healer. It begins with ‘Apo hista mayo bhuva.’

“Waters! You are health giving,
Give us energy, so that
We may look on great delight.

Give us a portion of the sap, the most
Beneficial you have,
Like mothers longing with love. (to share her best possession with her off springs)

_Apah Suktam: Rig Veda_ (1.1 to 2.2; 10.9)

‘Water or _apah tattva_ appears as one of the products of the creative process, which receives a good deal of attention in ancient Indian scriptures,’ explains Shankar (2013, p.192). The __Rig Veda__, possesses the earliest account of water as the original source that gave rise to the subsequent evolution of the universe. Similarly, in _Chandogya_ Upanishad, it is compared to a tree, here it is referred to as sat or existence and it being the root of which _tejas_ is the sprout. _Tejas_ in its turn becomes the root of which _apah_ is the sprout, _apah_ in its turn becomes the root of which _amma_ is the sprout. Water has been vividly addressed in the Vedas and other ancient literature abundantly.

Why is water such an evocative subject? Water has two forms-celestial and terrestrial. Both have the same destination, and that is the mighty ocean. Considering the latter form of it, our study in the fields of biology and physics tell us that water is merely an inorganic compound through which various chemical processes take place. One of the reasons why we know so little about water may be our obsession with the physical nature of life. While the celestial form of water, put forth to us by the ancient seers and thinkers, appreciated water’s special qualities better than we do today. The profound difference in outlook between the new rational, mechanistic and more exclusive worldview, and the more traditional inclusive,

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nature-centered view, is that, the celestial form is comprehended as a ‘holistic’ science in contrast to the former known as ‘reductionist’ science. Thus, Water is inseparable from a holistic view of life.

Metaphors appeal to thoughts that lie beyond rationality, and by engaging in it, they stand as direct aid to our perception. Nature’s metaphors are particularly a valuable source. In this regard, the animal species are very important, because they are most evolved than its say, plant and other lower species. It can stand as a pure reflection or metaphor of divinity for humans. In fact, the Vedic literature is particularly strong in its metaphorical use of animals, as well as other aspects of nature. To illustrate a few:

The cow is one of the prime metaphors widely used in the Rig Veda. Traditionally ‘cow’ has been a source of sustenance for humanity through its milk and other domestic assistance. The Rig Veda also refers in metaphorical terms cow for mental sustenance, light and knowledge as a nourishing energy. There are references to the seven words (saptavanih) as the seven streams of sound from the cow of mother nature (Prakriti). Here the septuple shows the complete range of sound (mantra) and light as sustenance, from transcendental to the physical. The septuple represents completeness. It is analogous to the seven visible rays of light in the spectrum, the seven separate notes in an octave, and also the seven days of the week (the day being a measurement of time via sunlight). 3 Similarly, the horse is often used as a metaphor for the power or life (prana) aspect of nature, due to the obvious strength of the horse. The swan refers to the calm mind of an evolved being (in a yogi), much like the calm yet graceful and elegant movement of the swan. The eagle refers to great vision and mental accuracy, an ability of the mind to soar great heights, like the vision and the precise movement of an eagle. Likewise, the oceans and seas refer to the cosmic water which gives birth to all manifestations. Just as the sea is the source of all life on earth, the river too, is a source of

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3 Secret of the Veda, chapter 11
inspiration in fulfilling the purpose of connecting the higher states of consciousness to lower physical planes of thought. The Himalayan rivers such as the Saraswati, Indus, Ganga and Brahmaputra are used extensively as metaphors. In the Vedas, Saraswati is the main source of knowledge, speech and inspiration.

From the above illustrations, we reckon the profound forms of nature’s wisdom, whether it is from the feel of a stone, the sound of birds or a stream, the fragrance or vision of a flower, the space of the sky, the bountiness of mountains, the bio-diversity in a forest, the trust or faith of an animal, or the stability of a tree, all encompassing in the scriptures. The study in these scriptures develops our concern regarding the environment from the point of view of moral interest.

In Indian philosophy, the Orthodox and the Heterodox systems both in spite of their metaphysical differences, come to a common understanding with respect to the environment. Indeed when it came to the basis of philosophizing, they did not fall back on the Vedas and they resisted to their own differences. But certainly, when it came to the source of environment, we find them coming together to discuss human-nature relationship. Especially, with regard to whether morality consists in mere performance of certain specific duties or manifests in certain inner traits of our character is sometimes open for debate. In other words, when it comes to following the morality of doing or being. The common consensus has been always in favour of the morality of being because without the inner roots of virtuous character mere mechanical doing of acts will not make one moral. Some virtues like compassion, forgiveness, freedom from anger, truth, non-violence, etc. have always been emphasized. Likewise, some duties like charity, doing good to others, sacrifice, tapas, etc., have been repeatedly mentioned. Even the heterodox system valued environmental concern very strongly and in their writing we do find references regarding reverence and respect for nature.
Perhaps, this is the uniqueness of Indian philosophy and specifically within it underlying its environmental philosophy that naturally draws ideologies, beliefs and values talk in unison its significance. The Buddhist and Jaina texts are a store house practically explicating moral actions appropriate for the co-existence of human as well as non-human world. The most frequently refered list of virtues or duties that we come across in the Indian tradition, including the Vedas and the Upanishads, the Jaina and Buddhist customary practices are the following: satya (truth), ahimsa (non-violence), brahmacharya (abstenance), asteya (non-stealing), and aparigraha (non-attachment). These five constitute the five yamas of the vedic custom, the panchamahavrata of the Jaina tradition and panchashila of the Buddhist philosophy. They refer to the same traits of character and conduct. Kedarnath Tiwari remarks:

Satya refers to being honest in thought, speech and action-all the three. Ahimsa refers to not only to overt non-killing of living beings, but also to non-harming or non-injury to any beings in any ways. More often than not, it also carries with it the positive trait of love, kindness etc. Brahmacharya generally refers to a control over all of the sense organs. Asteya is non-stealing of the property of others. But asteya prohibits not only actual stealing, it also prohibits entertaining any thought of taking away what belongs to others. Sometimes, asteya is given such wide connotation that it comes very near to aparigraha, which means non-attachment to worldly objects. (pp. 86-87) 

In the above list truth, non-violence and non-staeling are regarded as duties, while abstenance and non-attachment are the virtues. But in one sense all of them are regarded as virtues of self-restraint. In the other sense, some refer to social morality, while others to individual morality. Truth, non-violence and non-stealing have social implications, while abstenance and non-attachment have primary reference to self-control. Along with these, as mentioned earlier metaphors have been an integral part of Panchatantra that are full of metaphorical fables depicting intrinsic value of nature in the Buddhists preachings. Jaina Texts too bring out the significant role of ahimsa or non-violence to be practiced in life, i.e., by being least harmful towards all the other elements in nature both biotic and abiotic. This adds on to our understanding of the environment from the point of view of moral consideration.
Further, when one especially looks into the Persian and Mughal works, our attention widens towards the environment. In the Persian paintings specifically the motifs were drawn from the plant and animal world. The colours used to paint were kept natural and they were extracted from plants, fruits and vegetables. Of course the Mughal gardens are world renowned. They have been a classic example for planting world’s most beautiful trees with flowers vibrant in colour and fragrance; plants and trees of various species which bear fruits, provide shade, serve medicinal purpose and beautify the landscapes for both public and private use. These draw our attention with regard to the environment by taking insightful moral actions.

2.6 Culture and Environment in the African Context

Endowed with the richest diversity of human cultures, and being the mother of the human race, Africa could easily propel herself from the depths of economic and political dilemma into one of the most resourceful regions of the world. Thus the key issue facing indigenous people as they gain new rights and raise their opinion in Africa’s newly democratic states is how to reconcile the cultural inheritance that makes them indigenous? An inter-communal co-operation and interactive human diversity has placed African States on the Global Map, today. Kikuyu a dominant ethnic group in Kenya practice a Communal Ownership of land, where in both animate and inanimate beings are joint owners of the land. The Ashanti in Ghana, for instance make a sharp divide between the mother of the fields and her dangerous sister who lives in the underworld. The mother of civilization is somehow closer to humankind.

Environmental and landscape history is also, to a large degree the history of ideas, perceptions, and prescriptions as found in African cultures about how land should look. Their actions on the land reflected deeply rooted aesthetic traditions about natural and inhabited space and the social organization of technology and labour power to transform it.
One third of the world’s population are indigenous people and more than half of them live in Asia and another half in Africa. Access to ancestral land and other natural resources is crucial to their survival but that access has become uncertain in the face of development pressures, driven by industries, such as mining, forestry, plantation, agriculture and so on. Similarly, the problems and crises currently afflicting the conservation and management of Africa's natural resources are primarily the symptoms of the deep-rooted, long-term effects of centuries of colonial domination. Disruptive, materialistic foreign customs have resulted in the disintegration of richly endowed, indigenous systems of natural resource utilization, conservation and management enshrined in the multiplicity of Africa's ethnic nationalities. These complex relationships with nature, founded in diverse religious beliefs, taboos, myths and totems, were responsible for the maintenance of Africa's diverse and abundant biological resources for millennia.

Some of the world’s most acute environmental problems are in rural developing settings, where natural resources are central to income and meeting daily needs. Land-based activities such as farming, livestock husbandry, and consumption and trade in natural resources (e.g., fuelwood, wild herbs) are significantly impacted by climate change. The environment also acts as a “buffer” against household shocks such as job loss or mortality. Thus, the state of the local natural environment is central to the well-being of millions of households in rural regions of developing countries.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu in a keynote speech delivered at the World Future Studies Federation conference held in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1995, argued:

We [Africans] need to re-awaken our memories, to appropriate our history and our rich heritage that we have jettisoned at such a high cost as we rushed after the alien and alienating paradigms and solutions. We must determine our own agenda and our own priorities. To recover our history and to value our collective memory is not to be engaged in a romantic nostalgia. [Far from it], it is to generate in our people and in our children a proper pride and self-assurance.

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Indigenous people all over the world are steadily confronted with outside pressures of having both their land and cultures assimilated into the dominant cultural context. There is currently an acute need to explore successful models of development that allow for the preservation of indigenous lands, sovereignty and culture, while also allowing for the integration of economic development, institutional capacity-building and technological advancement.

2.7 African Indigenous Wisdom

“Environment” can be broadly defined as a community’s natural surroundings (air, water, land) that contain the natural resources (e.g., wood for fuel, herbs for dietary and medicinal use) for which availability, accessibility and quality shape rural livelihoods and the overall health and well-being of the residents. Indigenous people have rich extraordinary experiences. Their unique knowledge has evolved on the foundation of social cohesion and ecological thinking. Such a knowledge system is highly dynamic, reflecting the scientific attitude of the society. Their wise and sustainable uses of resources have developed innovative technologies. From ancient time indigenous people have portrayed their wisdom by using natural imagery in literature and art to evoke the sacredness and instil a deeper meaning to ordinary aspects of life. The African folk lore traditions are store house of references describing about the bounties of nature. Natural elements like fire, air, space, water, etc. are the indispensable rudiments for our existence on Earth. Amidst mountains, Kilimanjaro is a big force which unites humanity. African sages have their genesis in the relationship that ancient tribes built themselves their world and the universe. Forests in general and trees in particular are rich heritage which, if suitably preserved, will benefit many generations to come. Fire is considered to be the first teacher of human species through it we learned various arts, crafts and sciences. Air permeates everything. Life on planet earth and our understanding of the
world is a function of air. Space is the void that holds the world. Subtlest of all, it is the only element with no specific attributes, yet has a unique place among the five elements.

Vannucci states, “throughout the history of mankind and perhaps the pre-history as well, man looks up and inward when he thinks spiritually and about God and all that is good.” For instance, as the flames of fire are always turned up, so are the branches of the trees.

“The general pattern in Africa could be said to be a kind of ‘refracted theism,’ in which divine power is broken down into the actions of the gods,” states Ninian Smart (1989)

Smart has observed some and depicted through four themes:

2.7.1 Mythic Themes

There are many myths of death and disorder. One theme concerns messengers of life and death. God sends a slow animal to deliver the news that humans will have everlasting life. It is often associated with the chameleon, which has the joyous colors of the rainbow in its makeup. But it is sluggish or slow. So God sends another animal, impatiently, like the swift running hare, to deliver the news of death. So the belief is that humans are subject to death. God may have wished us eternal life; but it is the result of natural events that we have to die, opines Smart. Another theme, apart from death, is the figure of the trickster, sometimes seen as a spider. In a Pygmy story, the spiderman *Tore* gave humans water by stealing it from an old lady. He also stole fire for them, when, on visiting a *smith*, his cloth caught fire. He ran in pain through the forest, begging the fire to leave him and enter the trees instead; which it did, and that is how it is that fire is made by the friction of sticks. The *smith* is often a vital person in Africa, a prototype of creator and intermediary between order and disorder. Often the primordial ancestor is conceived of as a *smith*. In simple understanding *smith* is the tool through the use of which effective instruments came into being such as, through effective use
of iron in agriculture one could spread human abilities to various dimensions and besides this, human culture, to different domains of knowledge, says Smart.

2.7.2 Ethical Themes

As the stories of death have indicated, human disobedience is displeasig to God. Humans have social dispositions of greed, jealousy and aggression. Often these tendencies are symbolised in the figure of the sorcerer who plots against the group, acting by night in the bush, cannibalistic in nature and living with wild beasts. The opposite of such characteristics define a general ethic: actions must be harmonious; open and in the light of the day; decourous and orderly; cultured and corresponding to the rules of society.

2.7.3 Ritual Themes

The most prominent ritual in sub-Saharan Africa is sacrifice. Sacrifice, as found in the rest of the world, is the gesture of communication with god, it represents life force, and so it has power, for instance to ward off evil forces. Human desires are made known to the divine being, and it is hoped that the scarificial act will promote such good things as may be desired. Apart from sacrifice, there are seasonal festivals making the transition to new times, as in New Year and harvest time; some are rituals of transitions to new positions in the social order, such as the coronation of kings and the installations of chiefs, the passing of the dead into the world beyond, the marriage ceremonies of individuals and so on. Similarly, Music is a vital feature of worship and ritual. It is generally thought that the spirit world is especially responsive to human music, which may at the same time be divine, because ultimately derived from divine sources. So some distinction is made between sacred and other music, and usually one finds an exhuastive repository of hymns and songs connected with the gods and ancestral spirits of the group. Smart emphasizes that music is used for healing, for fertility purposes and it is an obvious medium for celebration.
2.7.4 Experiential Themes

The awareness of the gods in the rivers and the rains, in the forests and in the sky, in lightning and wild animals, is given by a sense of mystical and extraordinary power. There are also dreams to consider: they may sometimes signal the presence of a spirit to the individual which may proclaim some sin or misdeed for which there is need of compensation. Very common throughout Africa are those occasions, which can be spontaneous, of the possession of a person by a spirit. This may be threatening, and it may call for rituals to cause the spirit to depart; but it also may be gentle, for the person gets thus as close as possible to the god. Priests who are closely identified with particular deities may speak in their name, and so acquire a prophetic function. Some curative practices which involve those who are skilled in questioning and diagnosis may be aided by shamanistic methods, in which the healer takes on the sickness and visits the other world in order to rescue the sick person from the dead. In the real sense, the African deities, their ancestors, the mountains and rivers and the entire ecological bio-diversity are not mere theoretical entities but are very much living presences. Rather they are the scenic backdrop in which the drama of human existence takes place, and fortune weaves its patterns.

For many, African philosophy is necessarily rooted in the traditional belief systems of African ethnic and linguistic groups. This means that anthropology, not philosophy, has been the first source of African philosophy (even among indigenous scholars), as it articulates and analyzes local thought. For some, African philosophy has included African spirituality, religion, cultural tradition, and activism, while for others, African philosophy is only philosophy if it is modeled closely on European forms of disciplinary methodology. Locating African philosophy in the disciplinary and interdisciplinary matrix can be difficult, but the pursuit of a pure disciplinary definition of African philosophy that fails to recognize linkages, debts,
dynamic movement, and the history of discipline development is too restrictive. This, though
does not mean that just anything can be called African philosophy.

Can going back to our cultural roots rejuvenate human-nature interdependency and
conservation-consciousness?

Both India and Africa depict similar wisdom, experiences and control over Common Property
Resources (CPRs). In India, mass movements for safeguarding CPRs have been the Garhwal
Himalayas often quoted Chipko Movement, the most vulnerable Narmada Bachao Andolan,
Anti-Theri Dam Movement and Save Seeds Movement are such remarkable cultural response
against the external forces detrimental to the local culture. Likewise, Kenya’s Green Belt
Movement, founded by Waangari Mathai, played a leading role with a group of less-
privileged women by planting over seven lakh saplings in twenty-two districts in Kenya to
stall the desertification of soil in Africa.

Similarly, the Kalahari is Africa’s wildlife paradise. It is a home for one of the oldest
inhabitants called Bushmen or San hailing from Southern Africa. They will eat anything
available, but their daily diet has always consisted more of fruits, nuts and roots which they
seek out in the desert. In spite of having a vast knowledge of flora and fauna, they do not
domesticate animals or cultivate crops. They have categorised thousands of plants and their
nutritional, medicinal, mystical, and lethal uses. Their lifestyle reflects their love of nature by
utilising bear minimum from their surrounding that is required for survival. Correspondingly,
in India, the State of Maharashtra is the home of Warlis. Warli culture portrays one of the
best examples of human-environment interaction. Their indigenous practices are proof of how
the tribals, have the knowledge of various mechanisms to preserve the environment. One of
the customs of theirs is the zoli ceremony which has two parts: 'empowering' the child to face
life in the forest and introducing the child to the community, which is the basis of Warli life.
Ramachandra Guha very explicitly in his *Nort-South Challenges* (2000, pp.98-99) brings out the wide spread belief that environmetalism as a phenomenon is peculiar to the rich nations of the North, as a product of the move toward ‘postmaterialist’ values among the populations of North America and Western Europe. In a series of books and essays published over the last two and half decades, we have reached to a consensus that poor countries cannot possibly generate environmental movements of their own. Guha has accounted in his work:

various movements that oppose commercial logging and industrial monocultures while defending traditional community rights and natural forests; other struggles of dam-displaced people who do not wish to make way for expensive and destructive ‘mega-projects;’ movements of peasants whose crops and pasturelands have been destroyed by lime-stone mines or granite quarries; movements of artisanal fisherfolk directed at modern high-tech trawlers that destroy their livelihood even as they deplete fish stocks; and movements against paper factories by communities living downstream, for whom chemical effluents destroy the beauty of the river as well as their sole source of drinking water. (2000, pp. 103-104)

Along with the struggles against environmental degradation we must account for the struggles for environmental renewal. Several growing efforts undertaken by rural and indigenous communities in India and Africa to better manage their forests, conserve their soil, sustainably harvest their water or use energy-saving devices like improved stoves and biogas plant are seeking towards social justice. These struggles often been addressed through letters and petitions to official authorities to bring about remedial measures. When efforts of plea fails, such struggles have resulted in protest. In the west, electronic media and direct mails are intelligently used to canvass support. But in India and Africa, the channels of communication were based on traditional networks such as village and tribe, lineage and caste. Chipko Movement that started in a remote Himalayan village high up in the upper Gangetic valley, a group of peasants stopped a group of loggers from felling of the hornbeam trees. The peasants of Mandal – the name of the village adjoined the forest patch – prevented felling by threatening to hug (chipko) the trees. Guha addresses:

Chipko was representative of a wide spectrum of natural-resource conflicts that erupted in different parts of India in the 1970s and 1980s: conflicts over access to forests, fish and grazing resources; conflicts over the effects of industrial pollution and mining; and conflicts over the siting of large dams. One can understand each of these conflicts sequentially, as an unfolding of the processes of Degradation-Shortages-Protest-Controversy (both local & national).... over the period of years taking seven distinct forms of social protest in India. These were Dharma or sit-down strike; the Pradarshan or
mass procession; the Hartal or general strike; the Rasta roko or transport blockade; the Bhoomi hartal or hunger strike; the Gherao or surround an office or official for days; and the Jail bharo or to fill jails by the collective breach of a law considered unjust. (2000, pp. 106-116)

These demonstrations, singly and collectively, have a very powerful experiential indigenous ideology of social justice. Tagore and Gandhi, for instance, have given Indian environmentalists their most favoured techniques. The former talks of ecosystem co-operative society and the latter perfected himself by protest as well as a moral vocabulary to oppose the destruction of the village economy by industrialization. As a result, India stood as an exemplar for the Asians as well as the rest in the world in creating an awareness of the strategic methods of protests for environmental degradation as well as struggles for environmental renewal.

Another very significant feature of the environmentalism of under developed and developing countries has been the significant role played by women folks of the society. Women have naturally adorned the leadership roles. For example, Medha Patkar, spearheaded the Sardar Sarovar dam, being built on the Narmada river in central India under the banner Narmada Bachao Andolan. No doubt, the construction of the dam was to fulfill the much needed water for irrigation and electricity for the privileged, at the cost of the ‘other’ less-privileged. In order to serve growing wants of the privileged, the development authorities decided raising the height of the dam that had a disastrous effect on the livelihood of over 200 villages, over their cultural centres and the rich deciduous forests. So she became the ‘other’ less-privileged’s power of speech, ensuring that her voice was loud and clear in the deaf ears of the authorities. Her concern was to help displaced villagers to have homes of theirs, as they were uprooted in order to build dams in the name of economic progress. This shall stand as a powerful tool used by women to restrict the onslaught of government dictates in the name of economic development. Similarly, Waangari Mathai, threw up her university position as her country’s first woman professor to motivate other less-privileged women to protect and
improve their environment. Women emerged unanimously undeterred in large numbers to participate in marches and demonstrations, strikes and fasts. They remained undisturbed, in an often brutal political culture, of being harassed, beaten or even jailed. A Venezuelan feminist writes that in her country ‘today all women’s group are environmentalist regardless of whether they know what the environment means,’ she probably is voicing for every woman in India or Malaysia, Brazil, Mexico and Africa.

Among women in the countryside, there is often a deep awareness of the dependence of human society on a clean and bountiful environment. A group of old women in a small township in Rajasthan, geared up to assemble and install solar panels as a form of renewable energy resource, that not only spread across villages, districts and states within the country, it also reached many tribal communities of Africa, where these women in spite of not communicating in their indigenous language successfully through sign language trained boys and girls, young or old in assembling the solar panels. Another tribal woman in the Bastar district of central India, herself active in forest conservation campaign, expresses, ‘what will happen if there are no forests? Bhagwan Mahaprabhu (God) and Dharti Maata (Mother Earth) will leave our side, they will leave us and we will die. It is because the earth exists that we are sitting here and talking.’ In the true sense we have a home-grown ecofeminist emerging from the grassroot level inspiring and indicating at a very closed knitted mystical bond between women and nature, indicating at an intrinsic proto-biological rapport. Women have a historical, traditional and spiritual relationship with the environment. Hence the participation of women in environmental movements rises from their day-to-day involvement in the use of nature. In addition to this from their wider awareness and reverence for community cohesion and solidarity. Guha opines that,

In the division of labour typical of most peasant, tribal and pastoralist households, it falls on women (and children) to gather fuelwood, collect water, and harvest edible plants. They are thus more easily able to perceive, and more quickly respond to, the drying up of springs or the disappearance of forests. But it is also the case that women, more than men are inclined to the long view, to sense. (p.108)
For example, the impact of lack of access to clean water and safe sanitation is not gender neutral. Women and men experience vulnerability differently owing to their socially defined roles and opportunities, access to resources and decision making. Roshini Alphanso, an academician states, in her article titled, ‘Water Scarcity: A violation of Women’s Rights’ that “customary laws and traditions reinforce women’s secondary role within the private and public domains, thus compounding the impact of lack of access on women and especially belonging to rural, indigenous, migrant, and other marginalized sections of the population.”

One of the famous African Proverb, which states that “if one wants to go fast, then need to go alone. But if one wants to go far, then we better go together.”

India and Africa have much in common: their expansive size in geographical and demographic terms; the cultural diversity of their societies; the deep disparities between rich and poor; the history of ambitious and aggressive projects of state-sponsored industrialization; the dreadful ecological and social costs of these projects; and lastly, the emergence of active environmental constituencies, which have challenged the prevailing consensus on what constitutes proper development. On one hand the urban-industrial-technological trap is becoming rampant, while on the other side mainstream culture is bringing the whole under one roof called “bioregional culture”. These eco-regional cultures have long realised that a crucial part of our relations with nature is repairing—wherever possible—the damage done to natural systems. Hence indigenous cultures and wisdom will definitely help humans to recognise, regard, readjust, resynthesize, reshape and rebuild an environment with aesthetic values of reverence for life.

The resolution of this dramatic paradox—and our survival depends on how soon we accept—that the laws and principles from which the natural world arose are the same as those that generate human culture and society, and that we have equal opportunity to exist and evolve

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with all other created beings. Thus environmental problems call for a global ethic and for
global citizenship which include individuals, corporations, governments and global agencies
working together with cultural structures to make it effective.

2.8 Cross-cultural Philosophical Analysis

The four themes of Ninian Smart enumerated indicates the parallel similarities existing in
Indian philosophy. A cross-cultural theoretical analysis enables to reconcile the idea that
philosophy is embedded in secular culture or civilization; it is useful to treat its manifestations
in these ambiences. As a result it is essential to consider human experiences including myths
of origin, ethical values and proverbial lore of human nature in relation to this widespread
sphere. Thus the corroboration of such worldviews, similarities and differences and their
critique and adaptation, is called as cross-cultural study of philosophy. Thus a culturally
embedded knowledge system help humans to define and demonstrate a role for various forms
of identification in general. India & Africa especially emerge in a distinctive way as the
environmentally informed approach to virtue ethics.

There are phenomenal intellectual works available in both the fields of Environmental
Philosophy and Environmental Ethics, we see how the knowledge of it can assimilate the
advances of environmental philosophy and apply them to general ecological, social and
intellectual changes associated with ‘capitalism’ and ‘modernization’ and the transition to
new ideas, such as sustainable development is modulated. But we also see how such a narrow
outlook exploit diverse resources and test the assumptions of western method of
argumentation against the intentions of their own language and culture. A cross-cultural
philosophical analysis reflects on these intentions. There is a progressive development from
questions of primarily Indian and African concern, to more purely, theoretical issues in
environmental philosophy.
Rabindranath Tagore states, “a lamp cannot light the other lamp unless it continues to burn its own wick.” So if we as humans want to ensure our survival for posterity, as an ongoing process one has to keep evaluating the ideas of co-operation, compassion, forebearance, acceptance, truth, goodness and cultivate the same by actively practicing them.\(^5\) So, we are seeking to fill the gap of such inadequacies through various alternative philosophical perspectives and culture studies.

‘Ekam Sat Vipra Bahuda Vadanti’ a Vedic quote meaning ’All is One and it is said in various ways’ is not a new idea, its foundation lies with the ancient seers and philosophers. For thousands of years they have gazed at the stars and known that one thing must exist that is common to and connects the many things within the Universe.\(^6\)

The great guide to human life is its culture.\(^7\) While statements about the relationship between indigenous cultures and the environment have been made on many occasions and in many settings, often these statements have again been encouraged and conceived with a milieu of decolonization.

Everything that we do (behave) may not directly come from the study of scriptures, because most of the indigenous people both from Africa and India of ancient past were well tuned to their respective nature. Rather it emerged from their value structure, behaviour patterns, creative expressions and influence of the elders in the society and family. For instance, when we receive someone with Na\textit{maste}, it is fundamentally based on tradition and human values that are passed on from one generation to another.

It is a fact that the world of nature is full of values, only thing is we require agents who recognize and respect such values to develop a sense of responsibility and accountability. So,

\(^5\) As Arne Naess, Paul Ehrlich believes, “today’s human thought patterns and social organization are inadequate to deal with the population-resource-environmental crisis.”

\(^6\) As Leibniz profoundly said; Reality cannot be found except in One single source, because of the interconnection of all things with one another. (Leibniz, 1670)

\(^7\) The Roman Philosopher Seneca was of the opinion that, “As the soil, however rich it may be, cannot be productive without cultivation, so the mind without culture can never produce good fruit.”
culture is the value and people are the agents who practice them through their day-to-day activities. We are citizens of a global community who need to jointly fight many environmental problems. For this we require a cosmopolitan ethic. Cosmopolitan or Global ethic involves a commitment or an obligation both implicit and explicit towards one another. As Aldo Leopold rightly points out, the members and citizens of the land community include not only humanity but also fellow creatures, the soil and waters, plants and animals which altogether make up ‘the land’. Indigenous people of both Africa and India follow a land ethic, as their unique cultures have taught them to design livelihood systems and live in harmony with nature and in peace and tranquility with other fellow beings. Thus culture is the interwoven complex and fertile medium of human wisdom, insight, habits, behaviour, customs, creativity, innovations and numerous other virtues.

Contemporary thinkers in philosophy with an abiding admiration for the rich tradition and past achievements, show cases a forward-looking faith in the power of the human self. B.K. Lal reminds that ‘every philosophy bears the mark of its origin.’ That is why Indian Philosophy is meditative. It arises as the result of a kind of meditation on the powers of the human self and of nature. The word “Meditative” is more comprehensive as it incorporates the word spiritual within it. And it also suggests that thinkers in philosophy discover certain divine powers of nature and the unique capacity of self-transcendence within an individual. So the process adopted is one of ‘meditative speculation’ where a thinker meditates upon one’s experiences of these powers and makes speculations about their nature. This is how philosophy originates. Contemporary thinkers accept the reality of the world and also of the bodily aspect of humans. For this they highly recommend, the bodily propensities are not to be suspended rather perfected.

Contemporary Philosophical thinkers stand as important challenge in today’s political-democratic ideology driven consumption-oriented economy, and with ideas of social
egalitarianism in conflict with the hierarchical, race, caste and class-ridden, subsistence-oriented structures, says J. N. Mohanty. These scholars have stood during such transformation by re-examining the traditional modes of thinking. With their competency in traditional learning and guided by modern philosophical motivations reinterpreted concepts like consciousness, soul/self, nature of the world, human-world relationship, and so on.

Amidst many striking features of contemporary philosophy, first is the lively sense of its practical value. It is indicated, “its chief concern has not been to conceive of a philosophical scheme like a toy machine to play with, but to make of it a chariot in which humans could ride.” Second, is the spirit of open-mindedness that breathes in its teaching – the conviction that it is one truth that is expressed in all forms of anything that can be called in a true sense faith. Third remarkable aspect is the tone of optimism that pervades in one and all of the contributors and for which the authority of the whole course of contemporary philosophy is claimed, especially Indian and African. The need of a complete understanding of the expressions of the leaders of contemporary thought, some of them who played a prominent role in the new administration during pre-independent and post-independent era of their respective homelands are desirable. The ideas of these scholars and the form given to it through education and the spirit of hope delivered seem to make the present as well as the future generations to pursue true worth of living.

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Books


**Journal Papers**


**Proceeding Papers**

