

## History of Environmental Conservation (*Ancient and Medieval Periods*)

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### ABSTRACT

*Discussions and discourses on Sustainable Development (development without depleting the natural resources) in the 21st Century has become a routine activity. It is true that the present world is threatened by the scarcity of natural resources, along with the drastic climate change that affects the life on earth. The changes in climate because of greenhouse effect, natural and manmade disasters resulted in global warming and other phenomena ultimately challenging the existence of human and their harmonious relationship with nature. Often through our discussions, we pretend to show our concern to the environment and its resources. The government makes policies on a regular basis to save our environment, however the outcome of such policies are not appealing as most of them find peace in paper and not in action. This paper tries to read the cause of the broken link between modern man and nature, through the understanding of the relationship man shared with the nature in the past. Concern towards the environment and understanding the importance of environment, and its resources for the existence humankind are not new phenomena, though we recognise the Stockholm conference held in 1972 as the torch bearer of environmental protection activities. With reference to India, evidence of this awareness towards the environment can be traced from the pre-Vedic period. In this study, an effort is made to read the environmental awareness that was prevalent in Ancient and Medieval India through historical evidences, and how it is lost among Modern Indians.*

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### 1. Introduction

“The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence”.

-Rabindranath Tagore

The talk, debates, seminars/conferences on Environment, its relation with other disciplines and its conservation have become common feature in the contemporary society. The realization of the close relation human beings share with the environment could be one reason for the sudden development of this phenomenon. Without a second thought one can say that the survival of mankind on this earth becomes doubtful in the absence of the environment and the natural resources. While such discussions and realizations are the intellectual byproducts developed in the current century, the history of bonding between human beings and environment begins right from the origin of human species. The primary concern of this paper is to understand the procedure of simultaneous development of man-nature connection and the relation man shares with nature.

We know that the Earth and life on Earth developed together. While the geological processes moulded Earth, its changing geology complemented the evolving life forms. It was not an easy process, the different geological breaks and rifts suggest that many species could not sustain the climatic changes. Studies have proved that various species evolved by genetic replacement and the surviving members of a species adapted to the new environmental conditions caused by geological disruptions and predation. The studies conducted on the similarities in geology and biology provide clues for understanding the relationship between the location of

pathways and barriers for both the existence of some and the absence of other fossils in early animal and hominid history. From hominid we evolved to homo and finally to homo-sapiens. Studies suggested that along with the evolution of homo-sapiens, the geological change also happened and man has also learned to adapt with the environment (Penna 2015, 41–43).

Ever since the life originated in the earth, they had to depended on nature and the natural resources that exist freely in nature for their survival. These include water (seas and fresh water), land, soils, rocks, forests (vegetation), animals (including fish), fossil fuels and minerals. These ‘Natural Resources’ form the basis of life on earth. In the early stages of human emergence, man also adapted himself to natural environment like other living organisms which was quite challenging (Patra 2016, 39). However, with the advent of industrial, scientific and technological developments, man has slowly overcome the challenges and threats of environment. The diseases spread by insects, rodents, through water, or through food which at once were endorsed as the main causes of death morbidity were practically brought under control. All these have been done without affecting much of the natural environment surrounding the human.

In course of time, the population explosion demanded more of resources resulting in the imbalance of the nature and along with it emerged new threats in our environment. Today, evidences can be drawn from many parts of the earth about the “dangerous levels of pollution in water, air, earth and living beings; major and undesirable disturbances to the ecological balance of the biosphere, destruction and depletion of irreplaceable resources; and gross deficiencies harmful to the physical, mental and social health of mankind” (Thakur 1997, 1–2).

However, man should have followed three major steps to understand the nature and its importance leading ourselves to not to avoid nature. First, a comprehensive perspective on the human past with an understanding of the natural forces working over centuries. Second, a magnified investigation of the brief timeframe scale-say for as long as three to four centuries-which has seen both the global recovery from the Little Ice Age and the beginning of quick human-induced atmosphere changes. Third, a comprehension of the revolution occurred in the climate science, driven since the 1960s by a developing comprehension of the job of non-renewable energy source innovation in changing worldwide atmosphere(Brooke 2014, 2).

## 2. The Ancient Indian Context

Ancient Indian literature is replete with references to different aspects of the environment- its management, preservation and protection. The traces of environment protection in India can be seen from the early times. In the early stages of human history in India, human beings considered the environment as very dominant and that was why, they worshipped different aspects of trees, forest, animals, mountains, rivers etc. All of these held a special place of reverence in Hindu theology(Budholai 2010). Various aspects of environmental conservation in India were recorded by the foreign travelers like Megasthenes, Pliny, the unknown author Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, Ptolemy, Fa-Hien, Hiuen Tsang, I-tsing etc., who came to India at different periods(Patra 2016, 40).

As stated, the efforts for environmental protection in Indian history can be traced from its early periods to the modern age. In early days, many religious and customary norms governed environmental conservation. The people gave utmost importance and reverence to every aspect of nature. The Indian traditions teach us that all forms of life - plants, animals and human beings are closely interlinked and interdependent and that disturbances in any one of them would jeopardize the entire ecological balance of the universe.(Pathak, Mandalia, and Yogesh Rupala 2012, 2) It was the dharma of each individual in the society to protect nature. The five important elements of nature called the Panchabhutas were divine incarnations to them("Environmental Protection During Ancient and Medieval Periods Law General Essay" n.d.). Hinduism recognizes that the human body is composed of and related to these five elements, and connects each of the elements to one of the five senses. The human nose is related to earth, tongue to water, eyes to fire, skin to air and ears to space. This link between our senses and the elements is the foundation of our human relationship with the natural world. For Hinduism, nature and the environment are not outside us. They, in fact, form an inseparable part of our existence(Tanwar 2016, 2).

The detailed historical analysis of the evolution of the religions and belief systems of the Indian subcontinent clearly reveals their close associations with nature. Human curiosity about the natural forces like rain, flood, storms, and lightning and their fear towards these forces as they were not able to control them probably marked the phenomenon of associating nature with religion. There was also the fear of wild animals which possibly forced them to believe it is controlled by some

supernatural power and they started worshipping them. The Harappan seals have given rise to the speculation that their belief system centered around zoomorphism(Singh 2015). A seal which was found by Wheeler in the 1920's has been identified as a peepul tree, which in India is considered as the Tree of Creation. Apart from worshipping a tree, the Harappans were familiar with several methods to control and preserve water for irrigation(Jha 2003, 34).

Recent advances in ethnobiology and paleoclimatic studies have helped in the reconstruction of the environment during the second and third millennia. Most evidences suggest that no significant change has occurred in climate or rainfall since around 9,000 years ago. Though some scholars suggest that a more humid climate existed between 3000 B.C. and 1800 B.C, some have suggested that winter rainfall was more abundant in the Rajasthan area between 5800 B.C. and 1800 B.C. The lakes and other water bodies in Rajasthan dried up. This indicates the greater aridity that happened towards the end of the Harappan phase of the Indus Valley Civilization(Ahmed 2014, 34). Thus the dire consequences of rampant 'misuse' are brought out. Scholars like Fairservis have sought to explain the decay of the Harappan Civilization in terms of the problems of ecology(Singh 2015).

The ancient Indian treatises known as Vedas and Upanishads (2500 - 1500 BC) are the main sources for the ancient past of India. Many scholars understand the Vedic literature such the Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas (forest books), Upanishads, Samhitas, Upavedas, as not only the religious text of India but as a literature that talks about societal religious practices existed in those periods. It is interesting to note that the Vedas deal with the concept of Nature and Life, contained several references on environment conservation, ecological balance and weather cycle. This indicates the high level of awareness among the people at that time(Tanwar 2016, 2). In the Vedic text, we can find evidence of natural worship where Superhuman deities sometimes with animal qualities are in control of the great natural forces and the fiery wild animals. *Indra*, the master of rain and lightning, *Varuna* (with water), *Agni* (with fire), *Pusan* (with cattle) are some such deities. The idea of worshipping nature does not limit with the reverence to the deities, but they gave due importance and took care of the environment as the nature was important to fulfil their requirements. For example, rain, rivers etc. were very useful for the agriculture and fire helped in the clearance of forests as well as for the domestic purposes("Hinduism - Gods and Goddess in the Vedas" n.d.).

The association and fascination with nature and its worship continued even during the Brahmanical/Vedic period. Trees are considered to be of great value in the religious and mythological manifestations of Indian Culture and mythology as trees played a major role in the sustenance of life as well as the preservation of nature. Since times immemorial, trees have been regarded as the symbol of life and growth and have been associated with wisdom and immortality. Significance of trees in the lives of Ancient Indians can be drawn from the four Vedas which provide a lot of references to various herbs, trees and flowers. In Indian literature and beliefs, they were considered as animate beings and to harm them was

considered a great sacrilege. Besides the *peepul* tree, various other trees were also worshiped. Plants and trees were associated with gods and goddesses. The trees and plants that were of some kind of advantage for the human beings were worshiped, and are provided with special qualities. Today, we now know that the *peepul* tree releases oxygen both day and night 24 hours and thus helps to purify the air. Similarly, *tulsi*, a plant that is worshipped more in Hindu tradition has great medicinal values (Singh 2015). In Mahabharata, the Hindu epic describes "Trees with flowers and fruits satisfy this world. Those who donate a tree are given salvation by the same trees in the other world."

In the Vedic texts, the protection of trees and wildlife held a place of special respect. Cutting green trees was prohibited and punishment was prescribed for such acts. The people of the Vedic period persist in safeguarding the habitation, proper afforestation and non-pollution. In fact, knowingly or unknowingly man is forbidden from exploiting nature. Man is taught to live in harmony with nature and acknowledge that divinity prevails in all elements, including plants and animals (Tanwar 2016, 1).

Forests are the primary source of life and fertility, a refuge for the nomad and a home for the seeker, and have always been viewed as a model for societal and civilizational evolution. They were places of retreat, a source of inspiration, for all Vedic literature was revealed to the sages here. Thus forests received an important role in Indian civilization and in literature. In Indian literature, it even took a feminine representation in *Prakriti*. In the great epic *Ramayana*, Rama's entire journey from Ayodhya to Lanka was through forests and Sea. In the *Mahabharata*, though the big war is for urbanization and to capture the cities of Mathura, Hastinapur, and Indraprastha, the Pandavas spent their years of exile in the forest and made marriage alliances with forest tribes, a move that would help them later in the Kurukshetra war. They also learned several important lessons from living in the forest. Thus forests became both a place for learning higher truths and a source of knowledge or knowledge itself. Thus forests were not the place of uncivilized groups or wild animals as portrayed in other civilizations. In fact, the ancient forests of India have survived as the sacred groves of modern India (Krishna 2017, 18–19).

Tree worship in India probably was predominant form of religion which might have preceded to the Vedic period. It is through veneration and glorification of trees that man attempted to approach and propitiate the divinity with the perception that gods existed in plants and trees. It appears that perhaps the early Indian thinkers attributed religiosity to plants for the maintenance of ecological balance. They worshipped tree as *vrikshadevata* (tree god) and forest as *van devata* (forest god) and had the concept of *kalpavriksha* (the wish fulfilling tree) (Patra 2016, 41–45).

One phrase of Rigveda says, even after "Thousands and hundreds of years if you want to enjoy the fruits and happiness of life, and then take up systematic planting of trees". It also instructs against deforestation, "Rivers occasion widespread destruction if their coasts are damaged or destroyed and

therefore trees standing on the coasts should not be cut off or uprooted (*RV 5.54.6*)." Don't uproot nourishing trees. Others would die consequently. The food chain will break and the entire universe will come to an end (*RV6.48.17*) (Pathak, Mandalia, and Yogesh Rupala 2012, 2). The Atharva Veda stressed upon the purity and quality of water. It is mentioned that pure water cures many ailments and it acts as a preventer of diseases which are not yet contracted. It also speaks about the protection of wildlife and domestic cattle. The Vedic hymn, the *Prithvi Sukta* in the Atharva Veda dedicated to the earth goddess is unquestionably the oldest evocative environmental invocation. The mother earth was celebrated for all her natural bounties and particularly for her gift of herbs and vegetation; her blessings were sought for prosperity in all endeavors and fulfillment of all righteous aspirations. The Vedic seer solemnly declares '*Mata Bhumi Putroham Prithivyah*' (Earth is my mother. I am her son) (Patra 2016, 44–45).

The epics *Ramayana* (c.1000/900 BCE) and the *Mahabharata* (c.900/800 BCE) refers to the environment at various places. In the *Mahabharata*, the whole of India was represented as the land of seven mountains which were chosen as seats of contemplation and peace. In the *Ramayana*, Sita, the main character is considered as the 'ideal' of the Indian women is known to have taken birth out of the soil (*Dharti Mata*). It also describes how the flora and fauna had shown their sympathy towards Rama, at a mournful situation when Sita was abducted by Ravana and paved Rama's way in their own languages. Thus, the intimate relationship between man and nature is portrayed vividly (Roy 2005, 16–17).

When Lakshmana was hit by Indrajit's arrow, Hanuman brought the *Sanjivani* herb from Dronagiri Mountain to save his life. In the epic *Ramayana* Ravana, when faced with calamity, speaks as follows: ... I have not cut down any fig tree in the month of *vaisakh*, why then does this calamity befall me? Above mentioned statements clearly indicate the value of trees which constituted a large part of our environment. According to the statement quoted above, trees possessed the divine power of both creation and death. In one, we can see it saves the life where as in the latter phrase reminds that the cutting of tree can result in death (Tanwar 2016, 2).

In *Mahabharata* nature is viewed as an extension of the same consciousness. Every human being is a product of the main elements of nature. River Ganga was the mother of Bhishma. All the sons of Pandu were born of the main elements of nature while Draupadi was the product of the sacrificial fire. The description of *gandhamadhanavyaasa* has mentioned about the multitudes of trees which created a healthy environment (Jairam Rajani 2016). The Bhagavad Gita in *Mahabharata*, contain many references to the omnipresence of the supreme divinity, including its presence throughout and within nature. In *sloka 20*, chapter 10, Lord Krishna says, "I am the self-seated in the heart of all creatures. I am the beginning, the middle and the very end of all beings. All beings have, therefore to be treated alike." Again in the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna compares the world to a single banyan tree with unlimited branches in which all the species of animals, humans, and demigods wander. Lord Krishna says that in the Bhagavad Gita that "*patram pushpam phalam toyam, yo me*

*bhaktya prayachchati tadaham bhakt yupahrutam asnaami prayataatmanaha*"<sup>1</sup> accept a leaf, flower, fruit or water or whatever is offered with devotion (Tanwar 2016, 2).

In the age of Gautama Buddha (6<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> c. B.C.) there were attempts to create ecological balance through the religious and philosophical teachings. This can be best seen in the concept of *ahimsa* (non-violence) in Buddhism and Jainism. They criticized the killing of animals in the name of sacrifice or rituals, and advocated a gentle and non-aggressive attitude towards nature and prudent use of resources. All the twenty-four Tirthankaras of Jainism were closely associated with environment in one way or other. This shows that how man could be able to attain supreme knowledge in serene and pollution free environment (Patra 2016, 47–48).

The *Manusmriti*, an ancient legal text condemned cruelty towards animals and stated that the killer of the cattle is doomed to die as many times as the number of hairs on the skin of the cattle (Krishna 2017, 137). According to it water is not a private property but is a public property, therefore no one should pollute the water. He also talks about the air pollution. Impure substance is not to be thrown to fire as the smoke rose thereof, may act poisonous. The highest environmental ethics of Manu is to go for penance after someone commits an environmental sin; a high order of self-punishment entails self-realization. Under conditions of urgent necessity, this punishment is relaxed for an aged man, pregnant women or a child (Sachidananda 2006, 1–4). The *Manusmriti* also says that 'He who injures innocent beings with a desire to give himself pleasure never finds happiness, neither in life nor in death'. These innocent beings include the flora and fauna of the earth and creatures in the sky and under the sea (Krishna 2017, 125).

Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, an ancient Indian treatise on administration, economic policy, taxation, diplomacy, planning and other dimensions of statecraft, remains very much relevant in today's world as well. The text was influential until it disappeared in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, however, it was rediscovered in 1904 by R. Shamasastri, who published it later in 1909. The first English translation of the same was published in 1915. This treatise provides a lot of knowledge about the environment and its conservation. It describes the maintenance of public sanitation and preservation of the environment, forest and wildlife. Even in the affairs of the state, the administration and the rulers were directed to preserve and promote environmental welfare (Tanwar 2016, 3). It also contains laws about the environment. According to Kautilya, it should be the dharma (moral duty) of each individual in the society to protect nature. Kautilya prescribed fines related to the cutting of different parts of trees. According to him, for cutting off the tender sprouts of fruit trees, flower trees or shady trees in the park near a city, a fine of 6 *panas* shall be imposed; for cutting off the minor branches of the same trees, 12 *panas*; and for cutting off the big branches, 24 *panas* shall be levied. Cutting of the trunks of the same shall be punished with the first amercement; and felling the same shall be punished with the middlemost amercement. In case of plants which bear flowers, fruits, or provide shade, half of the above fine shall be levied (Patra 2016, 49).

In the arthashastra, Kautilya suggests the need to develop *abhayaranya* or *abhayavana*, forest, and animal sanctuaries, where trees and animals would both reside free from the fear of slaughter. Kautilya also recommended the post of a forest superintendent, poaching and causing damage to forests, were considered illegal and it was a punishable offence especially for the productive ones. In topic 35, he recommends that the "superintendent of forest produce" appointed by the state for each forest zone be responsible not only for maintaining the health of the forest, protecting forests to assist wildlife such as elephants (*hastivana*), but also for producing forest products to satisfy economic needs, products such as *teak*, *palmyra*, *mimosa*, *sissu*, *kauki*, *sirisha*, *catechu*, *latifolia*, *arjuna*, *tilaka*, *tinisa*, *sal*, *robusta*, *pinus*, *somavalka*, *dhava*, *birch*, *bamboo*, *hemp*, *balbaja* (used for ropes), *munja*, fodder, firewood, bulbous roots and fruits for medicine, flowers. The arthashastra also revealed that the Mauryas designated specific forests to protect supplies of timber, as well as lions and tigers, for skins. It was Kautilya who gave the notion that new forests were to be planned at the time of a new state having been established, on an unoccupied land.

In the land unsuitable for agriculture, *Arthashastra* directs for the measures to be taken to increase water level, indicating that it was regarded as a "collective, not a private commodity" and is considered extremely precious. Fines were also charged on acts that adversely affected the water bodies, like "obstructing or diverting a watercourse" or "damaging embankments". He accentuated on effective water management and gave a detailed guideline for its management. He additionally suggested practices for the preservation of natural resources, especially living resources as he was aware that the future productivity of natural resources is linked to their appropriate conservation. Apart from these, in line with the Hindu traditions, he recommends kindness towards animals. *Arthashastra* also reveals the attention focused on wildlife in the Mauryan period: certain forests were declared as protected and they were called as '*abhayaranya*' like the present day 'sanctuary'. Heavy penalties, including capital punishment, were prescribed for offenders who entrapped, killed or otherwise molested elephants, deer, bison, birds, or fish, amongst other animals (Tanwar 2016, 3). Kautilya also recommended construction of gardens for public use and pinpointed the importance of lakes, tanks, ponds, groves, gardens, hillocks to make a city worth living. He talks about the medicinal value of trees and their remedies falls under arboriculture which dealt with the construction and maintenance of gardens and planned greenery (Shukla 1970, 179–81).

Asoka's rule is the foremost example of ecologically responsible statehood in India's ancient history. The Pillar Edict V of Asoka inscriptions reveals that he had imported and grown herbs suitable for human and animal. he had ponds dug up and shelters erected along the roads at every eight kilometres, and planted banyan trees on the roads to give shade to man and animal. He was concerned about the wildlife and its importance and banned the royal hunting and animal sacrifices. Burning of the forests without purpose was forbidden (Giri 2018, 61–64).

The Mauryas were succeeded in North India by the Sungas and Kushanas and in the South by the Satavahanas of Andhra who also gave emphasis on the preservation and protection of the environment. The depiction of animal figures, trees and vegetal motifs dominated the post-Maurya art and sculpture. The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea (c. 1<sup>st</sup> century CE) and Ptolemy (c. 2<sup>nd</sup>) provides valuable information about various aspects of environment of this period. Fa-Hien, the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim who visited India during the reign of Chandragupta II (c. 375 CE to 415 CE) made references to the significant developments made in the arena of natural and ecological aspects during the Gupta period. He mentioned about the veterinary hospitals in the capital city, Pataliputra, which was most probably the first veterinary hospital in the world.

The Allahabad Pillar Inscription mentions that Samudragupta, the mighty Gupta ruler who conquered the forest states of central India in 4<sup>th</sup> century CE furnishes valuable information about various aspects of the environment during this period. The Kalinga emperor Kharavela was a great supporter of nature and environment. He extended the canal constructed by Mahapadma Nanda three hundred years ago from Tanasulia to Kalinganagari, his capital city (Patra 2016, 50).

### 3. The Medieval Indian Context

In the medieval period, though there have been instances of the establishment of nature parks, gardens like *gulistan*, *bostan* and fruit orchards by the Mughal rulers around their palaces and along banks of rivers, they did not have any definite policy to protect the forests or wildlife. Rather, for them it was considered to be a good source of revenue and pleasure. However, the notable feature of the Mughal regime was the growth of interest in natural history. An administrative post "*Muhtasibs*" were vested with the duty of prevention of pollution. The account of Babar (Baburnama) gives a detailed description of the fauna of India in a very systematic manner. After giving the features of India's physical geography, he proceeds to describe first the mammals, then birds and finally, aquatic animals (Moosvi 2017, 1). He further mentions that in Hindustan, there were a great variety of flowers, that included *jasun* (*Hibiscus rosasinensis*), *kanir* (*Nerium odorim*), *kiura* (*Pandanus odoratissimus*, the screw pine), and *yasman* (jasmine), the white champa by name (Amirthalingam 2016, 181). Later, Jahangir's *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* investigations in Natural History shows his interest in animals, birds and fauna. It also infers that he owned a greater scientific bent of mind than his great-grandfather. He had perhaps greater leisure than Babur had, and to satisfy his sense of curiosity, Jahangir patronized a large number of artists to whom he ordered to portray the animals and birds. He also commissioned for accurate paintings of flowers. Foremost, among these artists was Mansur who painted the flora of Kashmir in great detail.

The attempt to introduce new fruits was a natural corollary to it. Akbar's governor Ali Quli Afshar introduced sweet cherry in Kashmir by grafting and he also used grafting to improve the quality of oranges in the imperial gardens. Shahjahan generously lifted the ban on grafting and the grafted oranges began to be widely popular. Both Babar's account of Indian

flora and fauna and Jahangir's investigations in natural history are well known, and Salim Ali, the celebrated ornithologist, drew attention to their contributions as naturalists long ago.

Salim Ali, the ornithologist had acknowledged Both Babar's account of Indian flora and fauna and Jahangir's investigations in natural history as naturalists.

The text on ethics written by AbdulQadir Badauni begins by a quote attributed to Prophet Muhammad that says, "God condemns him who kills a cow, cuts down a tree or sells away a human being". Badauni lists sins and offenses; according to him, the three sins that are most heinous are cutting down a shady tree, making a profession of killing animals and selling away human beings. Akbar's efforts in promoting afforestation in common property resources, management of water bodies, and his disapproval of killing animals are legendary (Moosvi 2017, 1-2).

Jahangir was responsible for laying out some of the finest gardens in Mughal India. He also made it possible to cultivate high altitude trees like the cypress, juniper, pine and the Javanese sandal tree in the plains of India. Under his commission, more than a hundred paintings of Kashmir flowers such as the lotus, lily, tulip, jasmine, hollyhock and saffron flowers were made. Thus, it is evident that Jahangir qualifies as a keen researcher and fine observer of the flowers of Kashmir. He also cataloged, observed and investigated the fruit trees of Kashmir in a scientific manner. This included the pear, the guava, grapes, pomegranates, mulberries, and the Persian melon (Amirthalingam 2016, 184). During the Mughal period, hunting, especially of the lion and tiger, was restricted to the members of the royal family only. This, in the long run, helped to preserve them (Singh 2015, 3).

### 4. Conclusion

Today, the environmental problems in India are growing rapidly. The increasing economic development, and the rapidly growing population which have reached 1.35 billion occupying the world second largest position added to the negligence of environment as there were much severe issues to address. In due course of time in the race of so-called development human have submerged their relation with nature. It looks so obvious in the study that the humans have developed from the hunter and gatherer to modern humans in different phases. They developed their lifestyle to a more comfortable status, and simultaneously became powerful and greedy. Human wants to have control over everything in the earth. The words of M.K. Gandhi, "*the earth provides enough to satisfy everyone's need; but not for anyone's greed.*" proves its relevance. In the present scenario, globalization has changed the very nature and quality of the environment. The world has become a global village - an efficiently information oriented but environmentally value deficient society. A keen observer cannot deny the fact that in the process of development to humanity through ages, human have detached themselves from nature, for the concern about nature was more during the time of the pre-Vedic period and eventually it has declined slowly through the ages. All ancient Hindu texts emphasise on the preservation of environment and ecological balance. Human was forbidden from exploiting nature with the help of religion. The

understanding of human in ancient period was trying not to damage the environment rather to improve it.

Buddhism and Jainism were also environment friendly religion and they believed in not harming the nature or the wildlife, and to maintain a harmonious relation with nature.

India had witnessed many foreign Invaders. While a few of them came to plunder and went back, a few have settled back in India to rule. Before arrival of the British, it was the Sultanate and Mughal rulers who ruled over India from 13<sup>th</sup> century to 18<sup>th</sup> century. During this period, hardly there was any concern about protection of nature. When the British took over the reins from the Mughals, initially the British extensively exploited the environment for their development as they used the forest resources for various industries such as constructing Ship, building harbour, railway etc. Major deforestation took place for the purpose of tea and coffee plantation, and the area of land used for agriculture was converted to produce cash crops. In

the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the British realised that the resources are not abundant and forest policies and acts were made.

To some extent it is true that the foreign Invasion had great influence on the Indian society. However, spreading of Christianity and Islam had changed the attitude of Hindus towards the nature. India was considered as superstitious and uncivilised land by the British. In the race of modernisation and westernisation, the modern Indians have changed their spiritual belief systems too.

The modern society is becoming rational and it believes in science, logic and proof leaving no place for spirituality. Eventually, the society and circumstances has forced the human to detach themselves from the nature. Now it's high time that we should understand the value of nature and the references of ancient India on the protection of the existence of humankind.

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