

# Observation of the Environmental Thoughts in Sanskrit Literature and Western Literature

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**Abstract:** Today Environmental Philosophy is an ample philosophical area which is growing with branches and sub branches. This is the age of all the activities of the world through the view point of Environmental Philosophy. Here the article shortly discusses the environmental awareness and man nature relationship in the Vedas. This article briefly examines the environmental aesthetic perspectives of classical Sanskrit literature and western literature.

**Keywords:** Ecology, Environmental philosophy, Environmental awareness, Eco-Criticism, Environmental aesthetics, Man-Nature relationship, Vedas, Rig-Veda, Ramayana, Kalidasa.

## 1. Introduction

On March 4, 1969, some technical students at American universities dropped out of classes in protest of branches of knowledge that threatened the very existence of human beings in the universe. Their main protest was against the tendency of man to use the resources of nature indiscriminately. They argued that this tendency of man would lead to the complete destruction of natural resources and ultimately threaten the very existence of mankind in this universe. As a result of this protest, new branches of knowledge have emerged, such as environmental philosophy and environmental awareness, which are essential for the survival of mankind. This branch lodged in nurture - nature motto and includes in its scope all scientific attempts aiming at studying, nurturing and utilizing nature without disfiguring her (earth). The thoughts on environmental studies and ecological awareness have got wide acceptance all over the world today. Radical environmentalists who have a great closeness in Environmental philosophy have founded a religion like earth-religion which relates man and other biotic and abiotic-factors. They consider man as a part of Universe which is holism. They see the spiritual side of the relation between man and other creatures. To empower nature-centric vision of world instead of anthropocentric view is the attitude of them. The philosophy of earth religion has won in growing self-dedication and emotional approach towards nature. Its performance is based on the values of compassion, non-violence, kindness, virtue and sacrifice. These are very close to the Indian tradition.

## 2. Environmental Views and the Indian Tradition

Dharma is the base of Indian tradition and culture. Dharma

defined in the Indian tradition "Prasavarthaye bhuhtanam dharma pravachanam krtam, Yat sat prasavam samyuktam sa dharma iti nischaya". This 'dharma' refers to the quality of all biotic elements. The origin of all living beings is with this 'dharma'. The concept of 'dharma' includes the existence and entity of the individual (Madhusoodanan, G. 2000, p. 331). The word 'dharma' has its root in 'dhr' (Sabdakalpadruma, vol. II, 1988, p. 783) which means to uphold, 'support' and 'maintain'.

In India man-nature relationships were an integral part of everyday life. It was a way of approaching plants, trees, animals and birds with lovingly and respectfully folded hands. Vedas, upanishads, puranas and epics are enriched with the natural and ecological observations and descriptions. Life originated in water which sustains life. There are some philosophical visions about water in Vedas and Upanishads. Water and other natural products are an integral part of Indian worship and observance.

The Upanishads are the oldest and clearest expression of the philosophy of Indian culture. The Upanisads, which have been passed down orally for thousands of years, teach a spiritual and intellectual knowledge. Upanishads puts forward a vision that encompasses all biotic and abiotic things.

Puranic mythology believes in worshipping nature, thereby, bringing harmony in eco-system. Some incarnations of Hindu Gods and some characters of Puranas were often in the form of animals and birds. For instance, incarnations of Mahavishnu are Matsya (fish), Kurma (tortoise) and Varaha (boar). Great Sages Valmiki, Vyasa, through their works Ramayana and Mahabharata, testify to the moments when human beings, birds and animals loved, believed and interacted with nature and the environment, pointing to the eco-friendly life of the time. Many Indian Sanskrit poets and dramatists like Kalidasa, wrote scholarly works depicting the beauty, splendour and enchanting quality of nature.

### 1) Environmental Awareness in Vedic Literature

The Vedic Rishis had forewarned the need to protect the environment. They mentioned the need of performing the daily 'yajnas' for protecting the environment. The Rig-veda considered the oldest manuscript dealing with relationship between the environment and human beings. Atharva veda has dealt meticulously about various aspects of environment and showed more concern for ecology. Even the people in Vedic times knew about flora and fauna as well as the environment.

Atharva-veda's love for earth is outstanding 'Prithvi sukta' as mother earth bestows love on all the creatures living on it. We should not unnecessarily dig the earth as laid down in 12:35th mantra of 'Bhumi sukta'

Yat te Bhume vikhanaami kshipram tadepe rohatu maa te marma vimrugvari maa te hrudayamarpipam.

(Let what I dig from thee, O Earth, rapidly spring and grow again

O Purifier let me not pierce through thy vitals or thy heart)

Ayurveda is a sub-veda of Rig veda. Changes in the ecosystem laid stress on Ayurvedic treatment that uses flora and fauna as medicine for human health. Our environment is a blessing for us, as it provides basic necessities of life. More and more research on the flora and fauna of the environment will lead to new knowledge for the benefit of human beings.

The Vrkshayurveda says that planting a tree is equally useful as having ten sons.

Daskupa sama vapi dasa vapi sama hradah

Dasahrada samah putro dasaputra sama drumah (Vrikshayurveda-5)

Gunartana, in his commentary on Acharya Haribhadra Suri's Shaddarsana Samuchaya, gives a list of plants that exhibit the phenomena of sleep and awakening. Plants that react to closing and opening when touched have also been observed. It is also said that Sooruamukhi (sunflower) faces the direction of the rising sun.

Destroying environment is like cutting down the branch of a tree on which one is sitting. The environment should be made better and brighter based on the discourses contained in our ancient Sanskrit literature. Kautilya in his Arthasasthra emphasizes the need to protect forests and water bodies and to maintain clean habitats. He also says in his Arthasasthra that fines should be levied whenever roads are filthy. Varieties of large trees were planted and there had an officer to take care of the trees. Killing of birds and animals is also banned in Arthasasthra. (Rangarajan L.N. 1992)

It is noteworthy that mankind in the Vedic period considered themselves a part of nature. Vedas say that the whole world is the creation of the 'Yajna- purusha'. He created the earth, air, water, fire and space from his body. In addition, he has created various creatures such as horses and goats. Along with these, human beings were also created. Yajna- purusha is considered equal to all other living things in the Universe.

There is a lot of environmental awareness in the approach to nature that the Vedic sages had. In a mantra in the Rig Veda, Indra, Mitra, Varuna and Agni are praised along with the deities for water, medicine and trees.

"tanna intro varuno mithro agni:

aapa ausadhiir vahhino jushanta:

sarman syama marutaamupasthe

yooyam paatas vastibhissadaa na:" (Rigveda 5.7.34.25)

This indicates that the blessings of the forces of nature and the flora and fauna are essential for the well-being of human beings.

"Mata bhumi putrauhan prthivya:"- This Vedic prayer invokes divine intervention to bliss and protect the environment.

In a mantra in the Yajurveda, the sage wishes all the best in the universe and wishes good luck to cows, sheep and other animals alike.

"bheshajamasi beshajam gave ashwaaya purushaaya beshajam

sukham mesaya moshaya moshye" (Sukla Yajur Veda, 3.5)

### 3. Importance of water

Water is one of the basic elements of life. During the Vedic period, people in India relied mainly on rain water for water storage. Therefore, there are many verses in the Vedas which indicate the importance of rain water. It has long been recognized that water is one of the most essential nutrients for human life. Water is synonymous with life which means that water is the most essential element of life. There are many mantras in the Rig Veda praising water, such as that there is nectar in water, there is Agni in water which gives complete enrichment to the universe.

Apsvantaramrutamapsu beshajam

Apaamutaprasastibhirddevaa bhavatha vaajina:

Apsume somo abraveel antarviswaani beshajaa

Agnim cha viswsambhuvam aapascha visvabheshajee: (Rig Veda, I, 23,19-20)

The same mantra is found in the Atharva Veda with a slight difference.

Apsvantaramrutamapsu beshajam

Apaamutaprasastibhirasvaamatha vaajina:

Gaavaa bhavatha vaajina: (Atharvaveda, 1.1.4.4)

A statement from the Thaittareeya aaranyaka states that one should not defecate in water, do not spit, bathe naked and keep the water clean without contaminating it.-"napsu mootrapurisham kurvath, na nisthivet, na va vivasana: snayal" (Thaitariyanyaka 1-26-5-7). This indicates that anti-water pollution thinking was prevalent in those days as well.

Just as a mother gives her baby breast milk for its health, intellectual development and beauty, the Earth gives us water, one of the basic elements of life, from its sources. Indians consider the water of some rivers to be sacred water, for example the water of the Gangaes. Water sources were considered to be of high esteem in ancient India, especially rivers. They were worshipped like Goddess. Rivers named with respect like Ganga Mata (Mother Ganga), and Saraswathy Mata. Aaratis (worship) are held in almost all the rivers in the morning and evening. People considered rivers as goddesses. That is why they did not pollute the rivers. (Goel, Aruna 2003, P 147). Ayurveda says pure, cool, clear and beautiful water that does not add any artificial colour or taste should be considered as nectar for life.

#### 1) Hymns on Sun

There are many 'suktas' in Rig-veda that praise of Sun. Some hymns mention certain powers of Sun which seem to have some scientific implications that have been accepted by modern advocates of naturopathy. It is said that the rays of Sun have the power to cure dangerous skin diseases. In the Vedic hymn it is named harima (some kind of dark green colour which is the colour of skin when deep and decayed wounds spread all over the body) which may be some disease like leprosy. Sun rays

have the power to cure it: “Oh! Sun God! You, rising up in the sky and travelling northwards, Acure my heart and skin diseases. Sun rays are described here as having the power to cure heart diseases also” (Rig-veda 1-50,11). The next hymn reads as follows:

“Sukeshu me harimanam ropanakasu dadhmasi

Atho haridra vesu me harimanam nidadhmasi” (Rig-veda, 1-50,12)

Oh! Sun God! Please give the greenish colour of my diseased body to parrots or green plants. The color is an attraction and beauty for them. But, for the body, it is ugliness. Here again the medical power of Sun ray is mentioned.

#### 2) *Oshadhisukta*

One of the famous ‘suktas’ of Rig-veda is osadhisukta. ‘Rig veda 10.97 contains 23 hymns that praise the oshadhis or medical plants. Various thoughts on the patient, disease, doctor and the medicine are seen in those hymns. Ancient Indians believed that all kinds of plants had some medical power. We have story of ‘jivaka’ who was directed to fetch a plant that has no medicinal value. He failed in his mission which hints to the fact that all plants and trees are having some kind of medicinal value. The ‘Oshadhisukta’ in Rig- Veda gives some meaningful hints to these aspects: “The medicinal plants are like horses that take the diseased to the other side of the ocean of torture. They, shining forth with flowers and fruits, cure diseases” (Rig-veda, 10, 97,3). Let one medical plant reach the other and act for the cure of diseases. Thus the plants, combined together, may help to eradicate all the diseases. Each medical plant has its own power. At the same time, they have a special when they combine together with others (ausadhiyoga). The special power of plants when combined together is also referred to here (Rig-veda 10.97.14).

### 4. Protection of Forests

Environmentalists are seriously concerned with the protection of forests, by which balance of nature can be retained. The Rig-vedic seers also were fully aware of this fact. Rig-veda 10.146 praises forests and stresses the need of their protection. There are six hymns in this ‘sukta’ which begins as follows:

“aranyanyaranyani asau ya preva nashyasi  
katha gramanna prchasi natvabhiiriva vindati”

Here the goddess of forest is invoked. She is not at all afflicted with fear and is happy always. The second hymn in this sukta’ reads thus:

“vrshaa ravaya vadate yadupavati ciccika:  
akhadibhiriva dhavayan aranyanimahiyate”

Different creatures in the forest produce the sound ‘chi-chi’ in the night. Other creatures also produce the same sound imitating them. Goddess of forest, hearing the melody of music, gets delighted. The next hymn also is very important in this context:

“uta gava ivadanti uta vesameva drsyate  
uto aranyanissayam sakadiriva sarjati”

Animals like cows wander freely and confidently eating grass and leaves in the forest. Bowers shine forth like dwelling places or houses. People from villages who come to the forest

for collecting firewood, return in the evening with sufficient pieces of wood in their hands. All these descriptions indicate that the Vedic seers had great concern about the forests and they believed that they should be protected for a peaceful life on Earth. (Neelakandan, C M. 2005, P 68-70).

#### 1) *Rita and Rina*

The concept of ‘rita’ and ‘rina’ is very important in Vedic texts. These concepts are very much related to the balance of the cosmic order. All Gods are considered as the followers of the cosmic order and so are called ‘ritaps’ (ritam pibandhi ithi). The word rita is used in different meanings like truth in general, a settled rule law, sacred custom, divine law and divine truth. Even Gods do not want this order to be disturbed. This concept speaks of the balance of man, nature and the cosmic order.

Also there are some ‘rinas’ or debts to Gods, the spirit of dead etc. Like ‘devarina’ and ‘pithru rina’. Man should perform different rites like ‘yagas’ to free from the debts of Gods. He should perform the rites like ‘sraddha’ to get freed from ‘pithru rina’. He should give water to the trees and plants and food to the birds and animals around his house. All these are for keeping friendship with them and for maintaining the balance between man, animals, and other creatures and plants and trees in the nature. (Neelakandan, C M. 2005, P 70-71).

#### 2) *Protest against Violence in Yagas*

The strong protest against violence in ‘yagas’ that arose among the Caarvakas, Buddhists and Jains, had many implications in the history of Indian culture and philosophy. They strongly argued against the practice of killing animals in sacrifices. It is to be noted that the Carvakas, ridiculed priests for cutting trees even for sacrificial posts:

“vrikshaan chitvaa taroon hatvaa krtvaa rudhirakardamam  
yadyevam gamyate svargam narakam yena gamyate”  
(Carvakadarsana, Sarvadarsanasangraha)

If one will reach heaven cutting trees, destroying plants, doing violence and spreading blood and flesh in the sacrifice, who else is qualified to reach the hell. Also they argue:

“pasuscht nihatha: svargam jyothishtome gamishyathi  
svapithaa yajamanena thathra kasmanna himsyathe”  
(Carvakadarsana, Sarvadarsanasangraha)

If an animal killed in a sacrifice will reach heaven, then why does not the ‘yajamana’ (boss) give his own father in sacrifice to ensure heaven for him death!

Though these references have other contextual importance and implications, the tone throws some light towards their views on ecological awareness also. They believed that killing animals and destroying plants and trees even for the purpose of sacrifice, will cause imbalance in the nature’s order (Neelakandan, C M. 2005, P 63-64).

### 5. Observance of Silence

Observance of silence was considered as no less a spiritual activity as compared to the recitation of mantras which involves noise. Hence the student is advised in ‘Aapastamba grhyasutra’ to put out fire-woods into the ritual fire in the evening silently because, by doing so, he becomes favourite to Prajapathi. Many rites in different Grhyasutra are instructed to perform silently. The residual of the anjana (collyrium) is to be anointed in the

eyes of the bridegroom silently in marriage ceremony. Many such rites are advocated in different texts to be performed silently. Similarly, restraining speech after the performance of principal rites is prescribed in connection with upanayana and samavartana. Aapastamba grhyasutra states that the student, after adorning himself in the samavartana, should observe silence till the stars appear in the sky. The vow of silence among the saints is famous. All sages used to observe vow of silence for a prescribed period every year. The legend of Sri Sankara's observance of silence connected with the dramatist Sakthibhadra, is famous. Sound pollution is a difficult problem now faced by all of us. Can we think that the Vedic seers had foreseen the consequences of sound pollution and that is why they prescribed the vow of silence also in various rites and rituals! These points are to be further discussed and subjected to deep analysis (Neelakandan, C M. 2005, P 71).

### 6. Eco-aesthetic Aspects in Western and Classical Sanskrit Literature

The deep connection between man and nature can be seen in many places in the classical Sanskrit literature. The stories and characters in the Indian epics Ramayana and Mahabharata are intertwined in one way or another with nature and the environment. Sanskrit poets and dramatists like Bhasa and Kalidasa embodied the co-existence of nature and man in their various works. The descriptions that seem to unite with the nature given by the Sanskrit writers and their writing style are very attractive and pleasing. English poets like William Wordsworth depicted flowers and the beauty of nature through his poetry. He later became nature's poet.

Eco- aesthetics became popular in western countries in the last decade of twentieth century. But they had more than an anthropocentric view of environmental-aesthetic approaches. While in the drama 'As you like it' of William Shakespeare, he describes that 'we can see books in the fast flowing forest streams' (sources of knowledge), an anthropocentric view is mysteriously remaining there. Critics say that a pantheism towards nature is seen in the poems of William Wordsworth, but here also the sight is what nature does for man. For instance, in the poem Tintern Abbey the poet wants his sister 'to learn lessons from nature'. Another poem of Wordsworth...

"One impulse from a vernal Wood  
May teach you more of man  
Of moral evil and of good  
Than all the sages can".

Here too, the poet's vision is in the point that what nature teaches to man. The westerners reached renaissance after a fifteen years of growth under the anthropocentric philosophy of Jewish and Christian beliefs. This renaissance also strengthened the anthropocentric view. In Fact, Europe was in the belief of the renaissance for the last five centuries. So it is not a wonder that the nature poet 'Wordsworth' also get into those beliefs (Sivadadasan, CP. 1994, P 87-88).

Literary thoughts and poetry in India are inextricably linked with nature, and the Indian romantic expressions in them can be clearly understood and enjoyed. Expressions of similes are used in order that better compassion between nature and poems is

brought forth. In his Sahitya darpana, Viswanatha Kaviraj suggests that a poem can only be defined as excellent if it begins with description of an object in the nature (Sahityadarpana, VI, 315-325). The Kumarasambhava of Kalidasa, which begins with a reference to the Himalayas, is a good example of this. 'Nagaramava sailarthu candrarkodaya varmanai:' such quality is considered to be the best of any great poem (Kavyadarsam, 1. 13- 20). In addition to these, a strong recommendation has been made to describe Sun, Moon, Night, Dawn, Noon, Darkness, Dusk, and the seasons; and to depict the Earth's major ecosystems, mountains, forest, sea, rivers, streams, lakes. The names of the metre in Sanskrit poems like Vasantatilaka, Sardulavikridita, Puspitagra and Sikharini indicate an inseparable unity with nature.

Over to the western thoughts, this union between man and nature perhaps visible either in the works of Spinoza or of St. Francis. The famous Latin poet Virgil's pointing to insight in his famous work Eclogue is neither credible nor sincere, and the season behind this statement is thought to be lack of deep understanding of nature and the environment. The presence of the pictures of landscape, an important part of environment, is now used only in literature but also in critical works. In his book 'Modern Painters' (1856), John Ruskin, opines that landscape literature in ancient and medieval Europe was less important than that in modern literature. There has been a paradigm shift in the imitation of nature into an expressive ideology, which has been cited as the reason why the landscape has become so significant. Landscapes are presented in literary works as being transmitted from the reflection of the playwright's mind, which is why landscapes are manifested. (Sivadadasan, C P. 1994, P 88-89).

The eighteenth century is said to be the period of prose and of logic in English literature. This may be a good example of how landscape paintings were presenting was presented in those days. The famous composer Addison's thesis gives clear clues about flower gardens. He asked: "why not turn the vast estate of large fruit-bearing trees in to a large flower garden?" (The Spectator No. 414, 1712). Here the character Sir Andrew Free Port to establish a pastime of the mind that retreats from all worries without worrying about financial gain. He and his companions improved the flower garden and made a profit from it. Daniel Defoe's perspective on the environment can be found in his extensive work, 'Tour through the whole island of Great Britain'. His view is that forests and hills are meaningless but fertile farmland is included in the literature.

Alexander Pope, one of the proponents of the prose and logic, viewed the garden not only for its own beauty or relevance, but also as a reflection man's innate taste. The famous play right Thomas Gray made a small change in this attitude in his work 'Elegy written in a Country Church Yard'. The well-known poem namely 'The Deserted Village' of Oliver Gold Smith depicts the similarities between the human nature and the nature of the earth. The poem depicts the situation in which the rich occupy the entire land of the village after the outbreak of agrarian revolution, as a result of which the poor peasants are forced into exile. The poem discusses the fact that man falls into the deep pit of moral decay due to his strong greed for beautiful

landscapes.

Criticisms on English literature provide ample references to novels describing the inevitable relationship between human nature and the environment. One of the critics namely Alistaire M. Duckworth, one of the critics of the famous work 'Landscape and literature' describes Jane Austen's novels, which shed light on the moral aspects of reforms in the landscape. In the novel 'Sense and Sensibility' when Mr. Jhon Dashwood, makes some reforms for his wife on his farm land, his sister Eleanor, who does not like such work, accuses his brother of having no conscience or sympathy. It has been noted that even Walter Scott's novels describe the close relationship between human nature and the environment.

There are numerous studies that have been tried and brought to light in Europe and the United States as examples of environmental criticism. Among them is Jonathan Bate's 'Romantic Ecology', a remake of Wordsworth's poem. Wordsworth studies the politics of poetry, which marks the transition from red to green. Thomas Hardy's novels, like those of Edward Thomas and the Irish poet Shamus Hein, have a strong connection to Wordsworth's and landscape. Poetry and literary arts have long been studied in connection with history. However, at present this study is closely related to geography. These texts call into question the claim that a comprehensive study of literary works can be made on the basis of new historiography. In addition, the idea of showing, if there is geography of each state in each poem; the methods of evaluating it as the outward manifestation of narrow nationalism are questioned here. These critical texts tell us that the most desirable perspective is a holistic understanding of the unity of man and nature.

### **7. Man-nature Relationship and Environmental Awareness in Ramayana & Mahabharata**

The epics Ramayana and the Mahabharata, these are the essence of the ancient Indian culture, having Dharma as its vital element. In these epics, nature and the environment convey messages of enjoyment and awareness. Indian culture is the perfect combination of man and nature. The life of the characters in Ramayana, written Valmiki Muni, who is considered to be the first poet, is often closely associated with nature. The chapters Ayodhyakanda, Aranyakanda and Kishkindakanda in the Ramayana are rich in love for nature. Valmiki's expression "Sasagara Vanachalayaya Prithvi ..." is a perfect example of insight into nature, which sees forests, mountains and seas from the same perspective of oneness. Sri Vallathol Narayana Menon, one of the great Malayalam poets, translates the above verse of Valmiki as follows: Here Rama and Sita become the favourites of 'Girivana' (mountain and forest). Sita, seen on 'Chitrakooda Parvat', is going to forget all the circumstances that led to the throne and the pain of separation from her parents, relatives and friends, and she decides to stay there permanently, in which Rama shows no signs of dissent. This situation is well illustrated in Kumaranasan's (another great poet in Kerala) Balaramayanam, in which Lord Rama wholeheartedly welcomes the decision. Valmiki describes how the plants and trees of the forest were in

great distress when Ravana abducted Sita. Crying out loud, Lord Rama asks the trees where Sita is, cries like someone who is distracted and searches for her again and again (Aranyakanda, LX/11-20).

One who cannot take care of forests and enjoy the beauty of flowers will never understand flowers or human minds in life. The above statement is reinforced by Kumaranasan's lines that say that hands created by flowers always command the poet. The Indian understanding of human insight through the insights of nature in Malayalam literature is permeated with all the refinements in Kumaranasan's works. In these parts of the Ramayana, life is constantly in harmony with nature and dances indiscriminately.

We find several beautiful descriptions of ashramas (penance groves) in the Ramayana. It seems that Sage Valmiki finds a peculiar pleasure in such descriptions. These descriptions depict all living beings remaining in a blissful harmony. One fine instance is that made by Sutikshna while sending off Rama, Sita and Lakshmana, from his abode (Aranyakanda, 8.12-15)

Valmiki's description of nature, seasons, and natural phenomena are par excellence. Often he sees nature as a human being. This is not surprising with him who advocates Dharma through the enchanting literary art form and who strongly holds that art is for man's sake. As rightly pointed out by Krishna Chaitanya, Valmiki regards life as the basis, inspiration and justification of art. And he often looks up from art to life in order to embody the meaning of life in art ((Krishna Chaitanya, 1977, P.173)

Some of his descriptions of nature are in fine tune with the quintessence of Dharma, that is, living in perfect unison with cosmic rhythm. (Kishkindakanda, 30.45, 46, 54, 57)

Apart from these poetic and ideal descriptions of a simple, peaceful and blissful co-existence of living beings, we get clear mention of ecological and environmental issues in the Ramayana. We get a clear reference to the effect that polluting (public) water resources was considered as a severe sin. When Kausalya (mother of Rama) accuses Bharata as the man behind the plot of banishing Rama, he, with great poignancy, utters curses to bring upon himself the results of a series of grave sins, if her accusations had any element of truth. One of the sins he pronounces is polluting water. (Ayodhyakanda, 66.56)

Coming to the Mahabharata, it also has the Dharma as its kernel - the subtle dharma of living in perfect unison with cosmic rhythm, thereby supporting the natural blissful state of all beings, with one's mere existence. This voluminous epic history with many complexities is well known to have Dharma as its central core. The real nature of Dharma which the author, poet, philosopher, Vyasa, implicitly and poetically propounds is the blissful coexistence of all beings. He has overtly and covertly expressed this in many passages of the Bhagavadgita (a part of the work) and elsewhere (Udyogaparva, 24-52). A full chapter on Anusandhana parva describes the construction of water reservoirs, the planting of trees and the sacrificial offerings like Atiratra and Agnishtoma.

The Mahabharata contains a great discussion of the universal works of Yudhisthira and Bhishma.

The landscape descriptions of the Ramayana and the

Mahabharata are pleasing to the mind. The environmental awareness of these and the environmental issues of the time and the eco-friendly methods adopted at that time to overcome them are all relevant research topics which give very good results.

### 8. Eco-aesthetics in the Works of Kalidasa

Kalidasa, who lived around 5th century AD, is a Sanskrit poet and dramatist. His literary works are based on beauty of nature and environment. Poets and dramatists like Kalidasa were constantly following the eco-friendly tradition of India. Kalidasa had reached the pinnacle of his insight into the union of man and nature. His works attest to the fact that Kalidasa had a thorough knowledge of the landscape. Thus his descriptions became more real and fascinating.

Nature as a powerful agency and as a source of natural beauty exists in all Sanskrit literature in general and in the works of Kalidasa in particular. In 'Meghadooth' the clouds are messengers of love. Kalidasa in his Raghuvamsha describes the charming beauty of a peacock as touching. Once when Dasaratha was hunting, a peacock spread its peal in front of him very close to his chariot, which reminded Dasaratha that his wife's hair was adorned with various flowers. Raman's childhood was a natural education in gurukula, Ashok Vanika, the beautiful Ashok Vanika who brought some relief to Sita's grief in Sri Lanka after fourteen years in the jungle. All these are powerful examples of kalidasa's depiction of human-nature relationship through Raghuvamsha. Ram cried and asked each tree and leaf where Sita was missing and they accepted it and comforted him. The entire army led by Sugreeva and Hanuman (vanarasena) helped Ram in his fight against evil. Birds have significant roles in the Ramayana. The epic progress because of birds at crucial moments, such as the abduction of Sita by Ravana. Jatayu, Sambati and Garuda are the vital birds in the Ramayana.

Kalidasa's other plays also give a clear picture of nature, sensitize friends, bring them closer to nature and reconcile them with nature. For example, in the first part of the Kumarasambavam, the poet describes the beauty of the Himalayas. The beginning of Kumarasambhava's poem expresses the divine atmosphere of North India. "There in the north is the Monarch of mountains, Himalaya named of divinity indwelling; Plunging into a great ocean, east and west He stands, a rod taking the Earth's whole measure" (Chandra 109). Thus, the ecology that is part of environmental works is shown here. There are other small mountains around the Himalayas that are a storehouse of wonderful gems and precious medicinal herbs, as well as materials for the benefit of mankind. Kalidasa gives a poetic and active picture of the snow-capped mountains. The beauty of the Himalayas, the clouds and the sunset in these works highlight Kalidasa's landscape description.

When Kalidasa Abhijan Shakuntalam wrote, the beautiful heroine of the play was placed in the lap of Mother Nature. Shakuntala was the brother of the flora and fauna of the monastery. Truth be told, Dushyant not only loved Shakuntala's external beauty but also he liked and fascinated to the natural beauty of her surroundings and her sincere love for birds, animals, plants and trees.

Shakuntala can be imagined in aesthetic sense in our mind and vision only by the proximity and the flowers adorned on the body. She is innocent and pure. Her life is as natural as any other creature in the forest. She does not wear gold or diamond jewellery. Her earrings, bracelets and necklaces are flowers of different colours. This is how Kalidasa used nature in his works. Nature and environment are an important factor in the development of the story of Abhijanaa Sakuntalam.

Several marvellous views of the union between man and nature have been beautifully inherent in the poems and dramas of Kalidasa. In Abhijana Sakuntala a fine example of which is seen in the sorrow of Sakuntala who sets out for the husband's home: "who would then water the jasmine plants!" Who will take care of the deer injured by the grass? Sakuntala treated her pets like her own children or siblings when they were injured. Shakuntala drank water regularly only after watering the plants.

Kalidasa's ability to describe the beauty of nature can be seen in his first work, Ritu Sanhara. Here he systematically and aesthetically depicts the six seasons of autumn, winter, Sisira, summer, spring and Varsa. Kalidasa beautifully presented the impact of each season.

Another poem by Kalidasa, Meghasandesha, mainly explains the pain of separation. The first part of Meghasandesha depicts the geography and natural beauty from Ramagiri to Alakapuri. In this story the 'cloud' (cloud) plays the role of a messenger carrying the message of unity between man and nature, while at the same time playing the role of a messenger experiencing the pain of separation. Before Yaksha (the hero) came to see Alakanantha (Heroine), the reader's heart was inextricably linked with the rivers, trees, birds, animals and clouds of northern India. One reason why Meghasandesha's theme about Yaksha and his loved ones is so popular is that Kalidasa used the natural beauty and geographical representation of the area to show the conditions of Vipralambha Sringara. (Chaturvedi, Sudhanshu. 2001, P 41-43).

The fourth canto of Raghuvamsa describes Raghuvamsa's triumphant journey. It gives a clear picture of the natural beauty of India from the point of view of an aesthetician. The thirteenth sarga of Raghuvamsa is filled with landscape description. When Raman returns from Sri Lanka with Sita in 'Pushpaka vimana' after killing Ravana, he explains the scenes of nature to Sita. The 67 verses, beginning with the description of the 'Southern Ocean', fully explain the natural beauty. They also mention the beauty of the flow of the confluence of the White Ganges and the dark Yamuna. (Raghuvamsa, 13.54-55)

Rabindranath Tagore, one of the great poets, acknowledges that Kalidasa always warned against the evils of impending urbanization, and the beginning and collapse of the Raghuvamsa (drama) make this argument clear. Tagore named it Aranya Sandesa.

#### 1) *Eco-Aesthetics in Gita Govinda of Jayadeva*

Geeta Govinda (Asthapadi) by Jayadeva is a famous Sanskrit poem. We can see the deep connection between man and nature in the Gita Govinda. The context of the Gita Govinda is 'Rasa-krida' in the Bhagavata Purana. One spring evening, Nandagopa and Yasoda arrived on the banks of the river Kalindi for the Karthiani Puja. Nandagopa hired a girl named Radha to

take Lord Krishna to his house as it was getting dark and it was getting dark. But on the way, they were enjoying romance among the big trees, bushes and vines. Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda* is a poem that treats devotion and love alike, making the vision of environmental beauty possible.

### 9. Conclusion

In ancient India, ecological thought was pervasive in all aspects of life, literature and other forms of art. Ecological philosophy has developed in modern times in Western countries. Western literature aesthetically presented environmental thought through poems and plays that represented images of nature. Today we face many crises such as air pollution, water pollution, soil pollution, noise pollution, deforestation and human violence. Environmental philosophy, ecology and eco-criticism are now the most serious research topics in the field of literature in all languages and cultures of the world. Environmental thought in ancient Sanskrit literature can help us regain eco-friendly living. This article concludes by observing the emergence of a strong environmental awareness from ancient Indian thought. The author hopes that the spread of environmental philosophies will lead the human mind to enjoy nature at the same time and to understand that nature should not be destroyed or exploited. This article may be brought to a conclusion with citation from *Isavasya Upanishad*.

Isavasyam idam sarvam  
yatkincha jagatyam jagat  
tenatyaktena bhumjya:  
ma grdha kasyachid dhanam (*Isavasya Upanishad*. 1)

From this *Upanishad* message, it is clear that the environment belongs to all living beings, so the protection of all is necessary for the welfare of all.

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