

Environmental Awareness as Recoded In Atharvaveda



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ABSTRACT

The *Vedas* are the first texts in the literature of human race. They deal with knowledge, both physical and spiritual. The Vedic views revolve around the concept of Nature and life. We can easily figure it out how nature was related to life and livelihood of Vedic people through their literature which is referred to as The Vedas. This paper attempts to explore the awareness of ancient Indian people about Environment. In various texts of The Vedas we find the oldest and simplest form of Nature worship. This ancient literature reflects on the history of Vedic period, as literature mirrors society and social lives. It is well established fact the nature plays a dominant role in human life. Man has its roots in nature. The *Vedas* contain hymns in the form of praises and prayers addressed to gods who are personifications of the powers of nature. The hymns are mostly devoted to the adoration of the phenomena of nature.

Keywords : Atharvavda, Water, Environment

OBJECT OF THE STUDY

1. To identify and classify the environment issues depicted in *Atharvaveda* literature.
2. To explain the relevance of Atharvaveda in present time.
3. Concept of Earth, Water, Air& soil.
4. To know about types of solution to environment crises of *AV*
5. To look for the scope of implementing the *AV* knowledge to the current scenario.

INTRODUCTION

Veda are the first text in the literature of human race. It deals with knowledge both physical and spiritual. The Vedic views revolve around the concepts of nature and life. The oldest and simplest form of nature worship finds expression in Vedic texts. In Modern Science environment are living and none living beings, which is classified as light, air, rain etc. Environmental problems which we face today, are largely due to our scientific achievements. There is environment protection Act, 1986 follows- environment includes water, air, land and there interrelationship. According to one indigenous theory established in the Upanishad, the universe consists of five basic elements Environment (*Prithivi, Vayu, Apah, Teja* and *Aakasha*)—इमानि पञ्चमहाभूतानि पृथिवी वायुः आकाशः आपज्योतिषि। *Aitareya Upanishad* 18.1.17. The relation of human beings with environment is very natural .from the very beginning of creation wants to know about it for self-protection and benefit. In recent days environmental science and ecology are disciplines of modern science under the study of environment the concepts of environment differ from age to age, since it depends upon the condition, prevalent at that particular time. In this paper, an effort is made to find out the awareness of ancient Indian People about the environment. As Sanskrit literature is so wide I, refer here mainly to Vedic texts and Particularly the *Atharva Vedic Samhitas*. According to The Atharvaveda there are three covers of the environment and they are referred to as *Chandāṃsi*. They are: Water, Air and Herbs. They exist in the world since the birth of the planet: “*trīṇi ca chandāṃsi kavayo bi yetire pururūpaṃ darśataṃ viśvacakṣaṃ āpo vātā ouśadhayastānyekasmin bhubana arpitāni*” (*Atharvaveda 18.1.17*). It proves the Vedic sages had enough knowledge and understanding of the basic elements of the environment. On the other hand, The Upanisads describe earth, air, ether, water and light as the five basic elements of the universe: “*imāni pañcamahābhūtāni pṛthivī vāyuh ākāśah āpiyotīṣī*” (*Aitareya Upaniṣad 3.3*).

1. Devotation to Earth

In the *Atharvavda*, the earth is described in one hymn of 63 verses. This famous hymn called as *Bhumisukta* or *Prithivisukta* indicates the environmental consciousness of Vedic seers. The seers appear to have advanced understanding of the earth through this hymns. She is called *Vasudha* for containing all wealth. *Hiranyavaksha* for having gold bosom and *Jagato Niveshani* for being abode of whole world. She is called *Visvambhara* because she is represented of the universe. The earth is described then as being present in the middle of the oceans (sedimentary rocks) and as one having magical movements. It talks about the different energies which are generated from the earth. The earth holds almost all the secrets of nature, which will help us in understanding the universe. So the Earth respected called mother.

यस्यां समुद्र उत सिन्धुरापो यस्यामन्नं कृष्टयः संबभुवः ।
यस्यामिदं जिन्वति प्राणदेजत् सा नो भूमिः पूर्वपेये दधातु ॥

The Earth upon which the sea, and the rivers and the water which food and tribes of men have arisen upon which this breathing, moving life exists, shall afford us precedence in drinking. The mother-land is loved not only for its material wealth comprising the botanical, Zoological and mineral wealth that contains but also for the moral and spiritual ideals enshrined in the hearts and lives of the noble souls. This hymn is one of the most attractive and characteristic of the *Atharvan*, rising at times to poetic conception of no mean merit, and comparatively free from the stock artificialities of the Vedic poets.

2. Worship of water

Water is essential to all forms of life. *Chhandogya Upanishad* describes about qualities of water- The water is source of joy and for living a healthy. The cycle of water is described- from ocean waters reach to sky and from sky come back to earth.

(A.V. 4.27.4) The Indian Philosophy through its Vedas, Upanishads and Gita given a high ranking to the importance of water. The Water verily are healing, the water chase away disease, the waters cure all disease, may they prepare for remedy (A.V. VI.91.3)

3. Propitiation of Air

The Vedic seers knew the importance of air for life. They understood all about air in the atmosphere and also about the air inside the body. Air pollution affects ecosystems in a number of ways. Trees are playing very important role. Vedic rishis are the keen observers

Of the nature. The sacred texts Aranyakas and the Upanishad's were produced by the great rishis who lived in the forests. There is invoked the blessings of herbs and trees for betterment. Enlightenment came to Gautama Buddha when he was seated

Under a Bodhi tree.

4. Glorification of the Sun

In the waters are diseases expelling, and remedial of everything. The *Atharvans* were aware of the remedial power of waters, hence we find repeated prayers for healing in the *Atharvaveda*. (A.V. VI.91.3)

5. Plants as a panacea

या ओषधयः सोमराज्ञीब्रह्मीः शतविचक्षणा।
बृहस्पतिप्रसूतास्ता नो मुद्गत्वंहसः॥ AV. VI96.1

Many plants of hundred fold aspect, whose king is soma, which have been begotten by *Bṛhaspati*, shall free us from calamity. *Atharavaveda* gives the importance of herbs, which have to power to cure many dreadful diseases.

Conclusion

From above detailed discussion, some light is thrown on the awareness of our ancient seers about the environment and its constituents. It is clear that the A.V vision to live in harmony with environment was not merely physical but was far wider and much comprehensive. In that time people desired to live a life of hundred years and this wish can be fulfilled only when environment will be unpolluted, clean and peaceful. If we take care for our environment, it will give us years to live here in this earth. Modern scientists should feel proud of our ancestors for their profound understanding and views on Environment. Ancient Indian sages knew about various aspects of Environment (*Prithivi, Vayu, Apah, Teja* and *Aakasha*), and also the importance of coordination between all natural powers. During prayer the sages expressed their beliefs of the interrelationship among these extreme powers. Prayers carry lives within, they strongly believed that the natural powers existed — their thoughts, these powers and the sages praised them too. The ancient people wished to live a life of a hundred-year—“*jīvema śaradaḥ śatam*” (Atharvaveda 19.67.1), and they were aware of the fact that Environment should essentially be kept pollution-free, clean and peaceful.

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