CHAPTER - 04

RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVE
(INDIAN)
INTRODUCTION

The root of the ecological crisis is a spiritual crisis of self-centered greed, aided and abetted by ingenious technologies no longer properly restrained. Pollution, extinction of species, and destruction of forests and wildlife are crimes against the earth. We have moral obligation towards non-human creation. Rajotte writes: “The most urgent task of both science and religion is to assert the unity and sacredness of creation, and to consider the role of humans in it.”

Religious traditions can serve to remind the world of the power and complexity of nature as well as the moral advantage of living simply, according to the virtues associated with non-violence, etc. They may also help to supply both creative resources of symbols, rituals, and texts as well as inspiring visions for remaining ourselves as part of, not apart from, the natural world. Lily de Silva has said: “We have to understand that pollution in the environment has been caused because there has been psychological pollution within ourselves. If we want a clean environment, we have to adopt a lifestyle that spring from a moral and spiritual dimension.” She continues, “We have to follow a simple, moderate lifestyle eschewing both extremes of self-deprivation and self-indulgence. Satisfaction of basic human necessities, reduction of wants to the minimum, frugality and contentment are its important characteristics. Every individual has to order their life on moral principles, exercise self-control in the enjoyment of the senses, … and behave with wisdom and self awareness in all activities. It is only when each person adopts a simple moderate life style that humanity, as a whole, will stop polluting the environment. With such a life style, humanity will adopt a non-exploitative, non-aggressive, caring attitude towards nature. We can then live in harmony with nature, using its resources for the satisfaction of our basic needs. Just as the bee manufactures honey out of nectar, so we should be able to find happiness and fulfillment in life without harming the natural world in which we live.”

Each faith has something to offer for meeting the ecological crisis. None of them historically has faced the problems we face today; still each of them has enunciated principles that have relevance for the present times. In many ways, they, with their theories about life and practices designed to preserve and protect life, can provide interesting insights into how to cultivate a life style friendly to
environmental values. Here an effort has been made to discuss six major religions (in two parts) regarding their contribution in developing environmental ethics.

**HINDUISM**

Hinduism refers to the Vedic tradition of India. Vedic religion is a non-semetic religion of India, which founded itself on the Vedas. As far as religious aspect is concerned, Vedas are the most ancient and old scriptures available to mankind. It is believed that they were directly transmitted from the God; therefore they are ascribed divine origin.

Hinduism has always been an environmentally sensitive philosophy. It lays much emphasis on environmental ethics. The Mahābhārata, Rāmāyana, Veda, Upanishad, Bhagvad Gītā, Purāṇa and Smṛti, contains numerous messages for the preservation of environment and ecological imbalance. Nature has never been considered a hostile element to be conquered or dominated. In fact, man is taught to live in harmony with nature, and recognize the divinity prevails in all elements, including plants and animals. The great saints & seers of the past had a great respect for nature. What are those features of the Hindu religion which strengthen man’s respect for God’s creation, and how have those features become subsumed in the prevailing treatment of the natural environment and its resources, are going to be discussed in following headings.

*Sṛṣṭi : God’s Creation*

Vedic tradition contemplates divinity as the one in many, and the many in one. They believe that the whole sṛṣṭi (universe) is the creation of God. The earliest Sanskrit text Vedas and Upaniṣads have almost exclusively accepted and preached about the non-dualism of the supreme power that existed before the creation. God, as the efficient cause, and nature (Prakṛti) as the maternal cause of the Universe is unconditionally accepted.³ The God is personified in different names and forms with different attributes and qualities. The God is considered the creator of the Universe. Everything is the manifestation of Himself. In Atharvaveda it is said: “He is our Father, our progenitor, our Friend.”⁴

But in Yajurved he is described as: “He is our friend, our father, our creator: who knows all position, all existing things.”⁵
The Vedic concept of creation is presented differently in Vedic texts. The difference is very slight. The name of the creator is mentioned differently but the God and creation remain almost the same in all Vedic theories of creation. Where as Manusmṛti, Harivamsa and other Purānas believe that God created chaos from his will and deposited in it the seed that become the golden germ, from which he himself was born as the Brahma, or the creator (Puraṣa). On the other side the Upaniṣadic theory of Creation evolved from Brāhmaṇa, where it said:

“Purusa prajapati creates the waters, enter into them as an egg in order to be born from them, and issues forth from them as Brahma.” God is said to have desired creation as a way to relieve the solitude. He (the Ātmān) desired — I will become many, will propagate myself. Accordingly He practiced the mortification. After that He created the entire universe; whatever exists. After having created it, He entered into it.

Thus, it is believed that in the beginning there was the self-alone in the form of a man. He transformed Himself into man and woman locked in a close embrace. Later, He transformed Himself into other creatures. In this way He created everything that exist on earth, in water, and sky. He realized “I indeed an creation for I produced all this” thence arose creation. Everything in this Universe is created by God whether animate or inanimate, movable or unmovable, all belongs to God. “By the Lord enveloped must this all be, whatever moving there is in the moving world”.

Maharsi Vyas states in Mokṣa Dharma Parva of Mahābhārta : God and Prakṛti (Nature) are one and same, thus forming a single nucleus. Different elements or parts of the world are person lifted as parts of his body. “Mountains are His bones, Earth is the flesh, sea is the blood, and sky is His abdomen. Air is His breath. Agni is His Teja, rivers are nerves.” This notion of Vedic tradition indicates that God and Prakṛti was to be one and same. While Prajapati (as mentioned in Ṛgveda) is the creator of sky, the earth, oceans and all other species. He is also its protector and eventual destroyer. There is an endless cycle of creation and destruction. All created things are evolved out of the unmanifest creator. He is the only Lord of creation. Man has no special privilege or authority over other creatures; on the other hand, more obligation and duties have been imposed on the man. As everything is created from the supreme creation, then we
should certainty have a high regard for everything as the expansion of God’s energies. This not only includes all of our fellow men, but all creatures, as well as all aspect of the planet. Violence towards the planet in the form of not caring for the environment is the disrespect towards Gods and his creation.

**Divinity and Sacredness of All Beings**

The principle of divinity and sanctity of life is clearly engraved in the Vedic religion. Hindu regards everything around them as pervaded by a subtle divine presence, may it be rivers, mountains, lakes, animals, flora, the mineral world as well as the stars and planets. It is so because the Divine reality is present as Prāṇa/Shakti/energy, power in every electron, particle, atom, cell and in every manifestation of matter. “He is in all created things and they are all in Him.”

As God resides in all objects in the universe, living or nonliving, He manifests Himself in a graded scale of evolution. The human race, though at the top of the evolutionary pyramid at present, is not seen as some thing apart from the earth and its multitudinous life form.

“I am the self seated in the heart of all creatures. I am the beginning, the middle and the very end of all beings. All beings have, therefore to be treated alike.”

Only God has absolute sovereignty over all creatures including man; thus, man has no dominion over his own life or nonhuman life. Consequently man cannot act as a viceroy of God over the planet, he is just as integral part of this earth as other are.

This connotation of equality of all gives sufficient strength to the doctrine of unity in all diversity.

The Vedic believe in sacredness of all life and God’s creation means that no damage can be inflicted on other species without adequate justification. Therefore, all lives, human and non-human, are of equal value and all have the same right to existence. According to Atharvaved, the earth is not for human beings alone, but for other creatures as well:

“Born of Thee, on Thee move mortal creatures; Thou bearest them – the biped and the quadruped; Thine, O earth, are the five races of men, for whom, Surya (sun), as he, rises spread with rays that the light that is immoral”.
This acceptance of divinity, unity and sacredness of all lives and creation help in promoting reverence for the nature and its all components including all beings, thus preparing the foundation for environmental ethics.

**Reverence for the nature and its components**

In Vedic prediction, nature has been regarded as indispensable in the life of human beings. It has also been considered as revered, bestower of good, and protector from the evils with a concept of God living in it. Hence, there exists a deep sense of reverence for nature and its natural powers. The great forces of nature, the *pañca Mahābhūtas* of earth, sky, air, water and fire as well as the other orders of life; including plants and trees, forests and animals, are all bound to each other within the great rhythm of nature called ‘*Rta*’, which encompasses everything from the flow of season, the functioning of the human body to the configuration of the planets and their rotation. ‘*Rta*’ determines one’s place in the universe, one’s duties and one’s functions and, therefore one’s dharma as well as one’s rights.  

Everything works accordingly. Everything is entitled to maintain this balance and rhythm.

**Earth**

There are several hymns in Vedic texts which are wholly dedicated to respect, care, and protect the earth. The entire hymn of *Aatharvaved* of 63 verses is dedicated to Earth. The Vedic Hymn to the Earth, the *Prthavi Sūkta* is unquestionably the oldest and the most evocative environmental invocation. In it Earth is personified as the goddess *Bhūmi* or *Prthvi*. She is the abundant mother who showers her bounty or mercy on her children.

‘*Mātā Bhūmi: Putroaham Prthviyā*’

*May she, Queen of what has been and will be, make a wide word of us.*

“*Earth in which lie the sea, the river and other waters, in which food and cornfields have come to be, in which lives all that breaths and that moves, may she confer on us the fines of her yield.*” She is considered to feed up all that lives on it. Man is not alone the receiver of its bounties.
In *Bhämisäkta*, sustenance and flourishing of mother earth is clearly mentioned. It is said that Earth can be made happy abode for humans only when they live by *satya* and ‘*Rta’*, truth and right. Earth spreads out for us and makes us prosperous.

> “Set me, O earth, amidst what is they center and thy naval, and vitalizing forces that emanated from thy body, purify us from all sides. Earth is my mother, her son am I; and parjanya my father; may he fill us with plenty.”

Thus, it is very much clear that Earth is worshipped as goddess and mother. She is considered as the sustainer of all living beings and she bears everything on herself without any grudge. So it is mankind’s duty to protect her and not to ruin her with his mal activities.

It is not only the inner composition of earth which is to be protected, but the seer has mentioned that even the natural atmosphere and composition on above the surface of the earth should not be destroyed and disturbed. The ecological balance, which nature has created on the earth and its surrounding, should be maintained at any cost. The seers said it is the feeling of hatred, jealousy and contempt that becomes the cause of destruction of the God given natural gift.

**Agni/Fire**

In Vedic tradition natural powers are treated as deities. *Agni/Fire* is one of them. *Agni* has permeated the entire universe by his effulgence. It is in the earth, in the herbs, in the waters, in the stones, in men, and horses. It is He, who sends down the heat from the sky. He is considered the given and sustainer of life. With waters he is ‘affectionate mother …. givers of all, givers of life. They have healing power.’

*Agni* is down heat from the sky; the firmament belongs to him, and mortals on earth kindle him as an oblation-bearer. *Agni* is indeed the existence, for, it is because of *Agni* that everything exists here. *Agni* is our spring of life. *Agni* has been described as a begetter par-excellence. He places the germ in all beings, and engenders life on the earth and offspring in women. *Rgveda* says that *Agni* heats the heaven and earth when an offering of fuel is made to him.

*Agni*, in the form of the sun, is regarded as the soul, and as such, he is compared with the *Puruṣa*. He is regarded as the ruler and the preserver of the world. He is regarded as the Brahma, who has entered into all beings.
The celestial form of *Agni* is manifest in *Rgveda* where *Agni* is asked to bring *Agni*. In *Atharvaved* it is stated that *Agni* moves having entered into the fire. In the fact it is *Agni* ‘who guards our bodies with ever watchful care.’

**Water**

*Āpah* (water) have been regarded as the first and the foremost element in the *Vedas*. Water (*ap*, singular) is the first creation. *Viśvakarmā* first engendered the waters and then heaven and earth floating on the waters. Further, in the same *sūkta* it is said that the waters were earlier than this earth and heaven, much before the *asuras* and the gods came into being. The waters received the primeval germ whence all the gods came into being. *Atharvaved* says that in the beginning, there was flood of waters. In the *Nāsadiyāsūkta*, the water has been regarded as the first principle:

_Tama āsīttmasā gūlāhmares praketim salīma sarvamā idam._  
_Tuchhyenābhavapititaṁ yadāsīt tapasastanmahinājāytekam._

Darkness there was: at first concealed in the darkness this all was in discriminated chaos. All that existed then was void and formless; by the great power of warmth was born that unit.

In the *Hiranyagarbha-sūkta*, it is stated that the mighty waters contains the universal germ producing *Agni*, thence sprang God’s one spirit (*Ekaḥ*) into being.

Four whole hymns have been addressed to the waters. The waters are regarded as the mistress of the world. They are prayed to grant men procreative power. All creatures are born from the waters. They are the mothers of all being. They are the mothers of sun. They produce *Agni*. *Agni* entered into them. All objects, movable or immovable owe their existence to the waters.

The *apah*, indeed, are this entire world. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* says that it is the waters who pervade everything big or small; the earth, the atmosphere, the heaven, the mountains, gods, men, animals, birds, grass, plants, dogs, worms, insects, ants. All these (worldly manifestations) are waters indeed.

Reverence for and usefulness of water and its healing property and medicinal value is shown in following aphorism of *Rgveda*.

_“Water Contain_
All disease – dispelling medicaments  
Useful for the up taken of our body,  
So that we may live long  
To enjoy the bright sun.  
That there is ambrosia in waters,  
There is healing balm in them,  
And there are medicinal herbs,  
Know this all,  
And by then proper use become wiser.”

Vedic seers were also aware of the polluted water therefore Manu advised:

“One should not cause urine, stool, cough in the water. Anything, which is mixed with those unpious objects, blood and poison, should not be thrown into water.”

All these verses represent themselves as guidelines for everyone in the present scenario to be implemented in our life style.

Air (Vāyu)

Two words vāyu and vāta, have been used in the Ṛgveda for wind. However, a distinction has been maintained between the two. Vāyu is chiefly the divinity, and vāta, the element. Both the words have been deified in the Veda. Vāyu has been celebrated in two whole hymns.

The wind is the germ of the world and Ṛtman of all gods. ‘Satpath Brahman says that vāyu is the transformer of seeds, for vāyu is the vital air, and vital air is the transformer of seeds. He is the breath of all the gods. He is immortal. He is the support of all beings. He exists in all three worlds. He is an abode of all beings. He is the breath of all. All beings pass over into the wind, and from out of the wind, they are again produced.

In caraka Saṃhita, it is written about Vikṛti (pollution) and disease. Air pollution has been mentioned specifically as a cause of so many diseases.

“The polluted air is mixed with bad elements. The air which is against the virtues of seasons, with full of moisture, speedy, hard, icy cool, hot dry, harmful terribly roaring, colliding from two or three sides, bad smelling, oily, full of dirt, smoke, sand and stream creates disease in body and is polluted.”
Through this description everyone is advised to prevent any type of pollution of air. Since air is regarded as divine image, it becomes everyone’s duty to keep it safe and clean in the form of respect.

**Rains**

Regarding the rains, the Vedic seers not only described their importance, but also explained clearly the significantly proved mode of cloud formation. *Vedas* say that water in the form of vapors rise in the sky and come down in the form of rains on the earth.

In *Ṛgveda* it is said that water of upper ocean go to the water of lower regions in the form of Rains. Rainwaters are said to be the best form of water according to *Ṛgveda*. “Divyā Vṛṣṭi Asmākaṁ Supārā”.

In *Ṛgveda* it is accepted that it is due to the rains that earth becomes fertile giving birth to plants and trees which nourishes the health of human beings. The rains are called the protector and waters the life savers and the precious treasure. This treasure is always desired by the people living on the earth, because it is due to this treasure that rivers start flowing, and sky and earth are full of waters. Nature gives its best to human beings for their survival. There is clear emphasis on not polluting the water, and saving the rainwater. Man’s different acts are polluting air and water, thus, resulting in acid rain. Such interpretation of rain shows the importance of rains, and guiding people for its protection.

**Rivers/Oceans/Lakes**

Vedic religion holds rivers in great reverence. Vedic tradition not only nurtures the resources nature has bestowed upon her, but also worships them for all-round prosperity they bring in their wake. Rivers are considered highly sacred. They are generally female divinities, food and life bestowing mothers. The most holy rivers, the best known and most honoured, is the Ganga or Ganges. She is personified as goddess Ganga. The Ganga water itself is the symbol of life without end. This water is thought to be divine. Goddess Ganga is prayed and asked for all tranquility of mortal life and immortality.

The Saraswati River is regarded as goddess Saraswati. She is the divine spouse of Lord *Brahma*, the Creator. She symbolizes the creative power of Lord *Brahma*. 
All others rivers, oceans are also considered sacred. This divinity and sacredness of rivers helps in preventing polluting rivers. In *carak saṃhitā*, Charak says.

“The rivers having water polluted with soil and faces, insects, snakes and rates and carrying rain water aggravate all impurities. Slimy, having abnormal color and taste, viscous and foul smelling water is not wholesome.” It means that when river become polluted, water should not be used.

“One should not perform these 14 acts near the holy waters. Of river Ganga, i.e. remove excrement, brusing and gargling, removing cerumen from body, throwing hairs, dry garlands, playing in water, taking donations, performing sex, attachment with other sacred places, praising other holy places, washing clothes, throwing dirty clothes, thumping water and swimming.”

These very acts are polluting river. Such guidance will prove to be very helping regarding the present pathetic state of our rivers, ocean and lakes throughout the world.

**Trees and Forests**

In Sanskrit literature trees are considered as God. God means one, who possesses unordinary powers and qualities not present in human beings or anyone in the universe. Vedic tradition considers trees and plants as the abode of various Gods and Goddess. Vedic society has been much aware of the fact that flora of the country has a protective power, and indiscriminate destruction would result in pollution and chaos in the society. Some of the plants & trees have been well known for their medicinal power, for their spiritual power, and some as abode of God.

*Rgveda* regards plants as having divine powers, with one entire hymn devoted to their praise, chiefly with reference to their healing properties. In *Rgveda* trees and medicinal herbs have been treated as ‘mothers’, for they nourishes the people by providing them good health.

Trees were considered as being animate and having life, feeling happiness and sorrow. In *Mahābhārata*, it is said:

“Trees take water from the roots. It they have any disease it is cured by sprinkling of medicines. It shows they have taste Sense. Trees are alive and they have life like
others, because on cutting they feel sorrow. Similarly they have the feeling of happiness. After cutting, a new branch comes out.”

Vedic tradition considers trees as abode of various gods. A list of trees and plants and their association with God is given in following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tree</th>
<th>Related Deities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asvastha</td>
<td>Vishnu, Lakshmi, Ancestor worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vata</td>
<td>Brahma, Vishnu, Sri Hari, Kuber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tulasi</td>
<td>Lakshmi, Vishnu, Ancestor Worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soma</td>
<td>Moon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bela</td>
<td>Maheshwar, Spirits, Siva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aśoka</td>
<td>Buddha, Indra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amalaki</td>
<td>Laksmi, Kartik, Fertility Cult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tala</td>
<td>Spirits, Ghosts, Buddha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mango</td>
<td>Lakshmi, Govardhan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neem</td>
<td>Sitala, Manasa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palasa</td>
<td>Brahma, Gandharva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pipal</td>
<td>Vishnu, Krishna</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Importance of the trees during Rgvedic period can be seen in the following hymns. “…. May plants, the waters and the sky preserve us, and woods and mountain with their trees for tresses.”

Vedic people worship many trees, and it is still popularly believed that every tree has a vṛkṣa - devatā “tree deity” who is worshipped with prayers and offering of water, flowers and sweets and encircled by sacred threads. For them, the planting of a tree is a religious duty. The practice of planting trees seems to be followed at least fifteen hundred years old as illustrated by Matsya Purāṇa which lists the proper ceremony of tree plantation in aphorism.

In Varāha Purāṇa, trees plantation ceremony is called vanamahotsava. It is said that one, who plants one Pipal, one Neem, one Bad, ten flowering plants or creepers, two pomegranates, two oranges and five trees will not go to hell.

Cutting of trees and destruction of flora were considered a sinful act. The belief that a God dwelt in a tree or that the trees was the spirit, naturally made the cutting down of green trees an unreligious act. The vedic people considered it as their
foremost duty to protect the trees. In *Rgveda* there are words “Vanāni Rgjate” and “Rinate Vanānti” in *Agni* and *Marut Sūkta* where these both mean decorate. They never mean destruction. *Marut Sūktas* condemns those who destroy trees. *Padma Purāṇa* has also stated that cutting of tree is a punishable offence and the person who indulges in cutting of trees and destroying the grass field has to go to hell.

The whole of Sanskrit literature is full of references in favours of protecting trees. It was with an intention to protect the trees that they were associated with godly powers. Vedic ancestors consider it their duty to save trees. This sanctity of trees definitely exhorts protection of trees in the present era also. The present ecological problem is mainly due to excessive destruction of trees & forests. In *Vedas* there exists full naturopathy known as *Ayurveda*, which is fully based on various plants and herbs and other natural factors viz. air, sand, water etc.

**Mountains & Hills**

Mountains were considered very sacred for the Vedic people. Mountains are considered the abodes of the Gods. *Brāhmaṇas, Aranyakas, Upaniṣads, Vedāṅgas, Rāmāyana, Mahābhārata, Purāṇas, Sanskrit kāvyas* tell that Himalaya is the abode of Gods and the emperor of all the mountains. These textbooks praise the greatness of Himalaya. *Atharvaveda* describes the origin of different rivers from this *Himavant*. Whitened by the snow-clad peaks the mountains of *Himavant* bestows upon the happiness.

All the gods and great gods (*Dev* and *Mahādev*) have made their adobe on this Himalaya. Only a look at it abolishes the sins of man. The great god Siva resides on it and has married his daughter. *Mahābhārata* describes it the holy land, favorite land of gods and divine place of pilgrimage. *Kedarakhanda purāṇa* mentions this mountain as the best and land on this.

Himalaya is adorned with snow clad high peaks, fast running large and small rivers, having cold and crystal clear water, hot and cold springs, high waterfalls, lakes, valleys and slopes laden with green dense forests, different kinks of beasts, birds, reptiles and insects. Forests have thousands varieties of trees, herbs, bushes, creepers adorned with beautiful leaves, flowers and fruits. Mines of various metals and jewels are also found here.
Thus, mountains are also considered revered in Vedic tradition. The present state of mountains all over the world is very worse. Such reverence is surely will help in motivating people to rescue and protect them.

**Animals and Birds**

Vedic people are noted for their respect and consideration for the natural world. This includes the flora and fauna of the world, and creatures in the sky and under the sea. Since, Vedic tradition accepts the whole creation as the unfolding of the supreme one into many, they accepts divinity in all creatures including all animals. In *Atharvaved*, it is said that earth is not only for human beings to enjoy, but also for all other bipeds and quadrupeds, bird and animals and other creatures.\(^{89}\)

The most important aspect of Vedic theology is the association accorded to different species with reincarnation and deities. It is believed that Supreme Being has actually gets Himself incarnated in the form of various species.

Several Vedic gods and goddesses have animals and birds as their mounts. The following table lists some of the more important animals and birds associated with Vedic deities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lion</th>
<th>Durga</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wild goose</td>
<td>Brahma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elephant</td>
<td>Indra</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bull</td>
<td>Shiva</td>
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<td>Rat</td>
<td>Ganesha</td>
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<td>Swan</td>
<td>Saraswati</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monkey</td>
<td>Rama</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peacock</td>
<td>Kartikeya</td>
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<tr>
<td>Owl</td>
<td>Lakshmi</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This view of incarnation and mounts of gods and goddess pose very sacred and revered place for animal and bird kingdom. It prevents people from harming and killing them. Present loss of biodiversity is a matter of serious concern resulting in different another environmental problem like ecological imbalance. This view of Vedic tradition seems to be very helpful in rejuvenating and securing the biodiversity.
In *Rgveda* killing animals for food is prohibited and person committing such an act is called *Yatudhan*. “The Yatudhan, who fills himself with the flesh of man, and he who fills himself with the flesh of horse or of other animals, and he who steals the milk of cow—Lord cut off their heads with thy flame.”  

Cow is considered very sacred in Vedic tradition. Although Vedic people follow no single set of rules, reverence for cows can be found throughout the Vedic religion.  

In addition to prohibition of killing, vegetarianism is also highly promoted in Vedic tradition. Not eating meat is considered both an appropriate conduct and a duty. In *Manusmṛti*, it is said that eating meat is a great sin which cannot be washed away by performing *Aśvamedha-yajñas* for a period of one hundred years. It is also said: “Having well considered origin of flesh-foods, and the cruelty of fettering and slaying corporal being, let man entirely abstain from eating flesh.”  

*Yājñavalaky Śmruti* warns of hell-fire (*Ghor Narak*) to those who are killers of domesticated and protected animals. In *Mahābhārata*, the detail of the prohibition of flesh eating is given and promotion of vegetarian is depicted: “The purchaser of flesh performs *hiṃsā* (violence) by his wealth; he who eats flesh does so by enjoying its taste, the killer does *hiṃsā* by actually trying and killing the animals. Thus, there are three forms of killing. He who brings flesh or sends for it, he who cuts off the limbs of an animal, and he who purchases, sells, or cooks flesh and eats it— all of these are to be considered meat—eaters.”  

The *Gītā* also clarifies exactly what should be offered: “If one offers Me with love and devotion in leaf, a flower, fruit or water, I will accept it.” It further declares that one, who lovingly offers his food to God, according to scriptural guidelines, is freed from all sinful reactions and consequent rebirth in the material world: This also promotes vegetarianism, since meat can not be offered to God as food.  

**Ethics**  

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

“Sarve Bhavantu Sukhin, Sarve Santu Nirāmayā
Sarve Bhadrāṇi Paśyantu mā Kaścitdukhā Bhagbhavet.”

Above mentioned is a prayer in which the happiness and well-being of every being is wished and desired. The welfare of every being is the pathway, which leads to the welfare of oneself helping in the attainment of salvation.

For everyone to lead a balanced and disciplined life in Vedic tradition, there has been laid a ethical code of conduct to follow. There are several virtues prescribed in Vedic texts which are supposed to be followed by. Some of them are as such as directly can be helpful in environment protection.

**Ahiṃsā (Non-violence)**

Ahiṃsā (Non-violence) is foremost among them. Simply ‘Ahiṃsā’ means non-killing, non-injury or non-destruction of living beings, and the positive side it includes of protecting a living being, helping a living being, loving a living being and sympathizing with other. In Vedic tradition ahiṃsā appears as morality, compassion, kindness, love to all beings. In the Upaniṣads, the term ‘ahiṃsā’ as such is found to occur in Chāndogy Upaniṣad, where the five ethical qualities, one being ahiṃsā, are said to be equivalent to a part of the sacrifice in which the whole life of man is made an epitome.

In the Upaniṣads, all are asked to root our pride, resentment and lust etc. and not the tender feelings of love, compassion and sympathy. Taittiriya Upaniṣad also points out certain virtues which includes compassion and non-violence. Manu, the first law-giver of Vedic society, stated about the duties of man in which ‘ahiṃsā tops the list.

“Ahīṃsāsatyamasteyam śocuarmandriya nigrāha.”

In Mahābhārata it is said that non-violence is the complete dharma, violence is harmful and adharma.

Non-violence is regarded as supreme penance in various Vedic texts viz. Padma Purāṇa, Mahābhārata, Skanda Purāṇa. There are numerous references in Vedic text promoting the practice of non-violence. In Manuṣmṛti it is said:
“He who gives no creature willingly the pain of confinement or death, but seeks the good of all, enjoys, bliss, flesh cannot be obtained without injury to animals, and the slaughter of animals obstruct the ways to heaven”\textsuperscript{105}

Thus, practice of non-violence, compassion and love towards all being is highly promoted in Vedic tradition. This virtue is highly recommendable and relevant in present era of eco crisis, which aroused mainly because of the lack of such virtues like non-violence, compassion and love towards living beings.

\textit{Aparigraha (Non-possession)}

Another virtue which proves itself relevant in the context of environmental ethics is the promotion of non-possession or \textit{aparigraha}. \textit{Aparigraha} means no acceptance or taking or reception of gifts or other worldly possession. The motive of the promotion of non-possession is to develop detachment towards worldly things, and the welfare of all being is also implicit in it. It evolves the state of desirelessness to keep possession. In \textit{Manuṣmṛti}, Manu says that a monk should establish himself in non-possession, live in secluded place and should observe the silence.\textsuperscript{106} In the \textit{Mahābhārata} also non-possessions is considered to be a quality of a recluse … \textsuperscript{107}

Vedic tradition accepts that everything is the property of Supreme Being. If we have any possession or wealth, we should see that we are only borrowing them for a short time. According to \textit{Isa Upaniṣad} this planet does not belong to humanity anymore than it belongs to the other species living on it. Everything in the Universe belongs to the Lord, you should therefore take only what is really necessary for yourself, which is set-aside for you. You should not take anything else because you know to whom it belongs …\textsuperscript{108}

According to Vedic tradition desire for the fruit of one’s action is responsible for man’s bondage to the cycle of birth and death. Man’s right is to work only, not to the fruit of action. Therefore, abandoning all attachment, he should perform his work only.\textsuperscript{109}

The root causes of present environmental crisis are the excessive use of natural resources, consumerist approach that are based on desire, greed and attachment towards worldly possession. The vow of non-possession, promotion of a detachment and desirelessness seem to be quite relevant in this context. In
Bhagavad- *Gītā*, there is mentioned the divine qualities of a true worshiper. Fearlessness, excessive *Sattva* (purity), interested in the study of spiritual knowledge, charity, self-control, rituals and worship, study of scriptures, penance and simplicity, non-cruelty, truthfulness, without anger, self-sacrificing nature, peace of mind, being non-critical, compassionate to all beings, without greed, gentle, modest, firm-minded intelligence, forgiving nature, fortitude, cleanliness, without envy, without egoistic pride – these are the virtues of those born with divine nature.\(^{110}\)

Thus, it has been cleared from the above description that how the Vedic tradition has enshrined a respect for nature and the concept of environmental harmony and conservation through its scriptures, religious codes, and mythology as narrated in *Vedas, Upaniṣads*, great epics and *purāṇ*. It is obvious that seers of the Vedic and *Upaniṣada* era perceived the value of maintaining a harmonious relationship between the needs of man and the spectaculars diversity of universe. To them, nature was not only the mother that sustained their life; it was the abode of divinity. They did not believe that man’s role on earth was to exploit nature to his own selfish purpose. On the contrary, sanctity of life to them included not only the effort to seek salvation but to seek it by developing a sacred attitude towards the spiritual significance of nature. Man, in Vedic culture, was instructed to maintain harmony with nature and to show reverence for the presence of divinity in nature. Whole universe is be to considered and regarded as one family as state “*vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.*”\(^{111}\) The peace chant of *Yajurved* is also the embodiment of universal welfare.\(^{112}\) Hence, it can be said from the perspective of Vedic tradition that abuse and exploitation of nature for selfish gain is unjust and sacrilegious. We all are entitled to protect it on the whole. Vedic scriptures have stressed that man and nature need to live in close harmony and plants and animals should be the objects of unlimited kindness and benevolence since they make no demands for their sustenance.

Due to mankind’s ignorance and selfishness, our planet has put on the edge of destruction. In *carak samhita*, it has been already warned that when air, water and other elements of nature are polluted, season starts working against their routines or cycles and vegetation gradually begins to ruin.\(^{113}\) Such prediction is proving itself true. Climate change, global warming etc. are such problems we are facing now-a-days. In this context, Vedic religion can be of great help in transforming
society from its current preoccupation with materialism and consumerism to conserve society. Building of Environmental ethic can be made possible with the help of Vedic code of conduct.

BUDDHISM

Concern for the welfare of the natural world has also been an important and integral element of one of another Indian school of thought known as Buddhism. Buddhism, founded by Gautam Buddha appx. 2600 years ago, is wedded to the doctrine of peace, compassion and goodwill. Central to Buddha’s teaching is seeing the equality among humanity and the importance of equality of all sentient beings. Buddhism is fully-fledged philosophy of life reflecting all aspects of experience. Recognition that human beings are essentially dependent upon and interconnected with their environment has given rise to an instinct respect for nature in Buddhism. Although, Buddhism believes humans have a unique opportunity to realize enlightenment, which other creatures do not, yet they have never believed humanity is superior to the rest of the natural world. This respect for nature is revealed throughout Buddhist’s metaphysics and ethics. Buddhism teaches the importance of a caring attitude towards the environment and its components. The practice of non-violence applies not just to human beings, but to all sentient beings- any living thing that has a mind. Where there is a mind there are feelings such as pain, pleasure and joy. No sentient being wants pain, all wants happiness instead. From a Buddhist perceptive, failure to care for creation, to be compassionate for the animal, plant and mineral kingdom, results when we separate ourselves from these domains of life, when we exploit them in pursuits of satisfying our selfish needs, desire, and when we deny our connectedness to and interdependence upon them. Genuine caring for creation is an ecology based on compassion and is a natural and spontaneous result of understanding that everybody and everything is connected and interdependent. To hurt, harm, exploit, neglect or cause suffering to any living being or to our natural resources, environment or the planet is simply to hurt, harm, neglect and cause suffering to ourselves.

The fundamentals of Buddhist philosophy and ethics basically lie on the four noble truths laid by Gautam Buddha himself. The first of these truths was that of the existence of suffering. Birth, decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief,
despair, not to get what one want and existence itself as the world knows existence are sufferings.\textsuperscript{114}

The second truth is that of the origin of suffering. There is suffering because there is the cause of suffering, for nothing can take place without a cause. This doctrine is known as \textit{pratitya samutpād}, which means this exist, therefore that exist. The miserable life of earthly existence has been explained in terms of a chain of twelve links.

From past lives

1. Ignorance (avidyā)
2. The gestalt (Saṃghaṭha) of body, speech and thought, transmitted to us through our former lives, this is known as saṃskāra.

Relating to present existence

3. Consciousness (Viñjana)
4. Name and form (Nāma-rūpa)
5. Six doors of sense-organs (Saḍāyatana)
6. Contact (Indriya-vastu Sampark)
7. Sensations as a result of this contact. It also includes feelings (Vedanā)
8. Cravings for pleasures of senses (Trṣna)
9. Grasping or clinging to trṣna
10. Desire to be born (Bhāva) or account of Trṣna

Pertaining to future birth

11. Birth (jāti)
12. Jarā-Marana (old age and death)\textsuperscript{115}

It is said that \textit{bhava} i.e. the desire to be born is the father and \textit{trṣna} is the mother of our present existence. Hence, Buddhism aims at realizing a state of desirelessness.

The third truth is the extinction of suffering i.e. \textit{Nirvāṇa}. This is the final aim of human striving. It can be said to be a state without pain, desire and any prospect of rebirth.

The fourth truth is path to the cessation of suffering that is called the \textit{aṣṭāṅgikamarga}. This path is also known as the three jewels of \textit{Sīla}, \textit{Samādhi} and \textit{Prajñā}. Through \textit{sīla} or moral discipline one has to prepare oneself for attaining \textit{nīvāṇa} (salvation). Then there is the next step where \textit{sīla} is carried further into \textit{Samādhi}.
The Eightfold path follows:

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<td>1. Right view</td>
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Author important doctrine of Buddhism is mometariness, which means that nothing in the world can be regarded as substantial. Nothing has any permanent nature of its own. As such everything is in flux. From this it follows that every pleasant moment is bound to die out. No reliance can be made on things in constant change. Hence, pain is inevitable in relation to evanescent things if we set our heart on things. Soul too has no permanent self, but is a stream of ever flowing mental events.\(^{116}\) Thus, Buddhism suggests that since nothing in this world ever exists, so everyone should endeavor to obtain the *gaminī* (impermanent) and seek for the eternal five *Dukha-nirodha patipada*, and four truths. Because such is the path which may lead oneself to the cessation of all suffering. The ‘Buddha’ is nothing but the wisdom achieved by enlightenment, the sole purpose of the study & practice of all morality and the sale end of all progress.\(^{117}\)

Although at that time environmental problem did not occurred in the manner they exist today, yet Buddha, being a eternal visionary, propounded many of tenets throughout the Buddhist philosophy which can be correlated with the present environmental dilemma and this can be proved to be instrumental is solving the crisis.

Buddhism considers nature as dynamic. According to Buddhism, changeability, expressed by the Pali term *aniccā*, is one of the basic principles of nature. There is no static and stable things, there are only ever changing, ever moving processes. Solidity, liquidity, heat and mobility, recognized, as the building blocks of nature are all ever-changing phenomena. Change is the very essence of nature.

**The View of Equal Sanctity towards Beings**

Buddhism advocates the equality of all beings. There is no clean distinction between non-human and humans in Buddhism. It is through action, deed, or profession that differentiation arises. If there have had never been any distinction among trees, shrubs, insects, reptiles, birds, then, why should there be a distinction
among human beings.\textsuperscript{118} Buddhism teaches that all sentient beings are entitled to full moral consideration, regardless of species, right down to insect, worm and slugs and that we should hold all sentient beings as dear as they were our own mothers.\textsuperscript{119} Since all beings are equal, all want happiness, no one wants pain. “\textit{All are afraid of the rod (punishment), all fear from death. Taking one self as the example, one shall not strike, shall not let strike. All are afraid of the rod, life is dear to all.}”\textsuperscript{120} Human being is an animal, a part of nature. Buddhism is completely averse to the notion that nature and all created things exist for the benefit of mankind. Mankind is part of the entire cosmic order, but not in a position of dominance. Humans are just as much subject to the natural order of the universe as any other form of sentient existence.\textsuperscript{121} In this way Buddhism present itself eco-centric rather than anthropocentric. This notion of Buddhism creates a feeling of universal reverence for all beings and the natural environment itself. When we understand what we really are, we will be at peace with other beings and our environment. We will cease trying to enlarge our selves though possession and power, take responsibility for our universal self the world. Since the root cause of present environmental dilemma is the misunderstood notion of supremacy of mankind over all other species & beings including natural environment.

**Interconnectedness and Interdependence**

Buddhism strongly emphasis the interdependence and interconnectedness of all entities and events. There is no entity animate or animate and no event however trivial which is not in some way interconnected with every other. No entity or event is an island unto itself. The linkage and inter linkages are all pervasive and inextricable. In the exposition of the Thai monk Buddhadasa Bikkhu, “The entire cosmos is a cooperative. The sun, the moon and the stars live together as a cooperative. The same is true for humans and animals, trees, and the earth. When we realize that the world is a mutual, independent, cooperative enterprise, than only we can build a noble environment.”\textsuperscript{122} Buddhism taught that all things in the universe came into existence ‘arise’ as a result of particular condition. There is no creator God as the first cause, because there is no beginning.\textsuperscript{123}

“\textit{Just as the nature of earth is one which beings each live separately and the earth has no thought of over ness or difference, so is the truth of Buddha.}”\textsuperscript{124}
This doctrine is called the mutual interpertral interfusion of all phenomena. In addition to interdependence, Buddhism also accepts the interconnectedness of all beings. Since life is a continuous flow, all creatures have been connected to everyone. All male creatures at one time been our father, they should all be regarded as our father. And since all female creatures have at one time been our mother. In each life they have been the ones who have given birth to us. So to catch and kill any living creature is surely equivalent to killing our own parents and killing our own body. To cause suffering to any being is to cause suffering to one self. This idea of interdependence and connectedness evolves the feeling of universal responsibility and self-realization. When we understand what we really are we will be at peace with oneselves and our environments. This self – awakening comes with the realization that we are not just a tiny speck in the universe, but we embrace all existence. This understanding, grounded in an awareness of the independence relationship of all existence, spontaneously gives rise to feeling of profound intimacy, universal compassion, and responsibility for the natural world. If at deep level we accept that all phenomena are in essence one with our own body, we will treat everything, animate and inanimate with reverence. Since we are not separate entities, what happens to the universe happens to us as well. Buddhist ecology, therefore, encompasses not just this planet, but the whole cosmos.

**Karmic Cause and Effect**

This is another important aspect of Buddhism that bears upon ecology. Buddhism teaches the doctrine of karma, which is the law of cause and effect relating to our action. Karma means that whatever one sows, one reaps, be it good or evil. What each one is experiencing now is the outcome of what we have thought, said and done in the past. This notion of karma makes everyone aware of not creating constantly new karma by our action. One who believes in the law of causation, therefore, will be careful not to cause pain to people, animals, plants or the earth itself, for harming them is simultaneously, harming oneself. It also encourages us to take responsibility for our present situation as well as for how our life will unfold in the future. The world depends on deed, likewise on deeds depends the men of the world, beings were linked up with their past deeds like the king pin of the moving chariot.
The understanding of karma and rebirth also prepare Buddhism to adopt a sympathetic attitude towards animals. According to this belief, humans can be reborn as animals. So it is possible that our dead relatives are now living as animals. Therefore, it is only right that we should treat animals with kindness and sympathy. The Buddhist concept of merit also encourages a gentle non-violent attitude towards living creatures. Kindness to animals, be they big or small, is a source of merit—merit that human beings need to improve their lot in the cycle of rebirths and to approach the final goal of Nibbāna (also known as ‘Nirvāṇa’).

**Nature and Morality**

Buddhism believes that natural process are affected the morals of humanity. It is said that the moral degeneration of humanity has had adverse effects on nature. Moral deterioration accelerates and shapes the changes bringing about circumstances, which are adverse to human well-being and happiness.

According to a discourse of the Buddha in the Anguttara Nikāya, when lust, greed and wrong values grip the heart of humanity, and immortality becomes widely spread in society, timely rain does not fall. When timely rain does not fall, corpses fall victim to pests and plant disease. Through lack of nourishing food the human mortality rates rise.

Thus, several sūta from Pali cannon show that early Buddhism believes there is a close relationship between human morality and natural environment. Both nature and humanity are bound together in a reciprocal relationship with changes in one necessarily causing changes in other. Such a interpretation impels and exhorts one self and whole humanity to check their moral deterioration which is causing harm to the nature.

**Eightfold Path**

In Buddhism, the aim of life is to attain Nirvāṇa through removal of ignorance achieving self-realization. To attain the state of nirvāṇa, Buddhism advocates the eightfold path for everyone. The noble eightfold path consist of right vision, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right efforts, right mindfulness and right concentration.

Buddhism believes that all we are is the result of what we have thought. From positive thoughts flow positive actions and positive consequences, whereas from
negative thoughts flow negative consequences. Furthermore, the actions of an individual in the present life can influence the next one as well. Enlightenment derives from the understanding of this elemental reality. The quality of our thoughts and actions are inextricably linked and has a powerful impact on the environment. In this sense, Buddhism offers a gift to the world in the form of ‘Middle Path’ also known as ‘madhyam mārg’. 

To check one’s thought and action altogether, eightfold path has been advocated. This path is divided into three areas of discipline, concentration / mindfulness, and wisdom. The three steps of the path dedicated to discipline are all based on metta, or love, namely: right speech, right action, and right livelihood. These factors aim at promoting harmony between all beings. Such an orientation helps to promote environmental awareness and help to understand value of all beings.

Right livelihood, one of middle path is directly linked with environmental protection According to this, Buddhism requires every person to consider the manner in which the performance of his duties as employee would imperils on society and future. Employment in the armament industry, which imports the human future and natural environment, would be a violation of the path of right livelihood. Any employment which causes damage to the environment, such as manufacturing of toxic substance, felling of forests and the adverse exploitation of marine resources would also be a violation of right livelihood.

The most important part of middle way is samyak samādhi which is foremost as to achieve the self realization and realization of the real truth of interdependence of all beings.\(^{130}\)

**Ethics and Environment**

Buddhism advocates wide range of ethics to be followed by Buddhist. There are several sublime virtues derived from its metaphysical aspect, which direct a Buddhist conduct. Buddhist ethical conduct is built on the vast conception of universal love and compassion for all living beings, on which the Buddha’s teaching, is based. Buddha taught us to live for the good of many, for the happiness of the many. Since, they aim for the welfare of all beings; they seem to be helpful in promoting environmental concern in the practicenor.
The well known five precepts (pañcaśīla) form the minimum code of ethics that every lay Buddhist is expected to follow. They are as follow.

1. **Pāṇātipātā viramaṇi sikkhāpadaṇā samādiyāmi (I undertake the precept to abstain from the taking of life)**

2. **Adinnādāṇā viramaṇi sikkhāpadaṇā samādiyāmi (I undertake the precept not to take which is not given)**

3. **Kāmesu micchacārā viramaṇī sikkhāpadaṇī (I undertake the precept to abstain from misconduct in sensual actions)**

4. **Mūśāvādā viramaṇi sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi (I undertake the precept to abstain from false speech)**

5. **Surā-meraya-majja, pamadatthānā viramaṇi sikkhāpadaṇī samādiyāmi (I undertake the precept to abstain from liquor that causes intoxication and indolence)**

For the common layman was, the number of śīla prescribed are only five, but in particular cases and on particular occasion they are extended to eight to even ten for monks and laymen both. In addition to pañcaśīla, there are several another sublime virtues which can be derived from its metaphysics which can be directly or indirectly proved to be instrumental in conserving and preserving the natural world. In Buddhism there is a concept called the four sublime states, translated usually as loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. These sublime states encompass the base of ethical conduct in Buddhism. The sublime virtues which can be linked to Buddhist ecology are as follows:

To start with the first precept of pañcaśīla i.e. the non-injury to life (Non-violence), it is explained as the casting aside of all forms of weapons and being careful not to deprive a living thing of life. Living being implies anything that has life, from insects up to mankind. In taking this precept, a Buddhist recognizes his relationship so close that harming of any living creatures inevitably the harming of himself. The Buddha taught the advisability of comparing one’s own life with that of other beings. Everyone fears violence, everyone likes life; comparing oneself would never slay or cause to slay. “All beings tremble before danger, all fear death. When a man considers this, he does not kill or cause to kill. All beings fear before danger, life is dear to all. When a man considers this, he
does not kill or cause to kill. He, who for the sake of happiness hurts others who also wants happiness, shall not hereafter find happiness. He who for the sake of happiness does not hurt others who also want happiness shall hereafter find happiness.”

There are six means of killing: (1) killing with one’s own hands (Sahatthika), (2) causing another to kill by giving an order (anattika); (3) killing by shooting, petting with stones, sticks, etc. (nissaggiya); (4) killing by digging trenches, etc. and entrapping a being (thavāra); (5) killing by the powers of īḍhī, or occult means (īḍhīmāya); and (6) killing by mantras, or occult science (vijjamāya).

Buddhist monk and nuns have to follow an even stricter code of ethics than the laypersons. They must abstain from practices, which would even unintentionally harm living creatures. They are prohibited of traveling during the rainy season because of possible injury to worms and insects that come to the wet surface in water. The same concern for nonviolence prevents for monk from digging the ground, and drinking unstrained water. Thus, the base of performing this virtue is to accept the equality of all beings. This ethic is consistent with Buddhist philosophy of karma and oneness.

In its positive sense the precept of non-injury means the cultivation of compassion and maitri (loving kindness) for all living beings. Karaniyametha sutra prescribes the practices of metta (Loving kindness) towards all living creatures. As it is said in sūtanihipa “May all being be blessed with peace always all creative weak or strong, all creatures great or small, creative seen or unseen, dwelling a far or near, born on awaiting birth, may all be blessed with peace.”

Just as our own life is precious to us, so is the life of another precious to it. The word ‘metta’ is an abstract noun for the word “mitra” meaning “friend”, however, it is not defined just as “friendliness,” but as the same love that prompts a mother to love her only child even more than her life.

Thus, the Buddha’s boundless love extended not only to human beings, but to all living creatures.

The virtue of compassion has been considered “one of the indispensable conditions for deliverance. The Dalai Lama has often stated that loving-kindness is his religion. One who is cruel will not attain to nirvana, only those who hurt no
living being will reach nirvana. A truly great person is not one who succeeds in worldly matter, but one who “hurt not any living being.” Buddhists are to vow, “With all am I a friend, comrade to all and to all creatures kind and merciful.” Compassion is expected of monks, saints and all Buddhists, “ahiṣṭā,” or non-injury is as ethical goal for every Buddhist.

In the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition, spiritual adepts called “bodhisattvas” commit themselves to the task of saving all creatures from suffering. They vow to return to the earth again and again through reincarnation, rather than disappear into nirvana. They come back to suffer the trials and tribulation of life in order of help every individual of every species to escape from ongoing suffering and rebirth. Compassion is given an especially prominent place in the Mahāyāna branch of the Buddhist tradition by virtue of its association with the central ideal of the Bodhisattva, although concern for living things is conceptually no less central in the Theravadin branch.

Due to this precept of nonviolence, flesh eating is fully prohibited in Buddhism. The eighth chapter of Lankavatara sūtra deals specially about flesh eating. It is called ‘maṃsa bhakṣaṇa pari varto’. According to this text any Buddhist, whether he may be a monk, or a layman, should never eat any kind of flesh either of fish or of any other animal.

“The conquerors have said that wine, flesh and onions should not be eaten by any Buddhist.” “He, who kills any creatures for money and he, who pays money for it-both of them are evil doers and shall fall in the Raurana, etc hells.” In addition to Lankavatara Sūtra, in Hasti Kakṣya, Maha meghā, and Nirvāṇagul also flesh eating is prohibited.

Buddhism also expresses a gentle non-violent attitude towards the vegetable kingdom which provides us with all necessities of life. It is said that we should not even break the branch of a tree that has given us shelter.

Among Buddhists, large, old trees are particularly revered. The attitude, which is a legacy of pre-Buddhist animism, does not violate the belief system of Buddhism. The trees are called vanaspati in Pali, meaning ‘lords of the forests’. The deference to trees is further strengthened by the fact that huge trees such as the ironwood, the sala and the fig tree are acknowledged as Bodhi trees.
The open air, natural habitats and forest trees have a special fascination for the eastern mind as symbols of spiritual freedom. Home life is regarded as a fetter that keeps a person in bondage and misery. Renunciation is like the open air, nature unhampered by human activity.\(^\text{150}\) The chief events in the life of the Buddha took place in the open air. He was born in a park at the foot of a tree in Kapilavatthu; he attained enlightenment in the open air at the foot of the Bodhi tree in Bodhgaya; he began his missionary activity in the open air in the sala grove of the Mallas in Pava. The Buddha’s constant advice to his disciples was to resort to natural habitats such as the forest. There, undisturbed by human activity, they could devote themselves to meditation.

Buddhism tirelessly advocates the virtues of non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion in all human pursuits. Greed breeds sorrow and unhealthy consequences. Contentment is a highly praised virtue in Buddhism.\(^\text{151}\) The person, leading a simple life with few wants easily satisfied, is held up as an exemplary character.\(^\text{152}\) Miserliness\(^\text{153}\) and wastefulness\(^\text{154}\) are equally deplored as two degenerate extremes. Wealth should only be a means to an end; it is for the satisfaction of human needs.

Buddhism commends frugality as a virtue in its own right. The disciple Ananda explained to King Udena the thrifty uses of robes by the monks. When new robes were received the old robes were used as coverlets, the old coverlets as mattress covers, the old mattress covers as rugs, the old rugs as dusters, and the old tattered dusters are kneaded with clay and used to repair cracked floors and walls.\(^\text{155}\) The excessive exploitation of nature as carried out today would certainly be condemned by the Buddha in the strongest possible terms. Buddhism advocates a gentle non-aggressive attitude towards nature. According the Dīghnikāya, a householder should accumulate wealth as a bee collects nectar from a flower.\(^\text{156}\) The bee harms neither the fragrance nor the beauty of the flower, but gathers nectar to turn it into sweet honey. Similarly, a human being is expected to make legitimate use of nature, so that he can rise above nature and realize his innate spiritual potential.

Regarding pollution, there are sufficient evidences in the scriptures to provide insight into the Buddhist attitude towards pollution. Cleanliness, both in the person and in the environment, was highly commended. Several rules prohibit monks...
from polluting green grass and water with saliva, urine and faces. These were the common agents of pollution known during the Buddha’s day. Rules about keeping the grass clean were prompted by ethical and aesthetic considerations as well as the fact that it is food for many animals. Water, whether in a river, pond or well, was for public use and each individual had to use it with proper care so that other, who followed, could use it with the same degree of cleanliness.

In Buddhists Jātaka tales, there are several illustrations that prove that all creatures are foundation in Buddhist religion.

In *kuttadaṃtha sūtta*, Buddhist point out that it is the responsibility of the government to protect trees and other organic life. It is described in the *sūtta* polity named ‘The ten duties of the king’ (*Daśarājadhamma*). The *kuttadaṃtha sūtta* points out that the government should take active measures to provide protection to flora and fauna. Apart from these discussed values and ethics, there are several other virtues like self-restraint, patience, celibacy or charity, purity, humility, liberality, reverence, gratitude, tolerance, righteousness, etc. which can be derived from Buddhism, able to help in promoting environmental protection in someway.

Thus, Buddhism offers us a range of powerful sublime virtues and values, which can be instrumental for the protection of our natural environment and community of living being. The Dalai Lama gave expression to the Buddhist perspective in relation to future generation in these terms “if we develop good and considerate qualities within our own minds, our activities will naturally cease to threaten the continued survival of life on Earth. By protecting the natural environment and working to halt the degradation of our planet, we will have to show respect for Earth’s human descendents our future generation.”

The whole analysis and understanding of the Buddhist philosophy helps us to have a clear understating of the present situation of environmental crisis prevalent around the globe which is due to misunderstanding of the place of man in nature, having limitless desire for material well-being, and unthoughtful exploitation of nature without having sense of mutual protection and goodwill. The theory of causation, one of the fundamental teachings of Buddhism is the cosmic force affecting the present situation.
The present calamities are visiting upon us because of selfishness, greed and blindness to materialist pleasure and our disinclination toward following four holy truths. Now it is the time as propagated in Majjhima-nikāya, to develop right conduct, right understanding, and right aspiration if we are to arrest the growing environmental damage and promote a sense of protection, goodwill, and harmony. If we follow the above principles as a basis for environmental ethics in our daily action, it seems likely, that the consequence would promote a nonviolent ecology.

With its philosophic insight into the interconnectedness and thoroughgoing interdependence of all conditioned things, with its thesis that happiness is to be found through the restraint of desire in a life of contentment rather than through the proliferation of desire, with its goal of enlightenment through renunciation and contemplation, and its ethics of non-injury and boundless loving kindness for all beings, Buddhism provides all the essential elements for a relationship to the natural world characterized by respect, care, and compassion.

JAINISM

Jainism is the religion professed by the Jains, so called because they follow the system expounded and preached by the Jinas (Literally, conquerors of self). It is one of the oldest living religions of India, purely indigenous in origin, and represents that Śramaṇa current of ancient Indian culture. It is a fully developed system with all necessary limbs and accessories, and possesses quite a rich cultural heritage, as also several sects and sub sects.

This tradition holds that twenty-four great teachers or Tīrthankarās, established the foundations of the Jain faith. The most recent of these teachers is Vardhamāna Mahāvīra. These Jinas or Tīrthankarās were born as ordinary man, but renounced the world and by a course of strenuous self discipline, asceticism and concentrated meditation mastered the flesh, annihilated all the forces and influences abstracting spiritual development, and attained fullest self realization and absolute perfection, bringing out to the full divinity or godhood inherent in man. Then, for the welfare and happiness of all living beings, they preached what they themselves had practiced and achieved. As such, Jainism is not a revealed religion and claims no divine origin.\(^{160}\)
Jainism starts with the scientific assumption that nothing is destructible, that is, nothing can be created out of something which does not at all exist in one form or the other, and therefore, the universe is the conglomeration of all that exist, is uncreated, is real and is without beginning and without an end. The principle constituents of the cosmos are the two categories animate objects and inanimate objects. (Jīva and ajīva). The animate objects comprise an infinite number of independent souls in varying degrees of physical and spiritual development, and the latter consists of matter in different forms, time, space and media of motion and rest. Spirits (souls) and matter and thus the real, which are pluralistic, eternal and not liable to lose or interchange their nature.\(^{161}\) Jainism believes in the dogma that soul has been associated with matter from times immemorial; this association forges certain energies, which bring about birth, death, and various experiences of life. This process could be stopped and the energies already forged could be destroyed by a course of discipline leading to salvation.\(^{162}\) An intelligent and profound faith in the nature of soul, of matter, and of this mutual relationship, actions and reaction is the first condition for launching upon the path of liberation. The path of liberation consists in piety, charity, renunciation, self-discipline, penance, meditation and self-realization. This trio of right faith, Right knowledge and right conduct, known as the three spiritual gems in Jainism, constitute the path of Mokṣa or Nirvāṇa.

Though, Jainism holds a rich treasure of its metaphysics, ethics, etc, but here only those concepts are dealt with which are instrumental in present era of eco-crisis.

Environmental conservation is intrinsic, innate and inherent in Jainism. It is integrated in almost every principle, tenet and doctrine of Jainism. Enlightened Jain icons, Tīrthaṅkarās, learned saints pondered over every aspect of environment, the various causes of its degradation and as well as remedial to redress and redeem, and also for its sustained maintenance. They evolved and prescribed environment friendly concepts, principles, and ordained mandatory doctrines and an elaborate code of conduct to ensure sustained, congenial and symbiotically harmonious environment. Ecological view of Jainism can be elaborated in following points:
In Jainism equality of all beings is one of the fundamental principles. Even the earth forms, water, air, energy (fire), which are generally considered inanimate, are considered life forms similar to other living beings including human beings. This is unique in Jainism. More than 2600 years ago, Lord Mahāvīra declared that all being of natural world have equal potential for progress in the cycle of transmigration.\(^{163}\) In Jain perspective, the soul is eternal and beginningless. It has life, consciousness, knowledge, and perception. It is potent. It is of two types: one is worldly (Saṁsārī) and the other is emancipated from karmas (muktā).\(^{164}\) Saṁsāraṇaṁ means transmigration, cycle of wandering. Those, who undergo or are subjected to this cycle of wandering, are the transmigrated beings. The transmigrated soul (jīva) is further divided into two broad divisions on the basis of physical faculties: Sīhivar and Tras. They are also called the immobile and the mobile beings.\(^{165}\) The category of immobile beings covers all those organisms that have no mobility. All this types of beings are one-sensed beings having the sense of touch. These have been further divided into five categories – Prthvikāya (Earth Forms), Apakāya (Aqueous forms), Teukāya (Fire Forms), Vāyu Kāya (Air Forms), and Vanaspatikāya (Plant forms).\(^{166}\) Every one of these forms has two types according to their size as micro and macro. These five kinds of immobile beings are living beings having four vitalities i.e. the sense organ of touch, strength or body of energy, respiration and life duration.\(^{167}\) In Vanaspatikāya includes the nigoda also; a minute form of life that is characterized by innumerable souls sharing a common body which, in turn is embodied in other forms of life, including the bodies of human beings.\(^{168}\)

The mobile beings are from two sensed being onwards. This category covers everything in the animal kingdom. Two sensed beings having touch and smell sense include worms, leeches, mollusks, weevils, and so on. Three sensed beings, with the sense of touch, taste and smell include ants, fleas, termites, centipedes, and the like; those with four senses (additionally sight) include wasps, flies, gnats, mosquitoes, butterflies, moths. Five sensed beings, those having the ability to hear, include aquatic animals (e.g. fish, tortoise, and crocodile), winged or aerial animals (birds), and terrestrials, including quadrupeds (e.g. horses, cows, bulls, elephants, lion) and reptiles.\(^{169}\)
In addition to this minute classification of living being, what is important from the ecological perspective is the rendering of equal status to all living beings same as human beings. An equality of all forms of life and reverence for all of them is the central teaching of Lord Mahāvīra. He taught “As you want to live, do so to other.” In that definition of ‘others’ he embraced not only all living beings that can move, but also the earth, air, water and vegetation. On the basis of equality of all souls, Jainism also commands that the denial of the existence of the six classes of beings, the five immobile and the mobile ones, will be tantamount to the denial of the existence of the self. One cannot safeguard one’s own existence by obliterating the existence of others. One cannot be aware of one’s own existence by denying the existence of others. This dictum clearly proclaims the unity of the soul of the all beings.

“He, who knows all, knows one.
And one, who knows one, knows all.”  

Mutual interdependence of all beings, which is the basis of symbolic phenomenon of creation and sustenance of nature existing in all levels, is also loudly proclaimed in Tattvartha Sūtra.

“Parasparopagraho Jīvānām”

Meaning that all living organism, irrespective of the degree of their sensory perception of size, are bound together by mutual support and interdependence. All aspects of nature belong together and are bound in a physical as well as a metaphysical relationship. Ecological science highly accepts this mutual interdependence within natural environment and its components all-together. Jainism does so philosophically by accepting the principle of the interdependent existence of nature and animal.

Jainism states that, as we do not like pain and suffering likewise no other beings wish for pain and sufferings. In Acārāṅga it is clearly said:

Savve pānā piyāuyā suhasāyā
dukkhapadikūla appiyavahā piyajiviṇo jīviukamā.
Savvesiṃ jīvīyam piyam
It means that all beings love long life, relish happiness, hate suffering, dislike torture, and love to live, desire for life. To everyone life is dear. Everybody wants to live an independent life. So we should not inflict pain upon others.

In Acārāṅga, a very heart rending pathetic comparison of similarity between the pain inflicted on and felt by any living being including earth, water, air fire, plants and human beings is given. All feel the same intensity of pain as we do and so it is ordained that no harm should be done and no pain should be inflicted on any part (organ) or whole of any living being. It is our duty to protect all this.

According to Jain philosophy, the earth contains conscious beings who experience pain. One, who uses weapons on the body of the earth, has neither comprehended nor foresworn action that causes violence. One should, therefore, not use any weapon causing violence to the being of the earth, cause others to use such weapons, or approve of other using weapons in this way. Plowing, digging, excretion, and other violations of the earth fall into the category of violence towards the earth bodied beings. According to Mūlācāra, the earth body includes thirty-six types of soil, sand, gold, silver, stone, diamond, salt, iron, and other products of value to humans.

Likewise, water, according to Jainism contains beings. This supported by the tools of contemporary science, which demonstrates the existence of multitudinous microorganisms in water. Jains are supposed to drink filtered water. Acārāṅga Niriyuki enumerates some weapons that kill the beings found in water such as drawing water from a well, straining it, washing clothes. The Acārāṅga cūrṇi mentions some other varieties of weapons also such as, change produced in colour, taste, smell and touch. These causes of water-bodied violations are tantamount to the present water pollution activities. Every one is prohibited to cause violence to the water bodied beings. Jainism also accepts the fire-bodied living beings.

“Je logaṇ abbhāikkeja, se attaṇaṇ abbhāikkai”

He, who denies the existence of living world (of the beings of fire body), denies the existence of his own soul. According to Acārāṅga vṛtti, fire grows on the supply of fuel, and diminishes and extinguishes in the absence of it. Modern thinkers admit that fire cannot kindle without the intake of oxygen. Scientist have
found micro-organism called hyperthermophilic archaic bacteria in a variety of high temperature environment, previously thought to be in capable of supporting life, including the active zone of erupting volcanoes and in the extreme heat of deep sea thermal vents. There are also weapons that cause violence to fire bodies – soil, sand, water, and vegetation. There are beings residing in earth, grass, leaves, wood, dung, and garbage. All beings shrivel up on coming into contact with fire and experience instantaneous death.

Plant forms of living being are put almost at par with human beings on the basis of striking similarities. As the human being is born, grows, possess consciousness, takes nourishment, is not eternal, has metabolism, undergoes transformation, sleeps, experiences longings during pregnancy, and succumbs to disease, so also do plants. Plants experience pain when struck or cut with a weapon, just as the consciousness of a person born with the sense organ feels the pain. As states Acārāṅga:

“Se bemi - appege aṁdhamubbhe, appege aṁdhamacche”

To protect the forests and plants there are religious rules that apply even to the Jain laity. Jainacārya have described different types of plants and their classification in several ways. The Bhagvaiī Sūtra, the Āṅgavijjā, the Gommaṭsāra Jīva karmkaṇḍa and the kalyānakāraka are the prominent book, which deal in detail with the life of plants. Jain tradition clearly prohibits cutting down trees.

Likewise, the violation of air-bodied beings is forbidden. According to Acārāṅga Niryūkti, air-bodied beings can be killed by electric fans and even by palm fans.

To more authenticate the livingness of these living beings, in one of Jain Text Jīva Vicāra Prakaraṇam, Santi sūri lists types of life, frequency of appearance, and cites an approximate life span for each. For instance, he states that hardened rock can survive as a distinct life from twenty two thousand years, water bodied souls for seven thousand years, wind bodies for three thousand years; trees for ten thousand years; and fire for three days and there nights. Two-sensed beings are said to live for twelve years. While three sensed being for forty-nine days
and four sensed being for six months. Various life spans are cited for five sensed beings.

This presents the vivid description of natural phenomenon of equality, interdependence, mutuality, oneness and cohesion among all the constituents of natural environment. These are very important principles laid down by Jainism to avoid harm to water, fire and all forms of life and to minimize such evils as pollution, and thus to balance the community and ecosystem. These principles of equality, interdependence, mutuality of Jainism is fundamental for protection and conservation for environment. If all constituents of environment Earth, Water, Air, Plant etc. and all other living being are considered equal, and with same concern as one’s own self then none of these will be harmed, inflicted any injury and pain. All will interact for mutual benefit.

**Doctrine of Karma**

The doctrine of karma is the central dogma of Jainism, which is founded on the simple law of cause and effect, ‘You reap what you have sown.’ Nobody can escape the consequences of his or her acts of commission and omission, good and bad. This doctrine makes transmigration of a soul a proven fact; establish the continuity and immortality of all the souls. At the same time it does away with the necessity of any outside agency for the purpose of rewarding or punishing living beings. Jainism is quite explicit in cautioning that each person is responsible for his own deeds and enjoy and suffers according to nature and quality of his own acts good or bad. No one else can do anything. Jain saints were concerned about the pollution of soul by karma, which is understood as a type of extremely subtle matter that is attracted to and bound with the soul wherever actions are informed by passion (Kaśāyas). This type of pollution causes soul to undergo transformations that give rise to mithyāva, or false view of reality, and causes various types of improper conduct.

“mithyādṛśanāsvirtiparmādakṣayogāgābandh hetāvah:”¹⁹⁵

Any act, dead done by any living being under the influence of psychic emotion of anger, vanity, hypocrisy, greed and also irrationality, non-awareness and by any of the three modes of mind, speech and body is called karma. There are two types of karma. The first types are those done under the influence of psychic emotions of
attachment (Rāga) and aversion (dweśa) and such deed are sinful and cause of suffering. The other types of deeds are those done with equanimity, and are good, and fructify in peace and happiness. These activities are called Āśrava. The polluted soul, with karma, cannot achieve the highest goal of Nirvāṇa. This goal is achieved through one’s own exertion and personal declination to the path of spiritual purification. In order to progress along the path to salvation, Jainism believes that it is necessary to reduce to a minimum action that result in harming other living beings and attachment to and accumulation of excessive personal possession. Thus, Jainism promotes the minimization of deeds leading to the state of deedlessness.

The Jain belief in karma’s theory places a strong foundation and endorses moral responsibility of each and every action to oneself. Each one is responsible for his own actions and he alone has to bear their consequences. The karma or deeds does previously, influence subsequent deeds. Thus, the previous deeds are cause of present deeds, while present deeds are for future deeds, which are effects. This cycle of cause and effect continues. One should, therefore, abstain from misdeeds and do only good deeds. The present problem of environmental crisis is due to mankind’s evil deeds and insensitivity towards natural environment and living beings. The practical belief in karma theory can put restrain on the evil deeds. Jainism asserts that one who tortures and kills others beings, who strives in an extra-ordinary after passion and who governed by life-long passion, obtain naraka āyuṣ. The deceitful, the fraudulent man, who is in possession of the thorns, binds tiryugāyuṣ, and the humble and sincere one, whose passion is slight, obtains manusya āyuṣ. The belief in the above statements of canons restrains the entire act of an individual.

**Ethics**

Jain Ethics is considered as the most glorious part of Jainism. In order to follow the path of salvation, Jains are prescribed a detailed code of conduct. There are two course of moral discipline one prescribed for the householder (Aṇuvrata) and the other for the mendicants (Mahāvrata). The key ethical doctrines are five vows of non-violence, truth, non-stealing, non-consumerism or non-possession and celibacy, which are mandatory to be observed by laity as well as monks. The others are extension to reinforce and ensure flawless observance of these vows.
Though, three are several doctrines of ethics in Janis, yet only those which directly or indirectly relate with environmental conservation have been taken into account here. (The more emphasis has been given to the code of conduct laid for the laities. Mendicant’s life style will be discussed in detail in chapter-4)

(a) Non-violence

Non-violence is regarded as the highest virtue in Jainism. It means that no harm should be done; no injury should be inflicted on any part of or whole body of any living being. None should be killed, mutilated or destroyed. It means not only non-killing, but also not causing any suffering to any beings. It is not limited to any particular life form, but covers all life forms from minutest microbe to biggest and, also to earth forms, water forms, air forms, energy forms and all plant forms. For the monk, the vow of nonviolence includes abstinence from taking the life of any superior or inferior beings in any form.

"Sabbāo paṇaivāyao veramaṇam"  
‘Complete observance of the Non-violence’

Not only the ‘trasa’ or mobile forms of life are not be destroyed; but any violence to ‘sthāvara’ or immobile such as air, water, fire, vegetables etc. is also to be avoided. They are to observe this vow through mind, speech and not to kill with ill intentions, purposely or inadvertently any of the ten vitalities of a living being, movable or immovable. This is called *Ahimsāmahāvrata*. *Ahimsā aṇuvrata* is meant for laymen, it makes an allowance for the mild violence unavoidable in the household life.

"thūlāopāṇāivayāo veramaṇam"  
The householder abstains from injury to non-offensive two sensed, three sensed, four-sensed, and five sensed movable beings for the whole life. The *Ratnakaraṇḍasrāvakācāra* says, refraining from injury living beings having two or more sense with deliberate act of mind, speech and body in any of the three ways *kṛta, kārīta* and *manonata* is called *ahimsāṇuvrata*. Householder tries to avoid gross violence as possible he can.

Nonviolence is not just non-killing a non-harming of living beings, positively it means love, compassion, forgiveness to all beings.
‘Compassion and kindness for all is non-violence and highest form of religion.’

In *Tattvārth sūtra* it is clearly said, “To have pleasant, compassionate and balanced dispassionate feeling towards suffering life forms are strengthening of vow of non-violence.” Since non-violence is for all living beings, putting extra burden beyond carrying capacity on natural resources earth (soil, mineral), water bodies, air forms, energy-forms and plant-forms is also violence, and should not be inflicted.

In *Ratnakaraṇḍ Sāvakācāra*, it is written that some people have obnoxious habit of plucking of grass, leaves and flowers and crushing them, digging and burning fire, using fans to stir air unnecessarily without any purpose and just as a fun or habit. This should not be done by the true follower of non-violence. This promotes the preservation and protection of plant kingdom. On the basis of this very dogma of non-violence to all living being, Jainism accepts pure vegetarianism. Jain vegetarianism is quite restrictive, as Jainism has laid down many rules and regulation about food for monks as well as for the laity.

Five transgression of non-violence is also prescribed for the laities. These are (1) *Baṃḍha* (2) *Vadha* (3) *Chaviccheda* (4) *Atibhār* (5) *Bhattapānaviccheda*.

In *Ratnakaraṇḍ Sāvakācāra* It is said 'to pierce nose, ears etc of animals, confining them in a congested place and not allowing them to move around, to beat them with stick etc. put extra burden on them and to not provide proper feeding are transgression of the vow of non-violence i.e. these should not be done.' These transgressions embody the protection of animal rights.

Giving unnecessary, purposeless advices and implements for various activities involving violence such as business, agriculture etc. is also prohibited under the vow of non-violence. The doctrine of non-violence prohibits occupations, professions and business, which involve violence to various forms of life and which are harmful to environment. These can be listed as making charcoal, cutting trees, transport, charging transport fees, digging earth (mining etc.) animal products (bones, skin, nails etc.), lac, wool alcohol, toxins (poison), factories, mutilation of animals (castration etc), burning residue in fields, drying tanks for agriculture. All these activities were envisaged in negative terms, because of the
violence and pain likely to be inflicted on every kind of living creature, from five sensed humans and animals to minute organisms inhabiting earth, air, water, and fire. All these prohibited occupation are posing threat to the environment presently.

As already stated, Jainism believes that the earth forms (soils, rocks, mineral) and plant forms, when hurt, also feel same intensity of pain as felt by a sick, weak, old person when hit. All activities under the vows of non-violence are based on their realization of equality of living beings. This doctrine addresses all aspect of protection, preservation and suitability of all living beings including environment by ensuring that no harm is to be done to any constituent of nature, big or small. The entire web of nature is so intricately and interpedently interwoven that no single species can survive alone. Non-violence is the main vow. The others are like a fence for its protection. In the words of Christopher key Chappell, “Ahimsā in Jainism is a Universal law.”

(b) Truth

This vow is a commitment for right and rational and stand against all that is wrong, violent and superstitions. Jain Ācāryās described truth in all its aspects, cautions and modalities to guard against all sort of transgression and failings.

Truthful person do not himself speak, ask others to speak a word which will hurt anyone or will be responsible for ending any life. This vow of truth does not permit deforming, ridiculing, speaking, false ambiguous words against principle, advising mutilation of animals, exploitation of any life form (including natural resources), wrong trading, theft and speaking such words which are unpalatable, causing sorrow, pain, anger, rift and conflicts. This vow of truth is also very important to strengthen the view of non-violence, which is vital for social as well as natural harmony. It is stark truth that environment, both physical and social, is degrading increasingly because of the anthropocentric approach, exploding population and spiraling consumerism of human beings. Mankind is still nurturing false notion of inexhaustibility of natural resources inspite of conclusive scientific proof to the contrary. Mankind must realize the truth and eliminate the cause for looming distress by following the doctrine of truth.
(c) Non-stealing

The vow of non-stealing forbids theft or stealing. Stealing is exploitation or usurping by force or unfair means others things, habitats and possession. Stealing has been defined by Ācārya Umāsvait in the Tattvārthasūtra. According to him anything taken ungiven with attachment or pramāda is stealing.215 This vow also reinforces the vow of nonviolence.216 Non-stealing does apply not only to humans, but in respect of other living being also. One should not take, snatch or usurp possessions and conveniences of any other life forms. Natural resources, soil, water, air, and plants are also living beings and their exploitation beyond their carrying capacity is therefore also stealing.217

(d) Celibacy

The vow of brahmaṇcarya, which literally means trading into the soul, stands for abstinence from sexual intercourse. In wider sense, any action, which leads to extroversion, goes against this vow.218 In Daśvakālik Śūtra it is mentioned that ‘one should not indulge in sexual activities mentally, in speech and bodily himself and should not advice and encourage others and should not even acquire such acts of other.219 Sex is very strong urge and passion in all life forms and more so in human beings. It is, therefore, necessary to take all possible precautions and avoid situations, which stimulate sex. This doctrine of celibacy is instrumental in population control and consequent increase in consumerism and thus reducing pressure on natural resources and eventually checking further degradation and pollution of environment.

(e) Non-possession

The vow of non-possession is perhaps the most important of the vows in the present context of environmental degradation. As a mahāvrata, it implies non-acquisition, non-possession and non-consumerism. Jain thinkers have examined in depth the root cause of consumerism or possession. It is human weakness of indulgence in sensual pleasure, of five senses of touch, smell, sight and hearing and the insatiable desires. The infatuation for desire and greed is termed ‘mūrcchā’ which is like state of intoxication in which one loses sense of judgment.

The uttṛādhyayana tells that desires are as endless as the sky.220 Hence, instead of trying to satisfy them over and over again, they should be destroyed from their...
very roots; so mere non-acceptance of external object is meaningless, if the desire is existent. It is only desire, which is the true essence of possession.\textsuperscript{221} Thus, anything or which one has attachment is also possession, whether it is a living or non-living being (\textit{Ja\d{a} and cetana}), visible or non-visible (\textit{rūpi and arūpi}), big or small (\textit{sthūl and aṇu}). As a \textit{mahāvrata}, it is required of \textit{muni} to give up every thing that leads to attachment, except perhaps, in some cases, a piece of cloth and some necessary objects of necessity. As an \textit{aṇuvrata}, it is a vow of limitation of possession,\textsuperscript{222} a vow of abstention from major kind of possessions\textsuperscript{223} and the vow of limitation of desire.\textsuperscript{224} In general ‘\textit{Icchāparimāṇvrata}’ term is used for laity vow. There are numerous objects of sensual attachment as mentioned in Jain scriptures. Their consumption should be limited to minimum. There are farm and houses (\textit{kṣetra-vastu}), glad and silver, bipeds and quadrupeds and other requisites such as utensils etc, and other necessary equipments of the household.\textsuperscript{225} The duty of householder lies in limiting all his possession and consequently controlling his limitless desire of possessing more and more.\textsuperscript{226}

Acquisition and hoarding in greed for higher profits, loading more than capacity of vehicles is also violation of the vow of non-possession. In \textit{Ratnakaraṇḍarasrāvakācāra}, there are given five transgression of this vow as (1) keeping a much larger number of vehicles than required, (2) accumulating unnecessary or even necessary articles in a large quantity (3) expressing wonder and happiness at the pomp and property of another, (4) excessive greed, (5) over loading of animals.\textsuperscript{227}

In order to reduce consumerism, practices of limiting the use of various objects for a short or long period are prescribed to gradually bring it to minimum by practices. In \textit{Puruṣārth siddhupāya}, it is said “one who is contended within minimum limited needs and their acquisition, and does not desire more, also does not commit several types of violence inherent in acquisition and consumption.\textsuperscript{228} This vow is, thus, an measure to strengthen the observance of vow of non-violence also.

In the present era of environmental crisis, consumerism is the most damaging cause of environment degradation. An increment in consumption is putting more and more pressure on natural resources, which are being exploited beyond their carrying capacities, exhausting many of shrinking resources. This vow of non-possession and icchāparimaṇ vrata is highly relevant and recommendable. This
vow is so meticulously designed that it will eliminate inequalities and suffering of entire human population as well as pressure on natural resources.

**Supplementary Vows**

The five vows are mandatory for all the Jain ascetics and householders. For the householder, these five vows are followed by three guṇavrata and four śikṣāvrata, which help the keeping of the first five vows. These supplementary vows are collectively known as ‘śālvaratas’. Some of these vows can be helpful and relevant in the protection of environment.

Among them one of the vows, digvrata, restricts the movements in different directions. The purpose is to reduce the possibility of committing violence, and this is to be achieved by the circumscribing the area in which injury to the living can be committed. In digvrata, an individual voluntarily limits the distance; he will travel in any given direction. He sets definite boundaries marked by the position of well-known river, seas, mountains or he simply limits the radius of his movements to a specific number of miles. Due to this vow, the greed decreases, and unnecessary wondering of a laity can be restrained, thus, mitigating environmental degradation caused by excessive transportation, air pollution etc.

*Upabhoga parībhoga parimāṇa,* the second of the assistant vow, legislates against the use of certain editable items or the performance of certain professions. The word upbhoga indicates those objects, which can be, used only once, viz., food, drink, garland etc. The word parībhoga means objects, which can be used repeatedly as cover, ornaments, bed, house etc. This vow means putting limit to the use of objects of upbhoga and parībhoga in order to minimize attachment to them. The things which should be renounced for the whole life include meat and money which cause misery to those living beings who are possessed of more than one sense (2) intoxicants like wine, opium etc., (3) such objects which cause injury or infinite living being, possessed of one sense, like ginger, reddish, carrot, butter etc. (4) unsuitable means of conveyance or unsuitable ornaments (5) the use of bizarre dresses.

On one hand this vow promotes vegetarianism, which is very beneficial for environmental protection; on the other hand it condemns the use of liquor, wine, honey and other intoxicants substances.
Another vow, Anarthadanḍ vrata restricts an individual from certain activities from harmful profession and trades (already discussed under the vow of non-violence), because they would lead to harmful activities which serve no purpose. Acārya Pujiyāpaḍa has mentioned following form of Anarthadanda 1. Evil thinking (apadhyāna), 2. Advice to commit sin (papopdeśa), 3. Non-vigilant actions (pramādacarita), 4. Giving of weapons of violence (hīṃsādāna) 5. Wrong reading. In the view of Mahāprājña, training in violence, training for making terrorist, training for stealing, making new weapons come under the purview of unnecessary violence. Unsuitable Nuclear weapons present serious threat for environmental sustenance also. In this context this vow seems ecologically very sound.

One of the glorious part of Jain ethics as a mirror of Jain ecological consciousness is Pratikramaṇ and Pratyākhan under the vow of samāyīk, which is necessary to perform twice daily by mendicants and ideally at least once a year by laity. He/she should recite pratyakhyaṇa avoiding harmful actions and pratikramaṇ expressimg remorse and asking for forgiveness for part deeds of harm to any living being.

“I ask pardon of all living creatures, may all of them pardon me, may I have friendship with all beings and enmity with none”

This rite of pratikaraṇaṇ embodies the essence of environmental ethic inherent in Jainism.

**Samiti and Gupti**

For the proper implementation of all the vows and self-control and self-vigilance in conduct, Jain ethics prescribe the practice of three guptis and five samitis. The guptī protect the monk from sin. Guptis are three – Mano-gupti (freedom from impure thoughts), Vāggupti (avoidance of futile talk, food etc.), and Kāyagupti (renunciation of such violence action as piercing, beating, contracting, expanding etc.)

Samiti means vigilance in behaviour. Jainism believes that negligence lies at the root of all sins and, therefore, constant vigilance is necessary to avoid them. Gautam, the principle disciple of Mahāvīra asked a fundamental question. “How to walk, stand, sit, sleep, eat, speak, so that sins is not committed?” Lord Mahāvīra replied “Walk, stand, sit, sleep carefully and with awareness
(concentration) and no sin will be committed. The same is mentioned in Mūlācār also – “Awareness in every act and every moment has been emphasized in scriptures.” For this vigilance and precaution five types of carefulness (Samiti) are prescribed –

1. **Iryā Samiti** – It regulates walking to avoid injury to living beings. According to Pravacansār, paths are full of small organisms. It is difficult to traverse it without care, caution and awareness. Therefore, one should walk according to discipline.

2. **Vacanāsamiti** – It is to control one what one speaks to avoid violence through voice.

3. **Eśanasamiti** – It is to accept faultless Food. This samiti regulates eating and drinking to avoid the forty four faults described in the Acārāṅga. According to Daśvaikālik Śūtra “monk should enquire about the source and processing of food and ascertain that it is pure without doubt, and then only he take it” Nov–a–days most of food products grains, cereals, vegetables etc are produced with use of pesticides, which causes innumerable insects pests die in the land. Use of pesticides and chemical fertilizer also pollute environment. Mainly it should avoid deliberate violence.

4. **Ādānanikṣepanā** – It is to take care of whatever utensils and the like one comes to possess. Insects may be afraid, even killed. The main idea behind this samiti is to avoid violence even to small insects, ants and micro bacteria.

5. **Utsarga Samiti** – It regulates behaviour connected with defection and urination to harm living beings. By applying this principle of utsarga samiti, one can keep his environment clean; otherwise it will pollute the environment and cause unnecessary disease.

**Non-absolutism – Anekāntvād**

The concept of universal interdependence underpins the Jain theory of knowledge, known as Anekāntvāda or the doctrine of manifold aspects. Anekāntvāda describes the world as a multi faceted, ever changing reality with infinity of viewpoints depending on the time, place, nature and state of the one who is the viewer and
that which is viewed. This leads to the doctrine of syādavāda or relativity, which states that truth is relative to different viewpoint (nayas). What is true from one point of view is open to question from another. Absolute truth cannot be grasped from any particular viewpoint, because absolute truth is the sum total of all different viewpoints that make the universe. 245 This metaphysical doctrine of anekant supported by the epistemological theory of viewpoints (nayavāda) provides a basis for the central moral principle of non-violence (ahimsā). Because violence proceeds from intolerance rooted in ideological absolutism, ahimsā requires a firm foundation for tolerance, a foundation provided by the philosophy of Anekānta. The Anekānta philosophy provides an ontological basis of the principle of non-violence. It also grounds an epistemological basis for the respect for other that ahimsā incorporates. 246 This can have important ecological implications, for it legitimizes consideration from non-human perspectives, enabling us to consider the effects of our action on non-human life-forms and environments.

Thus, the above discussion about ecological view of Jainism presents a vivid description of environmental consciousness inherent in Jainism. Jainism forms a staunch basis for environmental ethics through its realization of wide variety of life, from single sensed life forms to five sensed human beings making the practice of non-violence necessary in all the aspects of living beings. It emphasizes non-violence. It values all forms of life. It requires its adherents to engage only in certain types of livelihood, presumably based on the principle of ahimsā. Jainism’s earth friendly attitudes have been celebrated in L.M. Singhvi’s Jain Declaration on nature, in Michael Tobias’s life force, in C.K. Chapple ‘Non-violence to animals’, Earth and self in Asian Traditions and in the proceedings of the Ladnun Conference on Ecology and Jainism etc.

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