

**BIO-DIVERSITY CONSERVATION – CONCEPT AND NEED****Lalit Kumar Singh, Ph. D.**

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**Abstract**

India is a very ancient civilization, a highly developed one in which all aspects of life were blended harmoniously resulting in a very healthy lifestyle both physically and spiritually. The earth has always been described in our ancient scriptures as the mother who nourishes and sustains the human race and all the living beings. The Vedas tell us clearly that the earth is our mother and we are all her children. Just as a mother brings up her children lovingly, so does the mother earth and it is our duty to revere all that we receive from her and return it back through love and care.<sup>1</sup> Human beings began their journey with a prayer, “Oh Mother Earth, shower everlasting glory and bless without there being any apprehension of extinction”, and Indra-Gupta Prithvi continued to fulfil the urge. Gradually human beings became ignorant about the benevolence of Mother Earth. They then turned themselves to be mankind.<sup>2</sup>

Different cultures developed in different landscapes that influenced activities, occupations, diet, language, and architecture. Cultures adapted to local environmental challenges by growing local domestic crops, developing irrigation and terracing systems, hunting, fishing, and gathering. Biodiversity provides a sense of place. Countries and states have flagship animals and plants that are a source of pride and highlight the uniqueness of each habitat. Travel, which provides great pleasure to many people, is motivated by the desire to see this combination of cultural, landscape and biological diversity. 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 by 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.

Being spiritual and religious text Indian mythology and the religious literature may be used as a tool of biodiversity conservation.

**Key Words:** Mythology, Vedas, Mores and Rituals, Vedic Literature, Poaching, Habitat, Religion, Dogmatism (Bigotry), Religious Proceedings, Celebrant, Rubrics.



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**Introduction:** The term „dharma“ which has been derived from the root “Dhri” which means to upload, sustain and support, denotes “that which holds together the different aspects and qualities of a being or an object into a whole”. It is the *dharma* when associated with *karma* which has come from the root *Kri*, i.e. “to do” or the action can lead the man into perfection if these two concepts envision towards humanity. Further by embracing all the living beings of the world as the members of a family known as *Vasudhaiv Kutumbakan* one can develop the respect for all those living beings. When this concept crystallizes into realizing the problem of environment, attainment of a more environmentally conscious world can be possible because these two fundamental ethics may be regarded as a prerequisite for the same.<sup>3</sup> This is the basic philosophy of a Hindu religion. Also all the religions world over are being guided by this social and cultural ethic and each religion and culture had contributed towards protecting the environment values. The ethics which guide us to maintain the quality of life must play a vital role in advancing and shaping our views towards perfect attainment of justice to nature and the existing eco-system.

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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 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.

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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.

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.

#### **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.

**Table :1 – Responses “ if they know about the relation between religion and biodiversity conservation”**

S. No.	Type of knowledge	Number of respondents	No of male targets	No of female targets	Percentage of frequency
1	Yes	142	76(38.00%)	66(33.0%)	71.00%

2	No	36	14(07.0%)	22(11.0%)	18.0%
3	Neutral	22	04(02.0%)	18(09.0%)	11.0%
	Total	200	10(53.0%)	94(47.0%)	100.0%

**Table : 2 - Responses of targets for various questions -**

S. No	Related Questions	Frequencies						Total / Percentage
		No of male targets			No of female targets			
		yes	no	neutral	yes	no	neutral	
1	Do the Hindu religion and Mythology 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 religious 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%)

**Discussion and Results:** By the analysis of the primary data , It is found 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:**

- To maintain essential ecological processes and life supporting systems.
- To preserve the diversity of species.
- To make sustainable utilisation 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 utilisation 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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