

Religious Beliefs & Attitude towards Conservation of Natural Resources: A Philosophical Study

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Abstract – *The environmental changes that we see today are the result of our own interference in the nature and our attempt to control it. Most of the environmental problems faced now are caused by man himself. Earlier when man used to live in harmony with the nature, there was a certain respect and fear of the nature as is evident from the many religious traditions and philosophies in the world. In every religion in the world, nature found the place of the mother or the giver of life. However, with the advancement of technology, man developed a sort of god complex and started exploiting the nature for its own good. But it failed to realise that defiling that on which his life depends will in turn cause harm to him.*

Until recently, people were not aware of, or did not take seriously the harmful effects of economic development on the environment. In recent years, however, due to the warnings rounded by science about an impending ecological imbalance, philosophy became intensively aware of the environment we live in, and much attention has been paid on issues related to it.

Thus, today, the movements to conserve environment have gained momentum throughout the world. Felling down of trees even trimmings or converting them into pollards – ignites strong sentiments. A nuclear experiment or emission of industrial effluents into rivers precedes protest marches and strong letters to editors. In each one of them, the issue is the deleterious effect of technology on habitat. The question that occupies our attention is how we should save our habitat?

Hence, the need for the revival of the old religious philosophies and environmental ideologies is needed. In this article, we try to highlight some texts and archaeological evidences of ancient India which can eminently reflect the perspectives of environment, forest and biodiversity conservation of our forefathers.

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INTRODUCTION

As per Oxford English Dictionary, Environment is “the surroundings or conditions in which a person, animal, or plant lives or operates”. Due to unethical business practices and zeal of maximising profit, we are overexploiting or wasting our natural resources, polluting our environment and disturbing the ecological balance of our planet. It is not only the business houses but individuals are also not bothered about and are not taking enough measures to correct the situation. We have become self-centric individuals and not thinking beyond ourselves. We are merely concentrating on to maximising our current benefits without ever thinking that whether next generations will have enough natural resources for industrial use or non-contaminated water to drink or non-polluted air to breathe.

Since the beginning of civilisation, every culture has been guided by religion. From sociological point of

view, broadly religion is said to be “a system of beliefs and practice by means of which a group of people struggle with the ultimate problems of human life.” Religion and related philosophy play an important role in forming human values and behaviour, which in turn also influence business operation.

The World Commission on Environment and Development acknowledged, “to reconcile human affairs with natural laws ... our cultural and spiritual heritages can reinforce our economic interests and survival imperatives”. [1] It further adds, “It is a terrible irony that as formal development reaches more deeply into rain forests, deserts, and other isolated environments, it tends to destroy the only cultures that have proved able to thrive in these environments”. [2]

From the perspective of many world religions, the abuse and exploitation of nature for immediate gain

is unjust, immoral, and unethical.[3] We can find many instances of moral teachings in ancient Indian literature which tells us to take care of our natural environment. In Hindu, Buddha or Jain cultures, not only the common person but kings were also required follow the ethical guidelines to protect the environment and ecological balance. The God is creator of this universe, so whatever exists in this world is his creation and human beings do not have the privilege of authority over other creatures, on the other hand being a higher level of species and more intelligent, they have more obligations and duties.

Meaning and evolution of religious philosophy & environmental ideologies relating to natural resource management

Although environmental law and environmental concerns may seem to be of a very recent origin, but in fact, they are the result of hundreds of years of development of religious philosophy and ethics. Environmental concerns can be traced back to the ancient time when religious dictums prohibited man to pollute or cause harm to his environment. The importance of the environment as the ultimate source of all the need of man was recognized by man right from the early days of humanity. However, humankind's failure to relate to nature with respect is most clearly reflected in the ongoing environment crisis, which since the industrial revolution has been characterized by massive industrial scale exploitation and the concurrent destruction of natural entities, such as individual's species and ecosystem. Until recently, people were not aware of, or did not take seriously the harmful effects of economic development on the environment. In recent years, however, due to the warnings rounded by science about an impending ecological imbalance, philosophy became intensively aware of the environment we live in, and much attention has been paid on issues related to it.

The relationship between culture and ecology was the integral part of ancient societies. Interactions with diverse biological entities and concern for their conservation remained important components in the structure of ancient civilizations. From the ancient age, human developed the capacity to transform the face of the earth. During the course of evolution of the human race, civilization has transformed the environment in countless ways and on an unprecedented scale. Use of fire, domestication of animals and early agricultural practices are the major steps to modify the already existing conditions. In the early periods of human history, environment strongly determined the lives and activities of the people. They were very much close to nature and natural resources as we find in historical documents. The ancient people developed many effective measures to safeguard our ecosystems and environment which reflect sustainable development in true sense. In our paper, we try to highlight some texts and archaeological evidences of ancient India which can

eminently reflect the perspectives of environment, forest and biodiversity conservation of our forefathers.[4]

RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY AND ENVIRONMENT IN INDIA

Hinduism

Hinduism provides a worldview with regard to the ecological situation based on the premise that mankind is an integral part of nature itself linked to the rest of creation by an indissoluble bounds. Indian philosophy aims not only at the well-being of all humans but also of all beings. The Sanskrit verse: "Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah Sarve Santu Nirmayah" refers to "May all be sinless and may all experience happiness." The Vedas, Mahabharata and Ramayana all chant praises about cosmic harmony and environmental protection. These Indian systems respect not only humans but also care about welfare of other beings.

In Vedic prediction, nature has been regarded as indispensable in the life of human beings. It has also been considered as revered, best owner 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 Panch Mahabhutas" 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.[5] Everything works accordingly. Everything is entitled to maintain this balance and rhythm.

Vedantic scriptures see divinity in everything around us like Sun, Moon, Mountains, Rivers, Land, Sea, Birds Animals, Air, and Water and so on. All are creations of the Almighty and have his presence and impression. In *Rigveda* the Creation of the Universe is described as:

From Fervour kindled to its height Eternal Law and Truth were born: Thence was the Night produced, and thence the billowy flood of sea arose. From that same billowy flood of sea, the Year was afterwards produced, Ordainer of the days nights, Lord over all who close the eye. Dhatar, the great Creator, then formed in due order Sun and Moon. He formed in order Heaven and Earth, the regions of the air and light. (Rigveda 10.190.1-3)

The co-existence of all is necessary for mutual benefit and unnecessary exploitation of any of these is prohibited. No one can take liberty of harming, exploiting and misusing any of the God's creation. *Bhagwad Gita* reiterates that the whole of the Universe is his creation, each and everything of this universe has his presence and ultimately it will merge in Him.

From *Manusmriti*, written in the post-Vedic age, we can realize that religion plays diversified role in saving the integrity of the natural environment. *Manusmriti* is the world's first ethical compendium on human jurisprudence, presented by *Maharshi Manu*, originated sometimes immediate to the post Vedic age.[6]

In the dicta for prevention of pollution in *Manusmriti*, we can get the reflection of ecological awareness:

1. Biodiversity means all living forms broadly ascribed as *Chara* (movable living world) and *Achara*(immovable: plant kingdom).
2. Pollution refers to spoilage of the five gross elements by unethical activity.
3. Contamination refers to any action against wholesomeness (*Ssoucha*).
4. Storage organs of plants like tuberous roots and underground stems, leafy vegetables, beautiful flowers, tasteful fruits, timber yielding trees, crops etc. remained objects of allurements in that period. For saving the plants and their parts from injury, *Manusmriti* describes various punishments for the offenders.[7]
5. Importance was given for conserving and domesticating animals, biodiversity protection, and vegetarian food habit. According to *Manu*, agriculture caused injury to animals, specially the insects and germs in the soil.[8]
6. For biodiversity protection, he mentioned that fishes of all types should not be killed for food purpose; one hoofed animals, village pigs, solitary moving animals and unknown beasts should be protected; carnivorous birds, birds of village habitat, web footed birds, diving birds feeding on fishes, birds with striking beaks should not be killed for the purpose of eating. He stated that killing of *Khara* (ass), *asva* (horse), *ustra* (camel), *mrga* (deer), *ibha* (elephant), *aja* (goat), *ahi* (snake), *ahisa* (buffalo) is a sin.[9]

In various parts of the country, people worship various animals and plants. A large number of Hindu Gods have a "*Vahana*" i.e. vehicle that they ride. The goddess of wealth *Lakshmi* rides an owl, *Durga* is

astride a tiger and *Saraswati* sits on swan expresses collaboration between human and gods. Plants like *tulsi*, banyan and banana, coconut fruit are worshipped; turmeric is used in rituals considered auspicious associated with Hindu, Islamic and Buddhist cultures. Clumps of trees (ranging from bamboo in eastern Himalayas to forest in Himachal Pradesh) or a portion of the forest is considered as the place where gods or spirits of ancestors reside. Thus they are left undisturbed and the area is considered 'sacred groove'. The sanctity of the area ensures that the flora and fauna flourish and biodiversity is maintained. In India, the

Bishnois of Rajasthan have sacrificed their lives to protect sacred '*khejdi*' trees. It is recorded that some sacred groves have water bodies within their boundaries. Hunting, logging etc. is prohibited and these areas are preserved for generations. They represent native vegetation in natural or near natural state. In the Himalayas *Sherpas* considered certain mountains as sacred and do not climb into them.

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 *Gautama Buddha* appx. 2600 years ago, is weeded 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 perspective, 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.[10]

In *kuttadamta sūta*, Buddhist point out that it is the responsibility of the government to protect trees and other organic life. It is described in the *sūta* polity named 'The ten duties of the king' (*Daśarāja dhamma*). The *kuttadamta sūta* points out that the government should take active measures to provide protection to flora and fauna.[11] 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 some way.[12]

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 descendants our future generation."*[13]

NON-INDIAN RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY AND ENVIRONMENT

Judo-Christianity

Amongst the non-Indian school of thoughts, Judo-Christianity holds a crucial and remarkable place. Judaism is a robust religion, which teaches strict obedience to the laws, statutes and ordinance of God. God of Israel is holy and just God and Judaism proclaims to follow 'Yahweh' as diligently as is possible. Consequently, Judaism teaches justice, righteousness and holiness in the life and conduct of the people. As man is believed to have been made in the image of God, so by following the laws, statutes and ordinances given by Moses, one becomes a partner of God and fit for his fellowship.

Judo-Christianity believes that God created the heavens and earth and all things found therein. Almighty God envisioned a world of beauty and harmony, and he created it, making every part of an expression His freedom, wisdom and love.[14] The doctrine of cosmos teaches that God created the whole cosmos with all animate and inanimate beings, materials substance, and forces out of nothing. The fact that God is creator endows all of creation with an intrinsic significance and importance. The Talmud observes, "Of all that the Holy One Blessed by He created in His World, He created nothing in vain."

Nothing in creation is useless or expendable; everything manifests some divine purpose. It follows, therefore, that there is a divine interest in maintaining the natural order of the universe.

Some specific instructions pertaining to managing nature are given in Genesis "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it[15]" The phrase, "to work it" means "to till it" or "to cultivate it"; the general meaning is to use productively. The phrase to "take care of it" means "to keep", "to guard", "to exercise great care over". The intent of "keeping, guarding, caring over" is to sustain the function for which the element of nature or natural system being cared for was originally designed. Sustaining the original God-designed functions of nature is a very important objective from theological, ethical and practical standpoints.

Thus, People are to practice good stewardship. The word "steward" and "stewardship" is used throughout the Old and New Testaments. The word used for steward in the Bible can also be interpreted as manager or servant. When the word for steward (manager, servant) is used in the Bible, it refers to a person who is put in charge of taking care of something that does not belong to him or her. This meaning is consistent with the Webster's Dictionary definition of a steward as "one employed in a large household or estate to manage domestic concerns". As stewards of nature, people have been appointed by God to manage the "domestic environmental concerns" of our planet earth home.

Trees and forests are accorded a special reverence in the Bible, and one of the first thing the Israelites were commanded to do when they "came into" the Promised Land was to plant trees and allow them to mature before eating the fruits thereof.[16]

Islam

A monotheistic religion, Islam is a system of belief and practices established by the word 'Islam' i.e. surrender or submission to the will of God. To a Muslim, Islam embraces all aspects of life, a kind of totalitarian system with control over all the world domains of human activity. Prophets and authorities have generally described Islam as the religion for guidance and the betterment of the world.

Islam also believes that all the creation is not just for the mankind. They have intrinsic value of themselves. Although human beings are at the top of the great chain of being, they are not the owner of nature, for the sole aim of nature is not only for human beings and their ends. Natural environment serve humanity as one of their functions, this does not imply that human use is

the sole aim for their creation. In Quran, it is clearly said that all creation of him is to fulfil mankind just ends.

When we look at the Quran's general attitude towards the universe, natural resources and the relation between human beings and nature we found that the main purpose of human beings is nothing else but to serve God, to be graceful to Him, to worship Him alone and to take care of His making i.e. the whole universe.

Throughout the universe, the divine care for all things and all-pervading wisdom in the elements of creation may be perceived, attesting to the All-wise creator. The Glorious Quran has made it clear that each thing and every creature in the universe, whether known to man or not, performs two major functions: a religious function in so far as it evidences the maker's presence and infinite wisdom, power and grace, and a social function in the service of man and other created beings.

God has ordained that His entire creature shall be of service to one another. The divinely appointed measurement and distribution of all elements and creatures, each performing its ordained role and all of them valuable, makes up the dynamic balance by which the creation is maintained. Over- exploitation, abuse, misuse, destruction and pollution of natural resources are all transgression against the divine scheme. Because narrow-sighted self-interest is always likely to tempt men to disrupt the dynamic equilibrium set by God, the protection of all natural resources from abuse is a mandatory duty of mankind.

When we base the conservation and protection of the environment on its value as the sign of its creator, we cannot omit anything from it. Furthermore, all human beings and indeed, livestock and wildlife as well, enjoy the right to share in the resources of the earth. In Islam, there are many verses which command that man's abuse of any resource such as water, air, land, and soil as well as other living creatures such as plants and animals is forbidden and the best use of all resources, both living and lifeless is prescribed.

Influence on international legal framework of natural resource management

The development of environmental law during the past three decades has led to the emergence of an increasing number of concepts, principles and norms. The reason why principles and concepts play such important role is linked to the origin and development of international environmental law. Environmental law has developed mainly in a piecemeal fashion, not in a structured orderly way, as ad hoc responses to environmental threats and challenges.

Of particular importance are the principles established at two important United Nations conferences, the 1972 Conference on the Human Environment ("Stockholm Conference") and the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development ("UNCED") in Rio de Janeiro. Both of these conferences produced declarations of principles (the "1972 Stockholm Declaration" and the "1992 Rio Declaration", respectively), which were adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. Together with the hundreds of international agreements that exist relating to protecting the environment, the principles in the 1972 Stockholm Declaration and 1992 Rio Declaration are widely regarded as the underpinnings of international environmental law.[17]

Sustainable development, integration and interdependence

The international community recognized sustainable development as the overarching paradigm for improving quality of life in 1992, at UNCED. Although sustainable development is susceptible to somewhat different definitions, the most commonly accepted and cited definition is that of the *Brundtland* Commission on Environment and Development, which stated in its 1987 Report, *Our Common Future*, that sustainable development is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." The parameters of sustainable development are clarified in Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration, both adopted at UNCED, and in subsequent international regional and national instruments.

Principle 4 of the Rio Declaration provides: "In order to achieve sustainable development, environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it." Principle 25 states that "Peace, development and environmental protection are interdependent and indivisible." Principles 4 and 25 make clear that policies and activities in various spheres, including environmental protection, must be integrated in order to achieve sustainable development. They also make clear that the efforts to improve society, including those to protect the environment, achieve peace, and accomplish economic development, are interdependent. Principles 4 and 25 thus embody the concepts of integration and interdependence.

The concepts of integration and interdependence in international environmental law are wholly consistent with the nature of the biosphere, i.e. the concentric layers of air, water and land on which life on earth depends. Scientists increasingly understand the fundamental interdependence of the various elements of the biosphere, how changes in one aspect can affect others, and the essential roles that nature plays with respect to human activities and existence (e.g., purifying

water, pollinating plants, providing food, providing recreation opportunities, and controlling erosion and floods). In this respect, international environmental law mirrors the most fundamental infrastructure of human society (i.e., the environment).

Environmental Impact Assessment ("EIA") has become one of the most effective and practical tools to support the implementation of sustainable development and its integrative aspects. The great majority of countries in the world have adopted informal guidelines or mandatory regulations, applicable not only to public projects but often also as a direct obligation of citizens. In addition, in many countries informal procedures of impact assessment for governmental activities have been developed. EIA is also widely accepted as a mechanism for public participation in planning processes and decision-making and a tool to provide information and data to the public regarding projects and other activities.

Also necessary are approaches that take into account long-term strategies and that include the use of environmental and social impact assessment, risk analysis, cost-benefit analysis and natural resources accounting. Some have proposed so-called sustainable development impact assessments, which take into account environmental social and economic aspects.[18]

Inter-generational and Intra-generational equity

Equity is central to the attainment of sustainable development. This is evident from many international instruments. For example, the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change ("UNFCCC") refers in article 3. (1) to intergenerational equity, as do the last preambular paragraph of the 1992 CBD, the 1992 United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, the 1994 Desertification Convention and the 2001 Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants ("POPs"), among others. the *Brundtland* Commission's Report defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"; and it goes on to identify two "key concepts" of sustainable development. The first of which is "the concept of 'needs,' in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given." Similarly, Principle 3 of the 1992 Rio Declaration states that "The right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations"; and Rio Principle 5 provides that "All States and all people shall cooperate in the essential task of eradicating poverty as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, in order to decrease the

disparities in standards of living and better meet the needs of the majority of the people of the world."

Equity thus includes both "inter-generational equity" (i.e. the right of future generations to enjoy a fair level of the common patrimony) and "intergenerational equity" (i.e. the right of all people within the current generation to fair access to the current generation's entitlement to the Earth's natural resources). The present generation has a right to use and enjoy the resources of the Earth but is under an obligation to take into account the long-term impact of its activities and to sustain the resource base and the global environment for the benefit of future generations of humankind. In this context, "benefit" is given its broadest meaning as including, inter alia, economic, environmental, social, and intrinsic gain.

Precautionary principle

Precaution (also referred to as the "precautionary principle,") essential to protecting the environment (including human health) and is accordingly one of the most commonly encountered concepts of international environmental law. It is also one of the most controversial, however, because of disagreements over its precise meaning and legal status and because of concern that it may be misused for trade-protectionist purposes.

Probably the most widely accepted articulation of precaution is Principle 15 of the Rio Declaration. Principle 15 was one of the first global codifications of the precautionary approach. Other formulations also adopted in 1992 at UNCED appear in the ninth preambular paragraph of the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity and in article 3(3) of the 1992 Climate Change Convention. The 1992 CBD states: "...where there is a threat of significant reduction or loss of biological diversity, lack of full scientific uncertainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to avoid or minimize such a threat." This language is less restrictive than Principle 15, because "significant" is a lower threshold than "serious or irreversible" and the language does not limit permissible action to cost-effective measures. Article 3(3) of the 1992 Climate Change Convention appears to take a somewhat more action-oriented approach than Principle 15, stating: "The parties should take precautionary measures to anticipate, prevent or minimize the cause of climate change and mitigate its adverse effects..." The next sentence, however, repeats Principle 15 almost verbatim.

In the *Southern Bluefin Tuna Case*[19], the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea ("ITLOS") could not conclusively assess the scientific evidence regarding the provisional measures sought by New Zealand and indeed, the country requested the measures on the basis of

the precautionary principle, pending a final settlement of the case. ITLOS found that in the face of scientific uncertainty regarding the measures, action should be taken as a measure of urgency to avert further deterioration of the tuna stock. In its decision making, the tribunal said that in its view, "the Parties should in the circumstances act with prudence and caution to ensure that effective conservation measures are taken to prevent serious harm to the stock of *southern Bluefin tuna*." The decision prescribed a limitation to experimental fishing to avoid possible damage to the stock.[20]

The exercise of precaution with respect to risk management can take many forms, including most commonly taking pollution-prevention actions or placing the burden of proof safety on the person or persons carrying out or intending to carry out an activity that may cause harm, including using or importing a drug or other potentially dangerous substance. Another precautionary method is to provide additional margins of safety, beyond those that are directly verifiable by existing scientific information, for vulnerable groups such as children.

Access and Benefit Sharing Regarding Natural Resources

Many indigenous and other local communities rely on natural resources such as forests, high deserts, wetlands, waterways, and fisheries for their livelihood or even existence. In addition, indigenous and other local communities often have unique cultures integrated with natural resources. These communities typically relate to these resources in a sustainable way, or else their livelihoods would disappear or their cultures would perish.

It is clear from Rio Principle 10 and international human rights norms that these communities and the individuals comprising them have the right to participate in decision-making processes with respect to those resources. They may also have substantive rights to those resources, the nature of which depends on both international and domestic law. In addition to international human rights law, an international law example is the 1995 United Nations Agreement on Fish Stocks, which in article 24(2)(b) requires states to take into account when establishing conservation and management measures the need to ensure access to fisheries by indigenous people of developing states, particularly Small Island Developing States.

A related issue is the extent to which indigenous and other local communities have the right to participate in, or otherwise should be involved in, the management, development and preservation of the resources on which they rely. Principle 22 of the Rio Declaration provides, "Indigenous people and their communities and other local communities have a vital role in environmental management and development because of their knowledge and

traditional practices. States should recognise and duly support their identity, culture and interests and enable their effective participation in the achievement of sustainable development.[21]"

Common heritage and common concern of humankind

The concepts of "common heritage of humankind" and "common concern of humankind" reflect the growing awareness of the interdependence of the biosphere and the environmental problems besetting it, as well as of the global nature of many environmental problems and the critical importance of those problems. It is thus increasingly acknowledged that the international community has an interest in these issues. The protection, preservation and enhancement of the natural environment, particularly the proper management of the climate system, biological diversity and fauna and flora of the Earth, are generally recognized as the common concern of humankind. Basic assumptions implicit in the common concern concept include that states and other actors should not cause harm with regard to issues of common concern, and that states and other actors share responsibility for addressing common concerns.

The resources of outer space and celestial bodies and of the sea-bed, ocean floor and subsoil thereof beyond the limits of national jurisdiction are generally recognized as the common heritage of humankind. The international community's interest in these is probably stronger, generally speaking, than it is with respect to common concern, though the contours of that interest are not clearly defined.

CONCLUSION

From the very on-set, the paper aims at looking at the role Indian traditional religion and socio-cultural practices can play in the management of natural resources. This belief in the existence of Supreme Being responsible for the protection of communities has also enabled the traditional Indian communities to voluntarily take management of natural resources very seriously. Until recently, people were not aware of, or did not take seriously the harmful effects of economic development on the environment. In recent years, however, due to the warnings rounded by science about an impending ecological imbalance, philosophy became intensively aware of the environment we live in, and much attention has been paid on issues related to it.

Earlier when man used to live in harmony with the nature, there was a certain respect and fear of the nature as is evident from the many religious traditions and philosophies in the world. In every religion in the world, nature found the place of the mother or the giver of life. However, with the advancement of technology, man developed a sort

of god complex and started exploiting the nature for its own good. But it failed to realise that defiling that on which his life depends will in turn cause harm to him.

Many environmentalists and social thinkers submit that primary importance should be given to attitudinal changes. Once people have a respectful attitude towards their habitat and unswervingly follow the prescriptions and also, the proscriptions towards it, they will definitely succeed in conserving their resources, making certain their growth and safety for future generations.

However, an assessment that would provide valuable insights into the changing religious values of local people in relation to the protection of forests and other natural resources is highly recommended.

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