
UNIT 15 MAN-NATURE RELATIONSHIP

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15.0 INTRODUCTION

Since ancient past concern for environment has been an integral part of Indian intellectual and popular traditions. This concern for environment is not something which has come to us from the West as is usually projected. It is indigenously visible in the cultural patterns, religious practices and social norms and needs careful delineation.

This Unit provides you with an insight into various traditions of Indian philosophy with regard to its vision of the environment. Indian philosophy has always considered environment as an organic living entity. Traditions have stressed *a participatory life with environment*. Humans have been seen as one component of this wider reality i.e., environment. They are created by the elements of environment and they finally dissolve in the environment. Here we must stress that Indian philosophical traditions are pluralistic in nature, therefore, we cannot reduce our examination to any single philosophical tradition. Yet a practical approach is to focus on the major philosophical traditions and take up manifestations of environment therein for a detailed study.

Since *Srsti*/Universe figures in almost all the traditions as a representation of nature, we discuss the concept of *Srsti* as visualised in Indian philosophy and its relationship with the humans in detail and also take up a discussion on, and the integration of, various components of environment with the living forms in this Unit. The significance of popular and classical traditions in promoting prudent attitudes towards environment is also part of our discussion. Finally we take up the notion of *Pradushana* of environment i.e. pollution of environment and discuss the treatment of this concept in philosophical traditions keeping in view the role played by human activities.

15.1 MAN'S PLACE IN NATURE

The Indian tradition places man alongside other creatures of the animal world and the world of vegetation. This is a significant feature and we would prefer to dilate on the subject further.

Man enjoys no pristine position though a whole lot of privileges get accrued to man through his intellect. Actually man's place in nature/environment is two fold – physical and the spiritual. The physical relationship entails interaction with all the other living things and non-living objects that are part of the environmental surroundings. The spiritual relationship, on the other hand, requires a set of the rules of conduct to be followed by man. These rules of conduct specify the duties and obligations towards other living species. The guiding principle in both relationships is that the environment should not be endangered due to the activities of man. There is an element of ethics involved in this and man's place in environment/nature is located within the realm of this ethics.

The treatment given to the issue – man's place in nature – in Indian philosophical traditions too distinguishes between the physical and the spiritual or psychical, as suggested in some treatises. Since the physical relationship is principally determined by those requirements that sustain existence, such as food and living environment, it is a relationship of providing for the material needs. However, material needs and material wealth are two separate notions and these are clearly demarcated in the treatment of man's physical relationship with environment. Unlike the techno-modern objective of mastering environment for extracting the maximum of material resources, the Indian tradition lays great emphasis on inculcating environmental ethics encouraging preservation, protection and conservation of nature.

The psychical or spiritual relationship transcends the material world. In a beautiful verse from *Kathopnishad* the idea is clearly described: 'Higher than the senses (and their objects) is the mind, more excellent than the mind (*manas*) is intellect (*sattvam*); above the intellect soars the great soul (*mahatma*) and more excellent than the great one is the unmanifested (*avyakta*). And higher than the unmanifested is the soul (*purusa* here) which is all-pervading and without sense' (Cf. Kapila Vatsyayan, 'Indian View of Environment As A Part of Indian Aesthetics' in *Creativity and Environment*, ed. Vidya Niwas Misra, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1992, p.25). Evidently man is conceived in Indian tradition as representing a microcosm of the larger universe which is the macrocosm. Interestingly the two – micro and macro-cosm – constantly exchange their forms. Thus fire of the nature becomes speech as it enters the mouth; the sun becomes sight as it enters the eyes; wind becomes breath by entering the nostrils; the annual herbs and regents of the forest become hairs as they enter the skin; the moon enters the heart and becomes mind. It also indicates man's and nature's interdependence as also the reality that the two can be comprehended completely only in

a state of union. The following verse from *Atharvaveda* illustrates the point nicely:

O earth! Pleasant be thy hills and snow clad mountains and thy woodlands on the earth-brown, black, ruddy and of all colours – the firm earth, the earth protected by the deity (Indra), upon this earth I – unconquered, unslain, unwounded, have set my foot.

15.2 SRSTI/UNIVERSE AND ITS ATTRIBUTES

The configuration of environment in Indian thought is expansive enough to include the entire Universe within itself rather than being locative or temporal in character. A more commonly used word for this is *Srsti*. In Indian thought *Srsti* is conceived as a living mechanism where humans along with *Pasu*, *Paksi* and *Vanaspati*, are one of the many living creatures and non-human forms are not the lifeless entity as the physical matter alone. The concept of *Srsti* has been elaborated in terms of its mobility where humans relate with *Srsti* continuously and the concept is therefore continuously redefined. Here one can read an attempt at trying to understand and relate to the greater ‘whole’ of the nature. In this process emphasis on adaptation has been one of the guiding principles for an interaction between human and natural world.

Indian philosophical traditions have visualized *Srsti* as a creation of the Almighty and so is the case with humans. As both are the creation of God, there is greater stress on maintaining cordial relations between these two in particular and among other components of *Srsti* in general. At the same time man has been considered as the most intelligent creature and therefore it is imperative upon humans to ensure a peaceful co-existence with other living creatures as well as with non-living material world.

The creation of *Srsti*, in the Indian philosophical tradition, is a concept that can be broadly categorized in four groups. An element of history seems to order the groups. We can begin with the Vedic theory as elaborated in the *Vedanta* and *Sankhya* traditions, followed by *Upnisadic* theory. The third theory is termed as *Puranic* traditions and lastly is the tradition as enumerated in the Gita as part of Mahabharata.

Indian philosophical traditions have developed a cosmic vision that is cyclic in nature. The cycle begins with creation and is followed by continuance that finally culminates in destruction; and then a new cycle begins. It suggests that every material object/creature is perishable with the possibility of regeneration. The fragility of the environment has also been carefully stressed in such discourses. Traditional thoughts have proposed a set of *Trinity* i.e., the Creator, the Preserver and the Destroyer.

The Vedic tradition traces the origin of *Srsti* from *Hiranyagarbha* which is golden embryo. The God from his will deposited the seed of creation in a cosmos that was in a state of chaos. This seed became the golden germ, from which was born the *Brahma* or the creator himself. It is

interesting to note that *Brahma* is identified as the *Purusa* who is all-pervading and is the supreme reason for all subsequent creations. This *Purusa* is also distinct from all that he created. The *Rigveda* also speculates on the world beyond the moment of creation. Several different names attributed to the creator indicate that the origin of the world is not unidirectional in spite of the fact that origin is always attributed to the God or creator. This also includes a feminine creation of the world. A verse of *Rigveda* locates the cause of creation in Aditi:

The Divinity (Aditi) is the Heaven, mid-region, the mother, the father, the son. The divinity is all deities, five classed men, and all that is born and will be born.

“The above Vedic theory was further expounded by Bhartrhari” say Dwivedi and Tiwari. The sage “discussed the *Vedas* and *Puranas* as visualizations of the divine power in Vedic words. A number of *Rigveda* hymns are in worship of inspired speech (*Vak*), considered a creation of God” (O.P. Dwivedi and B.N. Tiwari, *Environmental Crisis and Hindu Religion*, New Delhi, 1987, p.15).

Upanasadic theory of creation suggests that *Purusa* creates matter out of itself and then enters it as the first born.

Purusa Prajapati, creates the waters, enters into them as an egg in order to be born from them, and issues forth from them as Brahma. (Satapatha Brahman, 6.1.1)

The beginning is traced with *Him* as lone creature who, to combat the solitude, transformed himself into man and woman which became the carrier of his progeny. Likewise he transformed himself into other elements such as earth, water, animals, etc.

The *Puranic* theory considers *Brahma* as *Svayambhu*, who is born at his will. No other cause is responsible for his birth. *Brahma* being desirous of progeny, created waters first. He deposited in the waters a seed out of which *nara* was born and was called *Narayan*. While lying on the Ocean (*Ksir Sagar*) a golden egg arose from his navel which gave birth to *Brahma*. He then divided the egg and made earth and heaven. From that moment on the creation of all things began to take place. (*Brahma Purana* 137-40 as cited by Dwivedi and Tiwari, *op.cit*, p.17).

The theory of creation, according to *Gita*, has been most elaborately expounded in the *Santiparva* of Mahabharata. Yudhishtira and Bhishma converse about the *Srsti* and the process of its creation: “Yudhishtira asked Bhishma Pitamaha – How was the world created? What was the position of creatures at the time of *Pralaya*? Who is the maker of the sea, sky, mountain, clouds, *Agni*, air and other things of the world? How are all creatures made, how cleanliness and impurity emerged, and how *dharma* (religion) and *adharma* came into existence. In reply Bhishma said – God is the form of *Srsti*. He created the one out of the one-thousandth part of his body, and that *Purusa* became known as *Manas*

Purusa” (*Mahabharata*, Moksaparva, 182.1-3 as cited by Dwivedi and Tiwari, *op.cit.* p.19).

Further “The Father of all creatures, God, made the sky. From sky he made water and from water he made fire (*Agni*) and air (*Vayu*). From fire and air, *Prithvi* (earth) came into existence. Mountains are his bones, Earth is the flesh, Sea is the blood, Sky is his abdomen. Air is his breath, *Agni* is his *Teja*, rivers are nerves. The sun and moon which are called *Agni* and *Soma* are the eyes of *Brahma*. The upper part of the sky is his head, *Prithvi* (earth) is his feet and direction (*Disa*) are the hands” (*Mahabharata*, Moksaparva, 182.14-19, *op.cit.*).

Gita sums up the situation by declaring that the *Brahma*, created the *Srsti* and decided to protect it and to rectify its malfunctioning by appearing as Vishnu in various incarnations to set things right.

As stated in the beginning *Srsti* is created to provide a stage to all its creatures to perform their assigned roles and then vanish into oblivion. In this process the supreme power undertakes to create *Srsti*, maintains it and then annihilates the entire creation. The universe thus remains completely dependent on the will of the supreme power. Krishna tells Arjuna in *Gita*:

The whole cosmic order is under me. By my will it is manifested again and again and by my will it is annihilated at the end.

The chief attribute of *Srsti* is that it is illusionary, yet when it assumes a physical form the matter gets shaped into seven cardinal elements and five gross material elements. The creatures and vegetation emerging out of this creation receive eleven senses and the three major qualities – the quality of *Sata*, the quality of *Raja*, and the quality of *Tama*. All living creatures are infested with one of the three qualities and are in turn administered under the laws of God. Consciousness is another important attribute which the living creatures receive at the time life is breathed into them by God. *Srsti* is thereafter permitted to run itself.

It is now evident that the creation of *Srsti* and its attributes have a slight variation in the four theories discussed above. One may legitimately probe the reason for this difference. The vedic deities are generally classified according to their natural characteristics. The division available from *Rigveda* classifies them as below:

- 1 Celestial Deities : *Dyaus, Varuna, Mitra, Surya, Savitr, Pusan*, the *Asvins*, and the Goddesses *Usas* (dawn) and *Ratri* (night);
- 1 Deities of Atmosphere : *Indra, Apam, Napat, Rudra, Maruts, Vayu, Parjanya, Apas* (the waters);
- 1 Terrestrial Deities: *Prithvi, Agni, Som* (Cf. Dwivedi & Tiwari, *op.cit.* p.14).

The four theories give precedence to one of the three attributes of nature in the act of Supreme manifestation in the form of *Srsti*, hence the difference. The difference is in the material cause of the universe not in its essence. *Rigveda* reflects on this essence aptly:

He is one, but the wise call him by different names; such as Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni, Divya – one who pervades all the luminous bodies, the source of light, Suparna – the protector and preserver of the universe; whose works are perfect; Matriswa – powerful like wind; Garutman – mighty by nature.

15.3 COMPONENTS OF ENVIRONMENT

*Earth with the attributes of smell (Gandha),
water with the quality of viscosity (Sneha),
fire with the quality of energy (teja),
sky with the quality of sound (sabda),
air (vayu) with the quality of touch (sparsa), and
all the Mahatattvas-let all these elements bless our mornings.*

This verse from Vamanpurana makes it evident that in Indian thought environment has been visualized as an organic entity where all or most of the components are connected with each other in a complex web of inter-relationship. This thought also perceives that *there is life in all kinds of material or things*. Thus existence of any of its components in isolation is inconceivable. The emphasis on mutual dependence has been the guiding philosophy of existence in Indian tradition. There cannot be any dichotomy between the numerous components of environment. Mutuality is considered beneficial both for the environment and for the individual elements of its constituent parts.

It has been proposed that in creating the *Srsti Brahma*, the Almighty, shapes primal matter into eight *tattvas* (elements): earth, water, fire, air, sky, mind, intelligence, and ego of which first five are considered basic elements. Almost at the same time the evolution of animal and human world gives rise to the emergence of five senses: sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell. The essential components of environment are the *tattvas* and the senses. *Aitareya Upnishada* provides the details of the process of their evolution:

*He is Brahma, he is Indra, he is Parjapati, he is all gods,
He is the five elements, earth, air, space, water and light or
fire,
He is the tiny living objects and is similar to them,
He is seed of one kind or another,
He is those born from the egg, born from the womb, born from
sweat, born from sprout,
He is the horse, cattle, people and elephants,
He is everything that lives, that moves and flies and which is
motionless.*

This verse is quite illustrative of the process of creation as well as the compositional features of *Srsti*. The genesis has been attributed to processes that are multiple in character; the objects of creation have been defined as composed of terrestrial, aqueous and avian categories; the amplitude, ranging from minuscule to mammoth has been accounted for; and the cardinal five elements reiterated.

To further illustrate the characteristics of five basic elements of *Srsti* we provide a glimpse into their nature and significance as described in the treatises. There is a chronology of appearance that begins with sky. Sky is considered to be the first among all the five elements. It is also known by terms like, *Dyauh*, *Svah*, *Akasa*, and *Kham*. As we come to water, that is next in importance, we find *Rigveda* considering water great and all-pervading. Water is considered to be propitious and the enhancer of power:

The waters are propitious, the water verily are the enhancer of power. These waters, truly, do support Agni and Soma. May the readily flowering, strong sap of the honey-drops (water) come to me, together with life's breath and lustre.

(*Rigveda*, 3.13.5)

The source of water and the qualities of water have been especially stressed in the *Atharvaveda*:

O Man! may the waters from the snowy hills be peace giving to thee. May the spring waters bring calmness to thee. May the swift flowing waters be pleasant for thee. So may the rainy waters be a source of tranquillity to thee.

O Man! Sweet be the waters of the oasis upto thee and so may be the waters of the pool. May the waters dug from the earth (i.e., wells) be sweet, as well as those stored in tanks.

(*Atharveda*, 19.2.1-2)

This verse from *Atharvaveda* is significant from another point of view. It invokes the propitiatory attributes of water and proposes that these be bestowed on *Man*. It thus brings *Man* at the centre of *Srsti* and places at least one of the five cardinal elements at the disposal of the *Man*. The relationship of interdependence is missing and its place is acquired by the features of appropriation even if in rudimentary form. Water is ascribed several qualities. In a text called *Yuktidipika* we get these qualities described in the form of a list: Viscosity, firmness, radiance, brightness, delicacy, gravity, cold, protection, purity, progeny or union are the qualities of water.

These qualities are communicable and depending on the nature of the object the effect shows.

Philosophical traditions of India give the next (third) position to (Air) *Vayu*. It is also considered as *prana* of all the living creatures. It has

been suggested that the body of all the living creatures can be sustained only as long as the *prana* inhabits it:

All these creatures enter with the breath (prana) (into the body), and with the breath (prana) they again depart out.

(*Chandogyaa Upanishad*, 1.11.5)

The *prana* is both a psychic as also a cosmic principle that is it is not only the breath of life in men but also the universal breath of life that prevails throughout nature.

Next to follow is energy visible as *agni* Fire. *Agni* is equated with the Sun-the ultimate source of energy. It is accepted as the source of rains and its relation to rains has been clearly brought out in *Satapatha Brahman*:

From Agni is born steam, from steam the cloud and from the cloud rain.

Agni is also treated as a vehicle of carrying the sacrificial offerings made to God. It is accepted as mouth of the all-pervading *Paramatma* (the Supreme *Atman*/consciousness).

The last of the *Panch Tattva* has been Earth (*Prithvi*) which is attributed feminine qualities and treated as the mother of all living beings. *Prithvi* needs to be worshipped as it bears the material base of our sustenance.

Atharvaveda says

The earth which possesses oceans, rivers and other bodies of water, and which gives us land to produce food grains and on which human being depend for their survival, continue to possess these for all of us.

Further:

May she, our motherland, on whom grow wheat, rice and barley, on whom are born five races of mankind, homage to her, nourished by the cloud, and loved by the rain, ...may God, the lord of life, make our motherland, who beareth all precious things in her womb, pleasant to us on every side.

(*Atharvaveda*, 12.1.42-43)

The special significance given to *Prithvi* is easily forthcoming from these two verses. It is recognized most unambiguously that *Prithvi* as mother provides all the necessary means of the sustenance of life. It should therefore be prayed so that the resources do not dwindle and it should be revered so that the value of these resources is not obliterated from our thought.

It is also important to note that in this tradition the fruits of the earth

and its bounties are not declared as the sole belonging of the humans. In fact they are for all forms of life to use and get from them the benefits. The following verse from *Atharvaveda* illustrates this point:

*Born on thee, on thee move mortal creatures;
Thou bearest them- the biped and the quadruped.*

In this tradition the five components of environment, also known as *Pancha Mahabhutas*, are considered essential for the emergence, growth and continuance of the universe. They maintain a peaceful co-existence. The resultant order of nature/environment becomes a ground for a complex interaction of numerous living and non-living entities. The environment, as the life sustaining ambience, commands a sense of respect.

15.4 VEGETATION AND THE ANIMAL WORLD (*VANASPATI AUR PASU – PAKSHI*)

Even if there is only one tree full of flowers and fruits in a village that place becomes worthy of worship and respect.

(*Mahabharata, Adiparva, 138.25*)

Trees have been attributed a place of reverence in Indian tradition. The importance given to trees can be assessed from the fact that plants and trees have been seen as epitomising God's existence. *Vanaspati* as the creation of God and embodying *Him* has been a common description:

*From Him the seas and the mountains all,
From Him roll rivers of every kind,
And from Him all herbs, the essence too,
Whereby that inner soul dwell in beings.*

(*Mundakapanisad, 2.1.9*)

Rigveda offers prayer to God for the purpose of making plants and herbs plentiful with beneficial properties:

*May the plants and herbs be sweet. May the heavens, the waters
and the mid regions be all sweet. May the producer of grains
and vegetables be sweet.*

Trees are placed equivalent to Humans in significance and importance in so far as the *Srsti* is concerned:

*Just like a tree, the prince of the forest,
So the man is, in truth,
His hairs are leaves,
His skin resembles the external bark,
Out of his skin streams forth the blood,
Like the juice or the sap out of the tree,
It flows out from the wounded man,*

*Like the sap of the tree, when it is cut,
The flesh is comparable to the wood,
The sinews are like the inner bark,
The strong bones are like the inner core of the wood,
The marrow resembles the marrow (pitt) of the tree.*

(Brhandarankya Upaniasad, 3.9.28)

Any kind of intentional damage to the trees/ *vanaspati* has been condemned in the traditions as trees are considered living creatures. *Chandogaya Upnisad* says:

When one, O dear one, cuts this big tree here at the root, it trickles sap, because it lives. ... if life departs from the whole tree, the whole tree withers or dries up, Therefore O dear one, you should mark this.

Similarly,

The cutting of all these trees is condemned. Except for the reason of sacrifice, trees should never be cut, particularly in rainy season.

(Skanda Purana, 20.83)

Reverence for the trees as an ancient tradition, was based on the belief that every tree had a *Vriksh Devta*. It was offered water in the morning which ensured continuous care of the trees. Different trees have been identified with different deities to stress the notion of worship.

Traditions with respect to the animal world have been similar to that we witnessed for the *vanaspati*. Moreover it included the humans who were not accorded any priority over other creatures. The central concern was for life forms and all the living beings were given equal treatment. Animal world had been classified in terms of their mobility, origin, features, attributes etc. The term *Jangama* was used to denote the animals and they were classified in terms of their mode of generation:

- ¹ *Jarayuja* (producing living young)
- ¹ *Swedaja* (born like ant),
- ¹ *Ayonija* (non-womb born like worms),
- ¹ *Andaja* (egg-born), and
- ¹ *Jalaja* (water born like fish).

Animals were attributed different qualities. Animals and birds were believed to possess a certain intelligence and the power to predict future climatic or atmospheric changes as well as the ability to foretell events, good or bad for an individual or with respect to nature.

Since life forms were treated with care, killing of animals was prohibited and it was believed that such an act was liable to incur God's wrath:

The Yatudham (killer of animal) who fills himself with the flesh of man, and he who fills himself with the flesh of horses or of other animals, and he who steals the milk of cows— Lord cut off their hands with thy flame.

(*Rigveda*, 10.87.16)

To further stress the vulnerability of animals and to offer them protection, different animals were identified as the modes of transportation of different Gods. For example lion is the *vahana* (vehicle) of *Durga*, *Indra* rides elephant, *Siva* has bull as his conveyance, *Saraswati* travels on swan and *Vishnu* prefers eagle for transportation purposes.

The Indian textual tradition assumes that, like the rest of the material world, humans are also made up of elements which at death disintegrate and dissolve into nature. At the most general level the five *tattvas* or elements that dissolve into nature at the time of death are: *Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Sky*.

15.5 POPULAR AND CLASSICAL TRADITIONS: REPRESENTATIONS OF ENVIRONMENT

The nature/environment in India is represented by two different but related traditions – the popular and classical. While the reflections of the popular traditions are more visible in practice, the classical or textual tradition offers a complete and systematic analysis of the universe.

It is an interesting fact that the popular tradition is mostly preserved in oral, non-textual form in an uncoded manner. Oral traditions thus constitute a basic method by which we come to know about the knowledge which has not been organised and codified. They also help us to understand those societies for which we have very limited textual information. Day-to-day practices and methods carry the glimpses of ancient past. In oral tradition in India, *environment has been perceived in a symbiotic relationship with the humans where environment is also considered as a living organism which breathes, feels, and possesses sensory perceptions*. Various components of environment in this relationship either acquire or have been accorded special positions. At times these special considerations are also ritualized.

The trees and animals are one of the basic components of popular folk tales which are part of the popular oral traditions in India. Moreover various attributes of animals are also identified and are used as if they are natural sensory characteristics. The flora has been part of the themes of different stories. It is always kept in mind that human survival is possible only with the conservation of entire flora and fauna. This understanding is also reflected in the religious practices as different animals and plants are worshipped at different times so as to ensure their survival.

Popular traditions consider nature as a reality of which man is an inseparable part at all levels. The myths do not give man a unique position in so far as his origin or his position with respect to other creatures is concerned. It is generally believed in the popular tradition that knowledge came to humans from birds and animals. Man is not the creator of knowledge. Cosmic intelligence is considered to be self-existent and source of all knowledge.

The classical traditions are naturally more tilted towards philosophical expositions on environment. In these traditions the world was divided into two halves: the sky and the earth. There also existed a world beyond the sky and another below the earth. The five cardinal elements overlap in the formation of this world and so is the matter with the other world. This explains how biological and social, both aspects of human life were placed in an integral vision of environment in the ancient Indian traditions.

The classical traditions conceive environment as a system with complex inter-relationships of numerous living and non-living entities. Even the non-living organic world has been perceived as a living creature with a soul. It was a very significant concept as it placed man as equal to every other element of our environment as has been repeatedly stressed. To highlight the importance of various components of environment, various rituals have been institutionalized. These rituals ensured that we treated even the non-living world with great care and maintained a harmony with it. For example fire is conceived as messenger of God. Earth has been considered as mother goddess. Sky is worshipped as father.

The non-human living world has been given great attention in Indian philosophic thought. There is a whole tradition of anthropomorphism, where various kinds of plant and animal lives have been ascribed special position. The ancient tradition of worship of *Pashupati Mahadev* is one such example. The tales of *Panchtantra* may also be cited as another composition that highlights the special position given to non-human living world. Animals are given human characteristics of not only language but also faculty of feeling and intellect. The objective of the tales is to give lessons to mankind by highlighting the problems through animal world's characteristics. Different attributes of animals have been identified and are very beautifully utilized in these tales. Indian philosophical thought also highlights the numerous species of flora and fauna and their special position vis-à-vis environment. This all-encompassing view is a great achievement.

The same enveloping view finds reflection in man's visual expression of perceived reality. The Indian tradition looks at this perceived reality as imbibing three composite aspects, each involved in the other and each orienting the other. The order of priority goes like this;

- 1 the first place is for *pratibha* or inspired vision,
- 1 the second is for *vyutpatta* or studious equipment of the creator, and
- 1 the last being *abhyasa* or assiduous practicing.

It is while explaining the details of the second that the theoreticians find an occasion to take environment into their consideration. The term they use for it is *loka* which means the world in all its infinite variety of living and non-living beings.

In Indian philosophy it is generally believed that each creative act comes from direct contact with *prakriti* (nature). The language of the artistic manifestation evolves through the visual and audio perceptions of the objects in nature. Even the smallest sprout in nature becomes the artist's greatest joy. In celebrating nature nothing is considered as useless. The art form becomes a living entity, a part of the self, family, village and that way, the environment, as a whole.

The dance of Shiva is a perfect iconographical statement of ecology. His emblems are *Agni* and *deer*. His locks are the forests. He hides within himself *Ganga* (water). His hair adorns the sun and the moon. His garlands are the snakes. He wears the tiger skin. He brings to this world the cosmic rhythm of his *damaru* in the incessant process of cyclic creation, degeneration and regeneration and finally of enlightenment. His energy is *Sakti*. Without her he is incomplete. She herself, the daughter of the *Himalayas*, must undergo penance and austerities. The emphasis here is on discipline and austerity, with greater integration of environment.

15.6 POLLUTION (*PRADUSHANA*): TRADITIONAL CONCERNS

Traditionally, the environmental vision in India has been conceived in terms of a universe which is a creation of God and therefore, a definite set of rules seems to govern the universe. These rules are there for every living creature to follow, however, humans being more intelligent, were expected to adhere to the rules more vigorously. We have read above how it was expected of man to follow ethics for righteous path. Traditional Indian thought awards man the role of a steward/ guardian to take care of all the creatures of the earth. Adherence to the pious practices and ethics is considered as an act to ensure the continuance of order and flourishing of civilisation.

*For one who lives by eternal law,
The winds are full of sweetness;
The rivers pour sweets;
So may plants be full of sweetness for us.
Sweet be the night and sweet the dawns;
Sweet be our Father Heaven to us.
For us may the forest tree be full of sweetness,
Full of sweetness the sun,
And full of sweetness the kine for us.*

(*Rigveda*, 1.90.6-8)

In this situation a violation of the peaceful co-existence among the creatures or material world was considered as *pradushan*. The prime

cause of *pradushan* has been identified as human greed and selfishness. Polluted *Srsti* has been described in the following terms: It seems that all stars, planets, moon, sun, air, Agni and nature or directions have been polluted. Seasons also appear to work against the nature, Prithvi in spite of being full of its virtues has lost its *rasa* in all medicinal plants. Medicinal plants are without original qualities and have been polluted. When such pollution will occur human beings will suffer from diseases. Due to pollution of seasons, several types of diseases will crop up and they will ruin the country. Therefore, collect the medicinal plants before the beginning of terrible disease and change in the nature of Prithvi” (*Charaka Samhita, Vimansthan*, 3.2 as cited by Dwived & Tiwari, *op.cit.* p.79).

The source of *pradushana* has been explained in terms of non-adherence to the set norms of cleanliness, violation of *maryada* (code of conduct), etc. Cleanliness was greatly stressed in the traditional thoughts. Cleanliness of body and mind are stressed as a weapon to ward off *pradushan*: Unless the body is kept scrupulously clean and free from toxic or morbid material, the procedures for revitalising and strengthening it will not be efficacious as the dirty clothes will not take proper colour. (*Charaka Samhita*, 8.17, as cited by Dwived & Tiwari, *op.cit.*, pp.80-81).

Indian traditional thought stressed on the prohibition of any such activity which had the impact of disturbing the natural symphony or causing contamination of any of the elements of the earth. Anybody violating general norms of cleanliness and hygiene was liable to be cursed. Clearly tampering with the environment to generate disharmony was *pradushana*.

15.7 SUMMARY

We now know that resources exist within Indian philosophical tradition for the elaboration of man-nature relationship. There is great emphasis on man’s integral relatedness to nature, its elements and the animal and plant life. The environment in which man lives is not an alien environment. He has always to consider it his own, where he is like all other beings but endowed with special faculty of self-reflection and speech. Indeed man is constantly seen as an embodiment of the elements and forces of nature and constantly in relationship to animal and plant life. This gives the world a different character from what is implied in the modern idea of progressive evolution.

15.8 EXERCISES

- 1) Write an essay explaining the place attributed to man in Indian philosophical doctrine.
- 2) Explain the creation and characteristics of *Srsti* as exposed in Indian philosophy.
- 3) Is there a difference between popular and classical traditions of environmental representation in Indian philosophy? Comment.
- 4) Examine the concept of *pradushana* in Indian thought.

15.9 SUGGESTED READING

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