

## SOCIALISM IN INDIAN MYTHOLOGY- A SOLUTION FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

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### ABSTRACT

Only humans could cause a mass extinction, precipitating its own demise. Could anyone see the plants and animals, destroying the environment? The primary cause of today's loss of biodiversity is habitat alteration and poaching, caused by human-activities. Ecology is not only connected but also studies between environment and human being. Conservation of biodiversity is necessary for its importance for - Productive values, Consumptive value, Social value, Aesthetic values, Legal values, Ethical values, Ecological values and Economic values. In India, the concept of environment protection can be seen starting from the period of Vedas. All four major Vedas (The Rigveda, The Samaveda, The Yajurveda and The Atharva Veda) recognize the importance of maintenance of the seasons' cycles that are likely to get altered due to the climate change owing to inappropriate human actions. It is remarkable that the people in Vedic times regarded Nature and the environment in a holistic manner and revered each of its constituents and entities be carefully preserving them. It is interesting to know that the ancient Vedas have several references in them on environmental protection, ecological balance, weather cycles, rainfall phenomena, hydrologic cycle, and related subjects that directly indicate the high level of awareness of the seers and people of that time.

**Key Words:** Rituals, Vedic Literature, Poaching, Habitat

### INTRODUCTION

All four major Vedas (The Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda and Atharva Veda) recognized the importance of maintenance of the seasons' cycles that are likely to get altered due to the climate change owing to inappropriate human actions. It is remarkable that the people in Vedic times regarded Nature and the environment in a holistic manner and revered each of its constituents and entities be carefully

preserving them.

From these anecdotes it is evident that in the Vedic times even the smallest injury done to trees was seriously viewed and resented. In the Kumarasambhavam, Kalidasa went a step further by saying that even a poisonous tree should not be cut down even by the person who raised it. In Abhijnanasakuntalam, Anasuya while conversing with Sakuntala speaks to her jovially. She said: Similarly the sage Kanva, while sending Sakuntala to her husband's house, reminds the trees about the service rendered by her to them and seeks permission from each for her departure. Our culture went to the extent of saying that no loss of trees under any circumstances should be permitted. Even

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in extraordinary circumstances the destruction of trees or plants should be compensated for. As an example the loss of plants occurring for a cremation should be replenished by cultivating the same number of saplings by the person who performs the funeral rites. The plantation of trees is highly encouraged in our culture. "One should raise big trees which bear fruits. Even if it does not offer fruits, it at least gives shade".

The messages such as "Non-violence is the supreme Dharma", "Let not all animals be killed" are found in the Vedas, which advocate non-violence.

After crossing the river Ganga, Mata Sita with Shri Ram and Lakshman bowed in deep reverence to Syamvat tree (Sacred Banyan) praying:

"I bow to you, "O Great Tree".

"So I may gain the merit of wifely devotion."

For the first time in Earth's history, a single species, Homo sapiens, could cause a mass extinction, precipitating its own demise. The primary cause of today's loss of biodiversity is habitat alteration caused by human-activities. Ecology is not only connected but also studies between environment and human being.

In India, the concept of environment protection can be seen starting from the period of Vedas

"O mother earth let thy bosom be free from sickness and decay May we through long life be active and vigilant and serve thee with Devotion" -Rigveda

It is interesting to know that the ancient Vedas have several references in them on environmental protection, ecological balance, weather cycles, rainfall

phenomena, hydrologic cycle, and related subjects that directly indicate the high level of awareness of the seers and people of that time.

Let's think about the meaning of biodiversity. Most people understand that biodiversity includes the great heterogeneous assemblage of living organisms. This aspect of biodiversity is also known as "species diversity." Biodiversity includes two other components as well-

1. Genetic diversity and

2. Ecosystem diversity.

The 1.8 million species described by science are incredibly diverse. They range from tiny, single-celled microbes like Nanoarchaeum equitans, 400 nm in diameter living as parasites on other microbes in thermal vents at temperatures of 70–98°C (Huber et al. 2002), to giant organisms like Sequoias, blue whales, the "humungous fungus," and "Pando" (Figure 1). "Pando" is the name given to a clonal stand of aspen trees, all genetically identical and attached to each other by the roots (Grant et al. 1992). The stand covers 106 acres and weighs 13 million pounds. The "humungous fungus," a giant individual of the species Armillaria oysteriae is found in the state of Oregon, and covers 1,500 acres (USDA Forest Service 2003).

While people are generally most familiar with multicellular organisms such as plants and animals, these organisms form only small branches on the tree of life. The greatest metabolic diversity is found among the prokaryotic organisms of the Eubacteria and Archaea. Although some of these microbes use oxygen for respiration, or photosynthesize like plants, others have the extraordinary ability to derive energy from

inorganic chemicals such as hydrogen sulfide or ammonia, and they use carbon dioxide as their only source of carbon for producing organic molecules. Organisms that we consider extremophiles can survive in saturated salt concentrations (36% compared to approximately 3% for seawater), or in superheated water in deep-sea vents and geysers.

Ecotourism is travel with the desire to view, sustain, and support natural ecosystems and local cultures. Support from ecotourism can reduce habitat destruction, preserve species that suffer from poaching and illegal trade in the pet market, plus provide jobs for the local economy.

The biodiversity has the following importance:

#### 1. Productive values:

Biodiversity produces a number of products harvested from nature and sold in commercial markets. Indirectly it provides economic benefits to people which include water quality soil protection, equalisation of climate, environmental monitoring, scientific research, recreation etc.

#### 2. Consumptive value:

The consumptive value can be assigned to goods such as fuel woods, leaves, forest products etc. which may be consumed locally and do not figure in national and international market.

#### 3. Social value:

The loss of biodiversity directly influences the social life of the country possibly through influencing ecosystem functions (energy flow and biogeochemical cycle). This be easily understood by observing detrimental effects of global warming and

acid rain which cause an unfavorable alteration in logical processes.

#### 4. Aesthetic value:

Aesthetic values such as refreshing fragrance of the flowers, taste of berries, softness of mosses, melodious songs of birds, etc. compel the human beings to preserve them. The earth's natural beauty with its colour and hues, thick forest, and graceful beasts has inspired the human beings from their date of birth to take necessary steps for its maintenance. Similarly botanical and zoological gardens are the means of biodiversity conservation and are of aesthetic values.

#### 5. Legal values:

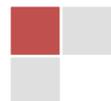
Since earth is homeland of all living organisms, all have equal right to coexist on the surface of earth with all benefits. Unless some legal value is attached to biodiversity, it will not be possible to protect the rapid extinction of species.

#### 6. Ethical value:

Biodiversity must be seen in the light of holding ethical value. Since man is the most intelligent amongst the living organisms, it should be prime responsibility and moral obligation of man to preserve and conserve other organisms which will directly or indirectly favour the existence of the man.

#### 7. Ecological value:

Biodiversity holds great ecological value because it is indispensable to maintain the ecological balance. Any disturbance in the delicately fabricated ecological balance maintained by different organisms, will lead to severe problems, which may threaten the survival of human beings.



## 8. Economic value:

Biodiversity has great economic value because economic development depends upon efficient and economic management of biotic resources.

In the day to day life, human beings are maintaining their lifestyle at the sacrifice of surrounding species which come from diversity of plants and animals struggling for their existence.

So, it is highly essential for the human beings to take care of their surrounding species and make optimum use of their service, for better economic development. Thus, it is rightly told, survival of the man depends upon the survival of the biosphere.

The different factors responsible for causing threat to biodiversity are as follows:

## 1. Habitat destruction:

The primary cause of loss of biodiversity is habitat loss or destruction which is resulted due to the large industrial and commercial activities associated with agriculture, irrigation, construction of dams, mining, fishing etc.

## 2. Habitat fragmentation:

With increased population, the habitats are fragmented into pieces by roads, fields, canals, power lines, towns etc. The isolated fragment of habitats restricts the potential of species for dispersal and colonization. In addition, the habitat fragmentation also brings about microclimatic changes in light, temperature, wind etc.

## 3. Pollution:

The most dreaded factor inducing loss of biodiversity is environmental pollution which include air pollution, Water pollution, industrial pollution, pollution

due to chemical Pastes, pesticides radioactive materials etc.

## 4. Over exploitation:

The natural resources are over exploited to meet growing rural poverty, intensive technological growth and globalization of economy. All these factors together may be responsible for the extinction of a number of species.

## 5. Introduction of exotic species:

The introduction of exotic species are due to:

(i) horticulture

(ii) agriculture;

(iii) European colonisation and

(iv) accidental transport.

It is seen that some exotic species may kill or eat the native species thereby causing its extinction.

## 6. Diseases:

Since the animals are more vulnerable to infection, the anthropological activities may increase the incidence of diseases in wild species, leading to their extinction.

## 7. Shifting or Jhum cultivation:

The shifting or Jhum cultivation by poor tribal people greatly affects the forest structure which is a store house of biodiversity.

## 8. Poaching of wild life:

## OBJECTIVES

1. To know about the status of knowledge and awareness among the respondents for Biodiversity Conservation.



2. To know the views of respondents about the role of religion and rubrics to conserve biodiversity.

3. To suggest the solutions for biodiversity conservation with the help of mythology.

### METHODOLOGY

In this study the analytical research methodology has been adopted in order to explore the depth and breadth of domestic violence against women. Personal interviews are held to collect primary data, with the help of direct interview schedule. In the block Iglas of District Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, 200 middle class families are selected randomly for the purpose. One adult woman from each family is selected for interview. And for secondary data, different research papers, journals police reports and government reports are consulted.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We observed that the level of scientific knowledge among the rural people is not satisfactory. The rural respondents provide safeguards to the biodiversity, only due to the religious causes. 76 male and 72 female (74%) respondents accepted that the religion and rubrics advocate conservation of biodiversity. 69 male and 71 female (70%) respondents accepted that they follow the rituals referred in ancient text and epics. 81 male and 77 female (79%) respondents accepted that they follow the directions of the preachers, related to the conservation of plants and animals. 85 male and 88 female (86.5%) respondents accepted that they preachers tell them about the sacred animals and plants during religious ceremonies like Kathas (stories) and Hawans. Thus it can be concluded that the Indian mythology and the religious

literature may be used as a tool of biodiversity conservation.

Mainly the conservation of biodiversity has three basic objectives:

(a) To maintain essential ecological processes and life supporting systems.

(b) To preserve the diversity of species.

(c) To make sustainable utilization of species and ecosystems.

Strategies for Conservation of Biodiversity:

The following strategies should be undertaken in order to conserve biodiversity:

(1) All the possible varieties (old or new) of food, forage and timber plants, live-stock, agriculture animals and microbes should be conserved.

(2) All the economically important organisms in protected areas should be identified and conserved.

(3) Critical habitats for each species should be identified and safeguarded.

(4) Priority should be given to preserve unique ecosystems.

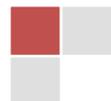
(5) There should be sustainable utilization of resources.

(6) International trade in wild life should be highly regulated.

(7) The poaching and hunting of wildlife should be prevented as far as practicable.

(8) Care should be taken for the development of reserves and protected areas.

(9) Efforts should be made to reduce the level of pollutants in the environment.



(10) Public awareness should be created regarding biodiversity and its importance for the living organisms with the help of religious literature and the proclamations

through the Pandits (preachers); for the purpose the targets (pundits/religious preachers) must be trained properly.

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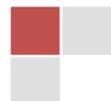


Table1: Responses “if they know about biodiversity and it’s conservation”

S/N	Type of knowledge	Number of respondents	No of male targets	No of female targets	Percentage
1	Have no knowledge	129	75(37.5%)	54(27.0%)	64.5%
2	Have knowledge	36	14(07.0%)	22(11.0%)	18.0%
3	Neutral response	35	17(11.0%)	18(11.0%)	11.0%
Total		200	106(53.0%)	94(47.0%)	100.0%

Table 2: Responses of study subjects for various questions

S/N	Related Questions	Frequencies						Total (%)
		No. of male targets			No. of female targets			
		Yes	No	Neutral	Yes	No	Neutral	
1	Do the religion and rubrics advocate conservation of biodiversity?	76 38%	24 12%	00 0.0%	72 36%	26 13.0%	02 1.0%	200(100%)
2	Do you follow the rituals referred in ancient text and epics?	69 34.5%	21 10.5%	10 05.0%	71 35.5%	22 11%	07 3.5%	200(100%)
3	Do you follow the directions of the preachers, related to the conservation of plants and animals?	81 40.5%	17 8.5%	02 1.0%	77 38.5%	23 11.5%	00 0.0%	200(100%)
4	Do the preachers tell you about the sacred animals and plants during religious ceremonies?	85 42.5%	12 06.0%	03 01.5%	88 44%	11 5.5%	01 0.5%	200(100%)

