

## 5. Conclusion

Within the narrow compass of this paper, an humble attempt has been made to highlight India's age-old tradition of protection/conservation of plants, animals and of forests - the three main components of nature - what are now known as three major components in an integrated system of a biosphere.

The growth of the industries opened various new avenues of profession and for raw materials more areas were to be deforested. So, this is a cruel reality that from the time immemorial forests have been fighting a losing battle all through the centuries, since the beginning of human settlement. In this battle man's role is of a predator. He is compelled to do damage to the natural vegetal world. But simultaneously it is man himself who guided by his empirical knowledge has been trying to protect this sole shelter for his own existence by prudent and sustainable utilization of forest resources.

The Ancient social thinkers with a view to protecting the green world and animal domain, introduced scriptural injunctions as is evidenced from literary and inscriptional sources. The ancient thinkers did not rest content by merely assessing the economic benefit and material utility of the living world, they also sought to derive lessons from it.

Man is advised to follow the nature of trees with a view to attaining perfection of his qualities. Kālidāsa has sighted that " the loftiest trees bend down by the appearance of fruit, clouds (when pregnant) with new water, hang very low ; good men are (never)

turned arrogant by riches. This (as) indeed the nature of the succourer of others." (*bhabati namrāstarava phalāgamairnavāmbubhi-rdurbilambino ghanāḥ | anuddhatāḥ satpurusāḥ samṛddhibhiḥ svabhābā ebaīṣa paropakāriṇām* || ( AS. V, 12).

The deep regards for plants and animals, and finding analogy of good qualities, virtues and ethics of man in plants explain that human soul is blended with that of plants.

We have strong ground to believe that this esteemed heritage evolved in India from environmental consciousness. The present concept of the need of conservation of bio-diversity and sustainable utilisation of natural resources was conceived by our fore-fathers long ago. In reality we are now attempting to recycle our rich age-old heritage of nature consciousness as is envisaged in the hymns of the Ṛgveda: "Sweet as honey (i.e. exhilarating) is the breeze that is blowing. Sweet as honey ( i. e. refreshing)is what the Sindhus ( the Indus and its tributaries) are emitting. May our medicinal herbs be sweet as honey (i.e. healing)! Sweet as honey(i.e.charming) are the night and the dawn. Sweet as honey (i.e. pleasant) is the dust of the earth. May our fore-fathers be in Heaven which is sweet as honey (i.e.delightful)! Sweet as honey (i.e.cooling) are our umbrageous trees. May the sun be sweet as honey(i.e. envigourating) | May our cows be sweet as honey (i.e. provide us with milk, sweet as honey)! (*Madhu bātārtāyate madhukṣaranti sindhabaḥ mādhvinaḥ santvoṣadhiḥ | madhu nakta mutoyaso madhumatpārthivaṁ rajaḥ madhudyaurastu naḥ pitā | madhumānno vanaspatiṁmadhumaṁ astu sūryaḥ mādhvirgavo bhabantu naḥ* || (Ṛg. 1.90.6, IX. 112. 1., X. 75. 5-6; X 97. 1-23)."