

## Ecology as depicted in the Vedas: It's Relevance in Modern times

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### Abstract

It is widely known that the Vedas are the oldest scriptures in the worlds. These are known as the divine or origin. These Vedas contain systematic scientific knowledge as well as knowledge of the creation of the world. Every type of eternal knowledge is available in these Vedas. Hence, Manu says: *sarva jñānomayo hi saḥ*. (Manusmṛti, II.7). It is known from the ancient Vedic times that the nature and human being form an inseparable part of life support system. This is what that reflects the concept of the present-day Ecology.

**Keywords:** Ecology, Vedas, Modern times

### Introduction

The world Ecology means the relation of plants and living creatures to each other and to their environment. It is the study of relationship between plant and all living organisms and their environment. So, ecology is the scientific analysis and study of interactions among organisms and their environment. Besides, it is the science that deals with the interrelations of plants and animals together with their environment.

Ecology is an inter-disciplinary field that includes Biology and Earth science. Topic of interest to ecologists include the diversity, distribution, amount (biomass), number (population) of organisms, as well as competition between them within among eco-systems are composed of dynamically interacting parts including organisms, the communities they make up, and the non-living components of their environment.

Ecology is not synonymous with environment, environmentalism, natural history or environmental science. It is closely related to evolutionary biology, genetics and ethnology. However, Ecology is a human science as well. There are many practical applications of Ecology is conservation biology, natural resource management, city planning (urban ecology), community health, economics, basis and applied science, and human social interaction, e.g. human ecology.

Ecology is the study of environmental systems or as it is sometimes called, the ecology of nature. Environmental usually means relating to the natural, versus human made world; the 'systems' means that ecology is, by its very nature, not interested in just components of nature individually but especially in how the parts interact. More properly ecology is used only in the sense that it is an academic discipline, no more evaluative than mathematics or physics. In addition to these, ecology is usually considered from the perspective of the specific geographic environment that is being studied at the moment. The subject matter of ecology is the entire natural world, including both the living and the non-living parts. Bio-geography focuses on the observed distribution of plants and animals and reasons behind it. More recently ecology has included increasingly the human dominated world of agriculture, grazing lands for domestic animals, cities and even industrial parks.

### **Ecology in the Vedas**

It can be said that ecology is the science which deals with atmosphere, which influences or affects all living beings in their day-to-day activities, i.e external and nternal activities. Since Vedas are the first oldest written documents of the world, they contain basic principles regarding the ecology and preservative methods for protecting the environment. Environment includes its surroundings and atmosphere. Many aphorisms from the Rigveda speaks about the physical factors and a biotic factor of present-day ecology, e.g. fire (*agni*), light (*surya*), water (*jala*) and precipitation or rain, air (*vayu*), rivers and flow of water.

There are a number of hymns in the Vedas that contain the special importance of the atmosphere, its pollution details, methods for protecting the atmosphere from being polluted, etc. The Vedas speaks about the method how to check the air pollution, water pollution, earth pollution, sound pollution, etc. Air is one of the essential properties of

human life. So, protecting the life of all living creature we should protect the source of life, i.e air. Our Atharvaveda says about the greatness of air and sun (Atharvaveda, 4.25.3). At another place in the Atharvaveda, it is said that the air is performing double duties as *Prāṇavāyu* and *apānavāyu*. As *Prāṇavāyu*, it provides the source energy for human being as *Apāna-vāyu* it discards all the unwanted elements from the body. Hence, the air is called *Viśva-bheṣaja*, as it destroys and discards all rough physical elements from the body (Atharvaveda, IV.13.3). In the Rigveda, *vāyu* or air is known as nectar as it gives energy to live. Without air no one can live in this world. So, this air (*vāyu*) is known as the medicine of all diseases (Rigveda, 10.185.1-3). Now a day, we practice *prāṇayāma* for keeping our body healthy and fresh. So, in this modern age *prāṇayāma* is very famous for eradicating all diseases. Besides, in the Rigveda it is also advised to protect the air pollution for the benefit of people (Rigveda, 10.186.3). In the Atharvaveda, there are number of verses, which tell us the means and methods for cleaning the environment (Atharvaveda, 3.21.10). In a Rigvedic verse it is said that the God has bestowed man with too much of gifts. Among them the earth, where there are so many precious everlasting sources of wealth. The protector of this never-ending wealth is the trees, medicinal herbs, waters and the forest. The real meaning of this Rigvedic verse is that this wealth of earth, i.e. gems, gold, petrol, coal, etc. For their protection depend on trees and plants. If we protect those, we can make use of the wealth or otherwise all those wealth will leave us once for all (Rigveda, 3.51.5).

An Atharvedic verse (*mantra*) speaks about the importance of protecting our environment. It says where the environment is pure, there the human beings, birds and even animals live happily and peacefully (Atharvaveda, 8.2.25). In the Rigveda and Atharvaveda there are verses, which describe the ozone layer, which protect the earth. In the Rigveda, a number of good similar words are used in '**mahad ulba**'. The word *ulba* means membrane, which protects the fetus in the mother's womb. Here, the earth is considered as the baby remaining in the uterus and the ozone layer, which protects the earth as the membranes (Rigveda, 10.52.1.cf. Atharvaveda, 4.2.8). This ozone layer absorbs 99% of heat coming out from the sun and thus protects the trees, herbs and living beings from being destroyed into ashes. So, this Ozone layer places a prominent role in protecting the earth.

In the Vedas, several time more emphasis is given for the protection of air, water

and fire. Now days, air pollution is a great problem for the society. The Vedas advised to clear the air through sacrifices and other means, so that our *prāṇa-vayu* (main heart air) will be protected. The earth is known as the mother of beings. According to the Atharvaveda, the earth adorns us with wealth of plants, green vegetation; trees etc. (Atharvaveda, 5.28.5) Likewise, in the Yajurveda, it is also said that the heaven (dyuloka) gives us medicinal herbs with force and water with strength. Hence, in this way the atmosphere, earth, water and herbs provide us different type of beneficial energies (Yajurveda, 29.53). Now we shall discuss about the water pollution, as it is known that water is the prime source of living. One third of this earth is full of water. If the water will be polluted then a number of diseases will come out and put harm to the beings of the earth. Hence, the Vedas say that the water should be treated as nectar (*amṛta*) as the plants, herbs and being get proper energy from the water to live in this earth. In the Atharvaveda, it is said that the seas are the source of gems and wealth. They are also source of rain, electricity, etc. (Atharvaveda, 1.13.3). In the Rigveda, it is said that among the protectors of human beings, water, medicinal plants, trees and mountains play a prominent role. Hence, it is clear that if we do any harm to these above things, then it will definitely make us suffer a lot to live in the society (Rigveda, 5.41.11).

However, to check earth, water, air and sound pollution it is properly advised in the Vedas that one should perform sacrifice. Through the sacrifices, protection of the whole environment, purification of the atmosphere, destruction of the diseases, enlistment of mental and physical health of all living beings and destruction of all evil thoughts from the minds of all human beings can be occurred. As the sacrifice is known as a scientific process by which the elemental equilibrium of the oxygen and carbon-dioxide is produced. The nature has the status of a circle through this each and every object attains its source place. This circle is called sacrifice. From this sacrifice rain occurs and from rain the cultivation grows (Yajurveda, 18.9). Hence, the Yajurveda says that it is essential to perform sacrifice for getting proper rain, cultivation, energy, food, purity of trees and medicinal plants, intellectual control and the attainment of peace and happiness. It can be said that the sacrifice is beneficial to both individual and the community. As it helps in minimizing air pollution, increasing crop yield, protecting plants from diseases, as well as help in providing a diseases free, pure and energized environment for all, offering peace and happiness in mind.

## Conclusion

Finally, it can be said that the Vedas are the main oldest literature, which contain the basic principles regarding the Ecology and preventative methods for protecting the environment. The Vedic verses are more scientific even today. Not only these Vedic verses will help us to stay away from the various pollutions, but also these mantras will definitely protect our physical bodies with good mental stability and happiness forever. Hence, in this scientific age, the Vedas are the great source of all type of physical as well as mental health & happiness for all human beings.

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