

# Bishnoi's Lifestyle and Environment Conservation

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## ABSTRACT

This paper highlights the initiatives of Bishnoi community in protection of environment and conservation of wildlife. This paper also focuses on how Guru Jambheshwar Bhagwan has been concerned about the environment. Guruji was born in rajput family in the village Pipasar in 1451. At the age of 34 ,he founded the Bishnoi religion, he provided education to his diciples in the form of "SHABDWANI".Bishnoism is all about 29 tenets that govern the lifestyle of bishnois-the religious sect ,out of which 6 are directly related to environment protection and saving animals. The Bishnois are considered the first proponent of environment protection, wildlife protection and green lovers as they are born nature lovers.To save the green trees , Guru Jambheshwar Bhagwan told his devotees that- "सिर साँटे रूख रहे, तो भी सस्तो जान",meaning, that if a green tree survives even if the head is cut ,consider it cheaper. Recognizing this message, on Tuesday, September 9, 1730, Amrita Devi Beniwal in village khezraliof Jodhpur district, with her sacrifice, not only presented the message of Maharaj in the history of religious and environmental protection of the world, but also this wonderful sacrifice was a motivation for upcoming generations.This paper also depicts, how Bishnoi community have gumptions for environment and wildlife protection and conservation. Guru Jambhoji directed his disciples to perform "yajna"daily which purifies not only the internal soul but also helps to purify the environment ,which now a days modern science also accepts.

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## 1. Objectives-

1. How the Bishnoi community plays an important role in environment conservation.
2. How the 29 principles guide them to save the environment.
3. What was guru Jhambhoji's teaching related to save environment?
4. What were the various steps taken by the people of the community regarding environment conservation?
5. What were the main principles out of those 29 principles which are related only with the environment

## 2. Methodology –

- 1.Secondary data has been used in this paper from various sources like Amar jyoti magazine and other holy books related with the Bishnoi sect.
2. Data collected about the martyrs of Khejadli from the temple and also direct questioning from the villagers.
3. In depth interviews of people of the Bishnoi community regarding their culture.
4. Focused mainly on group discussions of community people.
5. Empirical view.
6. Content analysis of historical records and documents.

## 3. Study Area-

This paper basically deals with the major works of Bishnoi community people regarding environmental conservation . So the study area of the research will mainly be Rajasthan ,

Haryana , Punjab . But Rajasthan is focused broadly, as the concentration of Bishnoi population is more in that area and secondarily the incidence like that of martyrs of khejarli village or self sacrifice of women of ravasadvillage of Rajasthan is also briefly discussed in this paper.

## 4. Introduction-

Environmental protection is very important. It is very important to preserve and maintain it. Without a pleasant and clean environment, human life is impossible and it is also difficult to breathe. Every human should give his full cooperation in protecting the environment and eliminating pollution, otherwise our life cannot become pleasant and simple. Environmental pollution has spread all over the world nowadays. There is no place in the world where many measures are being taken to eliminate pollution and balance the environment. Preaching not to cut green trees is being given and new green trees are being planted. Every effort is being made to remove pollution. The whole world is troubled by this, but the founder of Bishnoi Community , His Holiness Guru Jambhoji, had laid special emphasis on environmental protection and pollution 530 years ago, his principles are applicable even in today's era and they stand the test .This rule is followed by bishnois, as many incidents are clear cut evidence of this.

For the protection of the Khejarli tree, for the first time at the intersection of Ravasadi village, two women karma and Gauri gave self-sacrifice in front of everyone.

Guru Jambhoji's incarnation took place in Samvat 1508 at an ordinary village, Pipasar, in Rajasthan under Thakur Lohatji

Panwar. At that time, social evils were dominated here. Anarchy spread around, people were misleading the general public in the name of religion and fulfilling their selfishness.

Guru Jambhoji gave teachings for animal protection and social reform through "Shabwani".

Guru Jambheshwar lord laid great emphasis on self-determination to save the environment and said "रूख लीलो नहीं घावै" That is, green trees should not be cut.

Out of 29 principles that bishnoi follow, out of which 6 are directly related to the environment, which are-

- to offer daily oblation to the holy fire with a heart filled with feelings of welfare ,love , devotion .
- use filtered water, milk and carefully cleaned fuel /firewood(to prevent killing or burning insects).
- Do not cut green trees, save the environment.
- don't eat meat or non vegetarian dishes; feed and protect wildlife.
- don't use blue coloured clothes as in ancient india, the blue colour used to be obtained from indigo trees).

The Bishnoi sect is the center of attraction of the world due to its kindness and tree protection.

The sacrifice of Khejdli is a rare example of sacrifices for tree protection. Bishnoi is an important eco-friendly society at present due to its ecological conservation related lifestyle. In the Bishnoi residential areas, the principle that 'all creatures have equal rights on the earth' is easily seen in the desert where tree shrubs are found.

People of Bishnoi society have been using natural resources especially in the desert since the 15th century in line with the principle of balanced development (Brundtland Conference in 1987). Today, where clean water is becoming the most pressing problem, a traditional water conservation system is found in every Bishnoi house in the desert.

## 5. Incidence of khejarli village-

When we talk about environmental protection, the discussion cannot end without remembering Amrita Devi. Now the question is arising in your mind that what work did Amrita Devi do for the sake of environmental protection that due to which she would be remembered even today. Let us know what unprecedented work Amrita Devi did for environmental protection. This is from the year 1737. Officers of the princely state of Jodhpur came to Khejdli village and ordered the cutting of trees as soon as they arrived. The villagers got upset after hearing this. These were people of Bishnoi society who have an unbreakable love for nature. Guru Jambhoji has always been praiseworthy for Bishnoi society. He had made 29 rules to live life and the followers of these rules were called Bishnoi. Once in the 16th century there was a severe famine. People started cutting trees. Started devouring wild animals. While guiding them, Guruji said that by protecting flora and fauna, the problem of famine can be overcome. Jambhoji's education started showing colour. People acidified their teachings and stopped cutting trees and killing animals. Amrita Devi was born and raised in this Bishnoi society. She too had a special love for trees and plants. She remembered Guruji's teachings very well. She became angry on hearing the king's authority. She and her daughter clung to the tree. Her other friends also came after him. The soldiers cut their neck. Then what ? One by one, 363 people were martyred to protect trees. When the

news reached the king, he felt very sad. He apologised for the mistake of his officers. The king issued an order on copperplate to ban the cutting of trees and hunting of wild animals, under which punishment was imposed for violating the rule. After the martyrdom of Amrita and her companions, even members of the royal family did not dare to hunt in this area. A memorial and temple has been built here in memory of the martyrs. Thousands of Bishnois gather on Martyr's Day and pay their respectful homage to the martyrs.

Every Bishnoi is always ready to sacrifice everything to save life and environment

A saying is prevalent, "Sir Santéroonkhbache ,to bhisastojan, even if the head is chopped and a tree is saved you stay cheap," the situation is similar even today when men and women take the siege of a hunter as soon as the sound of the gun hits the ears. Like their family members, they mourn the dead animal. One such tree lover Amrita, whose martyrdom is an inspiration to all human beings. Their sacrifice will always give the message of environmental protection. The Forest Department of the Government of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh confers Amrita Devi Bishnoi Smriti Puraskar to the individuals who have contributed to the conservation of environment in which a cash award along with a citation is given to 25, 000.

Environment protection is very very important and was largely discussed even before guruji's teaching as it is written in Atharvaveda –

यास्या वृक्षया वंस्पत्याधुवास्तिषठन्ति विश्वहा ।

पृथ्वी विश्वधायासं धृतामच्छावदामसी ॥

Meaning, That is, the earth on which trees and vegetation always remain standing and standing, we praise the earth that holds all and holds itself. In another mantra of Atharvaveda, expressing concern and sympathy for the conservation, promotion and promotion of the land, it is said that the earth has to be dug for many purposes such as for sowing seeds, extracting minerals, wells etc. That is why it has been prayed in the Veda that the crater in the earth should be filled soon and we should be cautious while digging the earth so that its heart does not get hurt.

Guru Jambhoji Called his shabvani as veda- मेरा उपाख्यान वेदूँ, कण तत भेदूँ ॥

Bishnoi considers it a fifth Veda as it is full of knowledge, action and worship. Like the Vedas, Guru Jambhoji warned his disciples about the environment, towards the protection of human life. Bishnoi religion was established and made twenty-nine rules for them and made it mandatory for each Bishnoi to follow twenty-nine rules. These rules are the basic mantra of environmental protection.

In this way he did incomparable work for mankind by connecting religion with the environment. His ideas are not only for social reforms but are epoch-making and revolutionary. Today, environmental degradation is a complete prohibition of cutting green trees and killing animals in the lecture rosary of the whole world. Shiri Guru Jambhoji has said in his sermons- जीव दया पालनी,रूख लीलो नहीं घावै that is, Compassion of creatures and not cutting of green trees, biological components, animals and flora are of vital importance to maintain the environmental balance in nature.

The sacrifice of Khejladi is a world famous event, where 363 people, men and women of Bishnoi Community sacrificed their lives to save trees. Such a unique and ancient example is not found anywhere in the history of the world.

Therefore, Shri GuruJambhoji's thinking towards the environment is currently contemplative and educative for the balance of environment. If we want to preserve the world's forest culture, then the principles of Guru ji have to be adopted. Mutual relations of forest, animals and vegetation are unbreakable food chains, because any organism is directly or indirectly alive by vegetation. Conservation of land is also necessary for conservation of vegetation. Almost all the people who are followers of guru jambhoji are always ready to sacrifice everything, even their lives to save life and environment.

## 6. Conclusion-

After Guru Jambheshwar Bhagwan, many Bishnoi saints made people aware of environmental protection. Chief of

which was Saint Wilhoji. Wilhoji also campaigned extensively to protect trees and they had a profound impact on Bishnoi society. People understood the importance of surrounded trees and understood it and started sacrificing their lives for it. 'सिर साँटे रूख बचे तो भी सस्तो जाण' settled deeply in their mind.

The promotion of saint Wilhoji's creatures and conservation of nature also spread well. His following couplet in 'Batisakhdi' is currently very critical-

जीव दया नित रास, पाप नहीं कीजिए,  
जाँडी हिरण संहार, देख सिर दीजिए

On every amavasya on various holy places a huge yajna is performed using a large quantity of dried coconut, hawansamigri made up of various environment putifying elements and desi ghee, which helps to purify and clean the environment and the internal soul of people.

This is how bishnois are known as the great environmentalists in the world.

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