

Chapter-IV

Intrinsic Value in Nature: An Analysis from Indian Perspective

4.1: Introduction

One of the most important tasks of environmental philosophy is to construct a system of normative guidelines governing human's attitudes, behaviour, and action towards nature. Thus there are some fundamental questions to be asked are: how ought human, either as an individual or as a group, to behave, to act, toward nature? As we have discussed in the previous chapters by 'nature' we understand the nonhuman environment where human finds himself within. Questions like these presuppose the appropriateness of the application of moral, ethical concepts towards nature, viz., stones, fish, bears, trees, water, and so on. Any feasible environmental philosophy needs to provide adequate answers to these following three questions:

- What is the nature of nature?
- What is the nature of human?
- How should human relate to nature?

The complex of the problems constituting environmental crisis are environmental pollution, the aesthetic degradation of nature, human overpopulation, resource depletion, ecological destruction, and, now emerging as the most pressing and desperate of problems, abrupt, massive species extinction. These problems, which are essentially Western in nature, are not only tough and global but also they are peculiar as they appear to be resulted from both (1) a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of nature/environment and (2) an exclusion of nature/environment from moral concern or consideration in Western thought. Hence, to address environmental problems and eventually to ameliorate the environmental crisis requires the followings:

- (i) The metaphysical foundations must be brought into alignment with ecology- the principal basic science of the environment and
- (ii) An ethical theory must be enlarged so as to include within its purview both nonhuman natural entities and since the proposed metaphysical revision, most

generally conceived, subverts the concept of ontologically independent entities nature as a whole.

Thus, the theoretical project of environmental ethics on each of these two heads - the metaphysical and the axiological - has two basic phases, the first critical, the second is constructive.

In the history of Western thought, nature has been primarily appreciated as instrumentally valuable. In *Genesis*, it is said that God gives humankind ‘dominion over the earth,’ that is that natural things were created for the use and employment of man’s happiness. In Platonic philosophy, from Plato to Plotinus, the created world is seen as instrumentally valuable for approaching an understanding of the formal good, and ultimately the Good. One might tend to think that nature was regarded as instrumentally good, but intrinsically bad by Platonic philosophers.

However, there is a tendency in Platonism and Neoplatonism, one which has a profound influence on subsequent Western philosophy, to regard nature as intrinsically good. Of course we understand such an idea under the rubric of providence. We can see the clues of these ideas in Plato’s *Timaeus*, and explicit expressions of it in Plotinus’ *Enneads*. This concept of providence holds a powerful influence over the thinking of all subsequent Western philosophy up to Enlightenment. To hold a belief in providence is to believe that the world is fundamentally good, that, being created by a good and benevolent deity, it could not possibly be bad. We can find in Leibniz, in 17th Century maintaining that this is “the best of all possible worlds.” Despite the discontent caused by Leibniz’s impersonal God, his belief in a providential world order is characteristic of that period of intellectual development that which we refer to as Enlightenment.

The initial criticism focused simplistically on the so-called Judeo-Christian tradition in Western philosophy. This criticism was primarily cosmological and metaphysical, but had clear moral implications which came under attack in the following manner.

1. God - the locus of the holy or sacred - transcends nature.

2. Nature is a profane artifact of a divine, craftsman-like creator. The essence of the natural world is informed matter: God divided and ordered an inert, plastic material-the void/waters/dust or clay.
3. Man exclusively is created in the image of God and thus is segregated, essentially, from the rest of nature.
4. Man is given dominion by God over nature.
5. God commands man to subdue nature and multiply himself.
6. The whole metaphysical structure of the Judeo-Christian world view is political and hierarchical: God over Man, Man over Nature-which results in a moral pecking order or power structure.
7. The image-of-God in Man is the ground of man's intrinsic value. Since nonhuman natural entities lack the divine image, they are morally disenfranchised. They have, at best, instrumental value.
8. This notion is compounded in the later Judeo-Christian tradition by Aristotelian - Thomistic teleology - rational life is the *telos* of nature and hence all the rest of nature exists as a means-a support system-for rational man.

An influential example which is essentially nonprofessional way of criticizing Western metaphysical and moral traditions from an environmental point of view was expressed by landscape architect Ian McHarg in the following paragraph:

“The great Western religions born of monotheism have been the major source of our moral attitudes. It is from them that we have developed the preoccupation with the uniqueness of man, with justice and compassion. On the subject of nature, however, the Biblical creation story of the first chapter of *Genesis*, source of the most generally accepted description of man's role and powers, only fails to correspond to reality as we observe it, but in its insistence dominion and subjugation of nature, encourages the most exploitative destructive instincts in man rather than those that are deferential and creative. Indeed, if one seeks license for those who would increase radioactivity, create canals and harbors with atomic bombs, employ poisons without constraint, or give consent to the bulldozer mentality, there could be no better injunction than this text. Here can be found the sanction and injunction to conquer nature-the enemy, the threat to Jehovah. The creation story in Judaism was absorbed unchanged into Christianity. It emphasized

the exclusive divinity of man, his God-given dominion over all things and licensed him to subdue the earth.”⁷⁶

Given this metaphysical and axiological conceptual composite at the core of the predominant and prevailing Western world view, the environmental crisis is the predictable, the inevitable, outcome. McHarg argued that:

“Our failure is that of the Western World and lies in prevailing values. Show me a man-oriented society in which it is believed that reality exists only because man can perceive it, that the cosmos is a structure erected to support man on its pinnacle, that man exclusively is divine and given dominion over all things, indeed that God is made in the image of man, and I will predict the nature of its cities and their landscapes. I need not look far for we have seen them-the hot-dog stands, the neon shill, the ticky-tacky houses, dysgenic city and mined landscapes. This is the image of the anthropomorphic, anthropocentric man; he seeks not unity with nature but conquest”.⁷⁷

Thus, McHarg argued that to solve environmental crisis, it is necessary to construct or to adopt a different metaphysics and a different axiology. In the classic of early environmental ethics literature, Lynn White, Jr., makes the following remark:

“What we do about ecology [that is, the natural environment] depends on ideas of the man-nature relationship. More science and more technology going to get us out of the present ecologic crisis until we find a new religion, rethink our old one. The beatniks, who are the basic revolutionaries of our show a sound instinct in their affinity for Zen Buddhism, which conceives man-nature relationship as very nearly the mirror image of the Christian view”.⁷⁸

The views of Lynn White and several environmental philosophers argue that the Western worldview and religious traditions which encourage dominion and control over nature bear the responsibility for the tragic state of our world resources and ecology today. The extension of this position is that Asian traditions have the philosophical resources that constrain consumerism, encourage renunciation, and support eco-friendly traditions. If indeed Asian traditions in general and Hinduism in particular, have fundamentally eco-friendly philosophy and texts that encourage frugality, lack of possessions, and worldviews that include nature as continuous with

⁷⁶Ian L. McHarg,(1969), *Design With Nature Garden City*, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., p. 26.

⁷⁷*Ibid.* p.24

⁷⁸ Lynn White;(1967), ‘Historical Roots of Ecological Crisis’*Science*, Vol. 155, Issue-3767, p. 1203-1207.

human life, one may wonder why the countries in which these religions have been practiced have had a terrible record in ecological disasters and rampant industrialization. The answers are obviously complex.

There are several articles on environmental philosophy presuppose that there is a definite connection between worldviews and practice. While there is some justifications to the last statement (all Jains who believe in non-violence are usually vegetarians), we must acknowledge that there are competing forces that determine behaviour within the Hindu philosophy. Recent academic scholarship tends to blame Western thought and Western actions for the devastation of land in Third-World countries. J. B. Callicott suggested that Western intellectual colonization is responsible for the failures we see in Eastern and Southern Asia. This view is also advocated by some Indian authors. As Lance Nelson notes, Vandana Shiva, ‘an important voice of the ecology movement in India, focuses almost entirely on the West, and the Third World’s experience of colonialism, modernization, modernist developmentalism, and so on, as the root of her country’s environmental devastation. She thus tends to ignore the pre-colonial aspects of the problem. In particular, she tends to give romanticized readings of the environmental implications of certain aspects of Hindu thought’.⁷⁹

4.2: Distinctiveness of Value

There is a common belief, which is also reinforced by S. Radhakrishnan, that Indian tradition is in and out spiritual in nature. Indian tradition is disrespectful of material progress and affluence and all that matters is progress in the realm of consciousness and spirit and not in physical and the surrounding material/nature environment. There are two clear trends in our cultural tradition. They are *ātmavādi* (spiritualistic) and *anātmavādi* or *svabhāvavādi* (materialistic). The conception of the ultimate values or *summum bonum* of life does also bear out this contention. Four *puruṣārthas* or basic values depend on the nature of the philosophical system as how these values are ordered and priority accorded to them. Sri Aurobindo, the great sage

⁷⁹Narayanan, Vasudhara; (1997), “One Tree Is Equal to Ten Sons”: Hindu Responses to the Problems of Ecology, Population, and Consumption, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 65, No. 2, Summer, p.291-332.

and savant of modern India, very aptly remarks, “A true happiness in this world is the right terrestrial aim of man, and true happiness lies in the finding and maintenance of natural harmony of spirit, mind, and body. Culture is to be valued to the extent to which it has discovered the right key of this harmony and organized its expressive motives and movements. And a civilization must be judged by the manner in which all its principles, Ideas, form ways of living work to bring that harmony out, manage its rhythmic play and secure its continuance or the development of its motives.”⁸⁰

There are several definitions for values which as follows:-

- Value is that which satisfies human desire. This definition is not acceptable to learned persons because satisfaction of desire itself is not the aim of human life. It is needed for the preservation and development of life.
- Some thinkers define it as that which preserves and develops life, but this too is not acceptable, since it is the definition of biological values only.
- It is defined as that which is conducive to self-perfection. Most of the thinkers appreciate and accept this definition since it refers to the whole system of human value.

A value is a value because it speaks to our condition, answers to our need and completes some demand of our nature. And the moral, central and fundamental demand is the value attaching to its fulfillment. In fact value lacks universal definition. According to Rokeach “values are beliefs about how one ought or ought not to behave or about some state of existence worth or not worth attaining. Values are abstract ideals, positive or negative, that represent a person’s beliefs about ideal modes of conduct and ideal terminal goals”.⁸¹ A value is a standard to influence the values, attitude and actions of others; it is like a yardstick to measure the actions, attitudes, comparisons, evaluations and purifications of ourselves and others.

4.3: Intrinsic Value as a Guide to Action towards Nature

In philosophical analysis, the examination of intrinsic value and instrumental value are closely linked to ethics. But the philosophical examination of intrinsic value

⁸⁰Shastree, N. K, (2006), (edit.), Value Management in Professions, New Delhi, Concept publishing company, p. 54.

⁸¹ Gupta, N.L, (2002), *Human Values for the 21st Century* (New Delhi, Anmol Publications Pvt Ltd), p. 14.

and intrinsically valuing as distinct from ethics came of age in the mid-twentieth century in different ways in the pragmatic, analytic, and the phenomenological traditions. But if all the perspectives and meanings of intrinsic value and instrumental value relate, to the idea of choice, they also relate to ideas about what we ought to do. Intrinsic value in this sense give rise to general standards and ideals by which we judge our own and others conduct; also give rise to specific obligations.⁸² Generally, it is believed that it would be impossible to make choice without values. Purely factual analyses of any given situation can only ever tell us what might be the consequences of different course of action. But simply knowing the consequence would not help us to choose unless this has some means of determining this set of consequence to be preferable. And that is not a factual question but a matter of values. The vision in environmental philosophy is to create a stand on which everything in this planet is loved, valued and able to fulfill their potential.

As we have already discussed in Chapter-Two that values which are instrumental in achieving some end are known as instrumental values. For example a sacred thing has intrinsic value. Anything which serves as a means to growth has instrumental value. There is no clear cut division between the intrinsic and instrumental values. Intrinsic value in a different context becomes instrumental and vice-versa. The intrinsic values as well as instrumental values are problematic. To regard them as settled and to pursue those with any certitude seem to invite trouble. One always sees these values changing in all culture, though their rapidity with which the change takes place differs from culture to culture. 'Values change in spite of its universal character. One has, therefore, not simply to adjust to the changing values but to understand the process to change and to establish new values in cooperation with the process of nature.'⁸³

We would like to point out what is distinctive about the Indian conception of intrinsic value. Since, according to the definition and we have already discussed in Chapter-Two that whatever is the means of satisfying any of the needs felt by human is an instrumental value; the number of such values becomes almost infinite. But a

⁸² Chris Beckett, Andrew Maynard; (2005), *Values and Ethics in Social work, An Introduction*(London; Sage Publications), p.11

⁸³Joshi, H. M;(1986),*Knowledge, Value and Other Essays*, (Naroda, Jaya Prakashan), p. 248.

little reflection will show that there is no certainty with regard to several among them that they will secure the end that is sought to be attained through them. What was successful once or in the case of one person may not be so at another time or in the case of another person. Secondly, even when the means prove successful, the satisfaction derived through them is only provisional in that it is sooner or later replaced by a desire for some other mode of satisfaction. Thus, as ordinarily known to us, the instrumental values are for the most part unwarranted and the intrinsic values are all unstable (*ariätyantika*).⁸⁴ That is the irony of life, and it makes us ask whether there are any values that are not vitiated by these defects. The Indian answer to this question, to state it very broadly, is that there are two such values, viz. *dharma* and *mokṣa*. The other values are all brought under the heads of *artha* and *kāma*. These are the four well-known *puruṣārthas* - *artha*, *kāma*, *dharma*, and *mokṣa*. We may call the former pair worldly values, and the latter spiritual. When it is said that Indian philosophy is one of values, it means that it primarily deals with these *puruṣārthas* and that the consideration of metaphysical questions comes in only as a matter of course. Thus *artha*, as generally understood, can only be a means while *mokṣa* is always conceived as an end.⁸⁵ However the conception of *dharma* is not to be considered as the means of achieving *mokṣa*. *Dharma* is the central point of Indian ethics which is to be dealt with in details.

4.4: Hindu Ethics, Intrinsic Value and Nature/Environment

Historically, the protection of nature and wildlife was an ardent article of faith, reflected in the daily lives of people, enshrined in myths, folklore, religion, arts, and culture. Some of the fundamental principles of nature/environment - the inter-relationship and interdependence of all life-were conceptualized in the Indian ethos and reflected in the ancient scriptural text, the *Isopaniṣad*, over 2000 years ago. According to *Isopaniṣad*, this universe is the creation of the Supreme Power meant

⁸⁴*Ariätyantika*, This list, though old and well-recognised, is not altogether satisfactory for instrumental values are located in it with intrinsic ones. Thus *artha*, as generally understood, can only be a means while *mokṣa* is always conceived as an end.

⁸⁵Hiriyanna, M;(1938), *The Indian Conception of Values*, Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Vol. 19, No. 1, p. 10-24

for the benefit of all his creation. Each individual life-form must, therefore, learn to enjoy its benefits by forming a part of the system in close relation with other species. No species in the planet earth are permitted to encroach upon the other's rights which justify the intrinsic values in nature in Indian tradition.

The oldest visual image of the human interest, love, and reverence for nature in Indian tradition can be found in the 10,000 year-old cave paintings at Bhimbetka in the Central parts of India depicting birds, animals, and human beings living in harmony. The Indus Valley Civilization provides evidences of human interests in wildlife, as seen in seals depicting images of rhino, elephant, bull, etc. Historically, conservation of nature and natural resources was an innate aspect of the Indian mind and faith, reflected in religious practices, folklore, art and culture permeating every aspect of the daily lives of people. Scriptures and preaching that exhort reverence for nature and relate to conservation can be found in most of the religions that have flourished in the Indian subcontinent. Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, Islam; and others place great emphasis on the values, beliefs, and attitudes that relate to the cross-cultural universality of respect for nature and the elements that constitute the universe. The concept of sinning against nature existed in various religious systems. Classical Indian myth is replete with similes of human in unison with the nature/environment. Many of the rituals which to modern society may seem meaningless and superstitious were traditional strategies to preserve the intrinsic relationship between man and nature. The worship of trees, animals, forests, rivers, and the sun, and considering the earth itself as Mother Goddess, were part of the Indian tradition.

In spite of the depletion of forests in many parts of India, some sacred groves still remain intact as an oasis in deserts, conserving rich biological diversity. The maintenance of sacred groves can thus be considered to be an outstanding example of a traditional practice that has contributed to forest conservation, even though as a small measure. There are also examples of sacred ponds attached to temples in many parts of India. Some of these have been responsible for the protection of certain endangered species of turtles, crocodiles, and the rare fresh water sponge.

Many plants and animals have from historical times been considered sacred in India by various communities. The most outstanding examples are the peepal tree. The banyan trees and other trees have been traditionally revered and therefore never cut. There are a number of trees and plants considered sacred and grown in temple premises and are protected in other localities. More than a hundred such species of trees/plants in Indian society are considered sacred by various communities and religious faiths. These include the sandalwood tree, beetle nut, palm, *neem*, coconut, palm, *champā*, lotus, *tulsi*, and pepper, etc. Such traditional cultural attitudes, though based on religious faith, have made significant contribution in the protection and propagation of various species of trees and plants in India.

There are also other scriptures encourage planting of trees, condemned the destruction of plants and forests, prescribe that trees are like children. In this context, a passage from the *MatsyaPurāṇam* is instructive. The Goddess Parvati planted a sapling *Ashoka* tree and took good care of it. She watered it and took care of it, it grew well. The divine beings and sages came and told her: O [Goddess] ... almost everyone wants children. When people see their children grandchildren, they feel they have been successful. What do you by creating and rearing trees like sons...? Parvati replied: ‘One who a well where there is little water lives in heaven for as many years as are drops of water in it. One son is like ten reservoirs and one tree is equal to ten sons (*daśasamodruma*). This is my standard and I will protect the universe guard it... (*Matsya Purāṇam*-154:506-512). The words of Parvati are relevant today. Trees offer more than aesthetic pleasure, shade, and fruits. They are vital to maintain our eco-system, planet, our well-being, and Parvati extols them by saying they are able to ten sons. The main *Purāṇas*, texts of myth and lore, composed approximately between the fifth and tenth centuries C.E. have wonderful passages on trees. The *VarāhaPurāṇa* says that one who plants five trees does not go to hell, and the (*Vishnu Dharmottara* 3.297.13) that one who plants a tree will never fall into hell. The *Puranas* differ in the number and description of the universe, and one may perhaps take the liberty of interpreting as symbolic of various levels of suffering, including a steamy planet we keep poking holes in the ozone layer. The *MatsyaPurāṇam* describes a celebration for planting trees and calls it the festival of trees. These

traditional cultural attitudes are the exposition of reverence for nature/environment and embodiment of sacredness and gratitude for life.

Many animals are considered sacred and worshipped by several Hindu and other communities, have received protection for centuries. The peafowl, sacred to lord *Kārttikeya* is never hunted and is protected. Even rodents are considered sacred and are allowed to breed in the famous temple of goddess *Karṇimāta* in Rajasthan. The tiger and the cobra, though greatly feared, are afforded protection and respected on religious grounds.

Indian painting, sculpture, architectural ornamentation, and the decorative arts is replete with themes from nature and wildlife reflecting love and reverence, and therefore the ethics of conservation. A wide range of images of forests, plants, and animals are to be found in Indian miniature paintings and sculpture. The theme of the Hindu god Krishna's life depicted in miniature paintings underlines an appreciation of ecological balance. He is shown persuading people to worship the mountain in order to ensure rainfall. Krishna swallowing the forest fire also signifies a concern for the protection of forests and wildlife.

Innumerable examples of the status given to plants and animals can also be seen in the traditional sculptural art of India. The concept of *Vanadevatās* (tree goddesses), vehicles of Gods and Goddesses, sacred trees, tree and animal worship are depicted in stone and metal sculptures independently, or as part of temples, palaces, and historical buildings. In literature and scriptures too there has been considerable depiction of the appreciation and love for nature: *Mahākavi* Kalidasa, a prominent poet of the fourth century AD visualized, a cloud as a messenger in his *Meghadutam* and went into raptures when describing various seasons in his *Ritusamhāram*. Such an involvement with nature is reflected even in the visual arts which excel in their minute depiction of nature.

Indian literature effectively mirrors the ethos of its deep and sympathetic understanding of animals through innumerable stories. Even amongst these one could pertinently mention are the *Hitopadeśa*, the *Panchatantra* or the *Shuka-saptati* which abound in allegorical references to the animal world. The impact of the *Panchatantra* was so great that as early as the seventh century AD it was

translated into Arabic and has been very popular in the Arab and Persian world ever since. Though an interior form of life, animals have been endowed with ennobling qualities which provide lessons in morals relevant even to human beings.

We can find an extensive literature in Hindu philosophy on environmental Ethics in many of its scriptures. Along with the *Upaniṣads*, the *BhagavadGītā*s having more vital essences, which provide enough resources concerning environment. The general ethical framework and some specific passages from the above texts, however help us to reconstruct traditional views on certain issues like *ahimsā*, *dharma*, anthropocentrism, anthropomorphism, question of value etc. By describing so, it is often necessary to make explicit what is implicit in order to show the importance of ethics towards environment. The consciousness of ethical principles can definitely bring out a new beginning towards nature. Hindu religious doctrines as a foundation for environmental ethics provide us with certain normative criteria for our attitude towards nature. We may begin with an overview of sources, methods and types of analysis in Hindu ethics. We may give our attention to certain discussions on scriptures in the Hindu tradition which expresses the sacredness of life and gratitude for life.

Hindu ethics uses the term *Dharma* to refer to what we call 'Ethics'. It is one among the goals of human life - the *Puruṣārthas* (*Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma* and *Mokṣa*). It is the root of other goals. It makes other goals possible. It gives life a purpose, design or *telos*. *Dharma* has been divided into two types: *viśeṣa* and *sāmānya*. *Dharmasūtras* and *Dharmasāstra* texts give description of these two types of *Dharma*. *Viśeṣa* refers to conditional and relative duties with regard to castes, sex, stages of life, region, occupation and kinship. *Sāmānya* refers to generic moral principles (*sādharmaṇa dharma*) and are twofold: sacredness of life and gratitude for life. There are four sources of *dharma* such as: *Śruti* (transcendent authority), *Smṛiti* (another category of scripture), *Sadāchāra* (the behaviour of good people), *Anubhava* (conscience or knowledge derived from personal experience). All these four sources are arranged in a descending order of authority. *Śruti*, *Smṛiti*, *Sadāchāra* and *Anubhava* are considered as foundations of Hindu Ethics. According to Klostermaier:

“*Dharma* presupposes a social order in which all functions and duties are assigned to separate classes whose smooth interaction guarantees the well-being of society as a whole and beyond this, maintains the harmony of the whole Universe”⁸⁶.

This means that *Dharma*, at least theoretically is its own justification: *dharma* does not depend on a personal authority that could also make exceptions and pardon transgressors. In its strictest and fullest sense, *dharma* coincides with Hindu moral philosophy. Though from an absolutist, *Vedāntist's* standpoint, good and evil are relative, the two sides of one coin as it were, the *Dharmaśāstra* tradition of India has laboured continuously to sharply separate *dharma* from *adharma* to spell out quite unambiguously what is meant by ‘righteousness’ and ‘unrighteousness’. Hindu moral philosophy however does an analysis of *sanātana dharma* (eternal *dharma*). They are universally and unconditionally binding on all humans. They are the foundation or precondition for all duties. Crawford observes:

“*Sanātana dharma* performs the role of watch-dog over parochial and provincial egoism... the motivation behind *sādhāraṇa dharma* is twofold: the sacred and secular. *Sāmānya dharma* is impersonal and Trans-subjective for it transcends the illusory duality between self and other.”⁸⁷

The scope for interpretation of *dharma* brings out two facts:

- If a norm appears just once in *Śruti*, in as much as that idea becomes popular in later ages it can be legitimized
- Even ideas that never appear in *Śruti* can be introduced through one of the other foundations by arguing that they make explicit what is implicit in *Śruti*.

These two facts influence the order of listed values and can be changed depending on what seems relevant for a certain epoch. Therefore traditions cause elimination of undesired prescriptions from *Śruti* passages and elimination of values which do not seem relevant to the times. Bernard Gert⁸ asserts another type of analysis in Hindu ethics. He writes: Morality is a public system applying to all

⁸⁶Klostermaier, K. K.: *A Survey of Hinduism*, Quoted in Katherine K. Young, ‘Hindu Bioethics’, in Paul F. Camenisch (edit.): *Religious Methods and Resources in Bioethics*, p.48-49.

⁸⁷Crawford, S.C.: *The Evolution of Hindu Ethical Ideals*, K. L. Mukhopadhyay (January 1, 1974)1974,p. 51.

⁸Gert, Bernard, *Morality: A New Justification of the Moral Rules*, Oxford University Press Inc, 1988, p. 6.

rational persons governing behaviour which affects others and which has the minimization of evil as its core. According to Bernard Gest, ten moral rules can be the core of human virtues. They are ‘do not kill, do not cause pain, do not disable, do not deprive of freedom, do not deprive of pleasure, do not deceive, keep your promise, do not cheat, obey the law, do your duty’. These moral rules emphasize that prevention of evil is the most important goal of *Hindu dharma*. Gert thinks, the ultimate design (*telos*) of human life is to encourage spiritual development. In a better society it is less likely that a person will unjustifiably break moral rules. He analyses Hindu Ethics as a matter of morality, which is deontological. Gert confirms that according to the ancient Hindu thinkers, *Sāmānya dharma* is universal, public morality and it encourages by rewards and punishments. From this we can see a shift from a focus on injunctions and prohibitions in *Śruti* to a focus on virtues in *Śmṛiti*.

Virtues in *Śmṛiti* consider prevention of evil as their most important goal. The question of nonviolence arises in this virtue of prevention of evil. Non-violence (*ahimsā*) defines the moral ‘bottom-line’. Other virtues on the lists identify common values. Young writes: ‘Hindu moralists take into account the mundane goals of the individual’s happiness and society’s well-being as well as the supra mundane goal of spiritual liberation’.⁹ This type of analysis about dharma helps to ascertain the significance of Aristotelian method of analysis about dharma, even today, in the midst of elimination of undesired prescriptions from *Śruti* scriptures.

MacIntyre quotes Aristotle that: ‘The virtues are precisely those qualities the possession of which will enable an individual to achieve *eudemonia* and the lack of which will frustrate his movement toward that *telos*.... To act virtuously ... is to act from inclination formed by the cultivation of the virtues’.¹⁰ This shows that the practice of virtues creates a stable and harmonious society by recognizing unity-indifference. Similarly, Hindu moral philosophy calls for benevolence and service to the world. Hindu virtues also encourage spiritual development, the ultimate *telos* or purpose of human life. Virtues can redeem and completes nature through human-

⁹Young, Catherine K., Hindu Bioethics, in Paul. F. Camenisch, edit., Religious Methods and Resources in Bioethics, p.13.

¹⁰MacIntyre, A: After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory, Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd. The Old Piano Factory, 1981, p. 139-149.

beings. In short we can see that Hindu moral philosophy is largely a kind of virtue ethics. This emphasizes the importance of righteousness and its analysis as a significant factor to define Hindu moral philosophy.

In Indian tradition, nature has been worshiped and respected as God and deity who have given a wide range of scope for considering nature having a sort of value in it. Compiling all these aspects a trend of conflicts still resisting so far as ascribing value in nature is concern. Classical texts of Hinduism enumerate the goals or matters of value of a human being. These are *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *moṅṣa* - the circle of life and death. While *dharma*, wealth, sensual pleasure is usually seen as this-worldly, *moṅṣa* is liberation from this world and the repeated rebirths of a soul. There are texts deal with *dharma*, wealth, sensual pleasure, and liberation. The multiple Hindu traditions do differ from other world religions in having this variety of goals and array of texts to go with them. What all this translates is that there are several competing conceptual systems, intersecting distinct, which inform human behaviour and thus making nature intrinsically valuable.

The texts that deal with *moṅṣa* or liberation are generally concerned with three issues:

- The nature of reality, including the Supreme being the human soul
- The way to the supreme goal; and
- The nature supreme goal.

Generally, the nature of reality/supreme being is *taṭṭva*. These texts do not focus much on ethics or righteous behaviour world; that is the province of *dharma* texts. The theological texts that deal with *taṭṭva* focus on weaning a human being from earthly pursuit of happiness to what they consider to be the supreme of liberation (*moṅṣa*) from this life. It is important to keep this taxonomy in mind, because theological doctrines do not necessarily trickle into *dhārmic* or ethical injunctions; in many Hindu traditions, in fact, is a disjunction between *dharma* and *moṅṣa*.

One may say that there is a fundamental opposition between them: '*moṅṣa* is a release from the entire realm which is governed by *dharma*... It stands, therefore, in opposition to *dharma*. *Moṅṣa* however, is abandonment of the established order, not

in favor of anarchy, favor of a self-realization which is precluded in the realm of *dharma*. *Dharma* texts promote righteous behavior on earth, and *mokṣa* texts encourage one to be detached from such concerns. A few texts like the *Bhagavad Gitā* have tried to bridge *dharma* and *mokṣa* paradigms.

There are various religious sects in Hindu moral philosophy living in complete socio-cultural harmony. Reverence for nature and its creations is the unifying ethical principle in almost all religions of India. They have all kept nature above man. Our ancient people learnt to live with five elements of nature, the “earth”, “water”, “air”, “light” and “cosmos” and actually worshipped them in reality and symbolically. We have lot of information about the relationships between human and nature and human behaviour and indebtedness towards nature from the writing in the ancient Indian treaties and literatures, the *Vedas* and the *Upaniṣads* are all religions prevailing in Indian tradition.

Religious precepts are embedded in the respective scriptures of religions. They also seem to find their expression in the structured legal systems of various traditions and communities. The praxis-centered concepts influenced wide range of ethical thoughts in such a way that environmentalists support their demands and principles and thought it significant to look into these religious moorings. Environmental Ethics had developed as a response to failure of each ethical theories or incapability of ethical doctrines to deal with problems faced by mankind in understanding humans’ moral status *vis-à-vis* nature. It is an acknowledged fact that religions have not only determined the way we perceive the world but also set roles individuals play in nature.

Consequently, neither religion nor environmental ethics can survive in all times unless and until they are tied up with appropriate hermeneutics. It may be necessary that a moral science of environment and its underpinnings in theological doctrines have to have redefined and re-coordinated for a proper interdisciplinary articulation.

4.5: Concept of intrinsic value from Indian perspective

Many authors claim that certain Indian texts deny that nature has intrinsic value. If nature has value at all, it has means to *mokṣa* or liberation. This view is

unlikely as an understanding in Indian tradition that accepts the doctrines of *ahimsā* and *karma*. Christopher G. Framarin⁸⁸ argues that in Indian Philosophy, if nature has value at all, it has only instrumental value, as a means to *mokṣa* which he considered as an ‘instrumentalist interpretation’ and this is implausible as an interpretation of any Indian tradition that accepts the doctrines of *ahimsa* and *karma*. The proponent of this view must explain the connection between *ahimsa* and merit by citing the connection between *ahimsā* and *mokṣa*. He must say that *ahimsā* is valuable, and therefore produces merit, because *ahimsā* is instrumentally valuable as a means to *mokṣa*. *Ahimsā* is means to *mokṣa*, however, because it produces merit. Hence, the explanation is circular. Framarin also said that the instrumentalist interpretation entails that morality is strictly arbitrary - it might just as well be that *himsā* produces merit, *ahimsā* produces demerit. Hence the instrumentalist interpretation is implausible.⁸⁹

In order to avoid this consequence, something other than *moksha* has intrinsic value. One alternative is that the value of *ahimsa* derives from the intrinsic value of the unharmed entities⁹⁰. This view explains the connection between *ahimsā*, merit, and *mokṣa* straightforwardly. Since certain entities are intrinsically valuable, non-harm towards them is meritorious. Since non-harm towards these entities is meritorious, the agent accrues merit. And since the agent accrues merit, he moves closer to *mokṣa*. Hence, it can be argued that this interpretation is more plausible than another alternative, according to which the value of nature derives from this-worldly utility for humans. The basic instrumentalist interpretation is that there will be a tight connection between a tradition’s assessment of the value of nature, on the one hand, and a tradition’s rules governing the treatment of nature, on the other. Indeed, we should be able to infer the most basic moral guidelines that govern the treatment of nature from a tradition’s assessment of its value and vice versa. Hence, it might be thought that an inference can be drawn from certain Indian traditions’ explicit claims about the proper treatment of nature to a claim about the value of nature. Specifically,

⁸⁸ Christopher G. Framarin ;(2011)*The value of Nature in Indian (Hindu) Traditions* in *Religious Studies*, 47,3, p. 285-300

⁸⁹ *Ibid*; 285

⁹⁰ *Ibid* ;P. 285

one might argue that the moral principle of *ahimsā* entails that nature has intrinsic value - that its value is not derived exclusively from the value of further ends to which it is means.

The case for the intrinsic value of nature is not as simple as we think. According to B. K. Lal, the virtue of ahimsa can be explained in the following way. ‘The Hindu recommendation to cultivate attitude [namely, ahimsa] toward animals is based not the animal as such but on considerations about how the attitude is part of the purificatory steps that bring men’⁹¹. For Lal, discourage harm to animals because animals are intrinsically valuable end of *mokṣa*. Both the attitude of *ahimsā*, then, and animals themselves, are only instrumentally valuable, as a means to the further end of *mokṣa*. Presumably Lal would also deny that other natural entities, like plants, have intrinsic value. Lance E. Nelson defends a similar interpretation of *Advaita* and the *Bhagavad Gitā* with regard to nature more generally. In the case of *Advaita*, Nelson concludes that ‘all that is other than the *Ātman* [true self], including nature, is without intrinsic value’.⁹² Similarly, he argues that according to the *Bhagavadgitā*, ‘[i]t is the self [*ātman*] that is important, not nature’⁹³. If nature has any value at all, it is merely instrumental, as a means to attaining or realizing the *ātman*. Since the seeker attains or realizes the atman only if she attains or realizes *mokṣa*, Lal’s and Nelson’s views are roughly the same: only *mokṣa* has intrinsic value; if nature has value at all, it has instrumental value as a means to *mokṣa*. Nelson offers two distinct arguments for his conclusion.

1. The first argument might be called the ‘argument from illusion’. Everything other than the atman is a product of *māyā*, and hence illusory. Anything that is illusory is devoid of intrinsic value. Hence everything other than the *ātman* is devoid of intrinsic value. Since nature is other than the *ātman*, nature is devoid of intrinsic value.

⁹¹Lal, Basant K, ‘Hindu perspectives on the use of animals in science’, in Tom Regan (ed.) *Animals and Sacrifices: Religious Perspectives on the Use of Animals in Science* (Philadelphia PA: Temple University Press, 1986).

⁹² Nelson, Lance E. (2000) ‘Reading the BhagavadGitā from an ecological perspective’, in Chappel, C& Tucker *Hinduism and Ecology*.

⁹³ Nelson, Lance E; (2000), *Nature in Indian (Hindu) traditions* 287, p.140

2. The second argument might be called the ‘argument from pain’. It states that the world of *samsāra* (rebirth) and everything in it is inherently painful and unsatisfactory. If the world of *samsāra* and everything in it is inherently painful and unsatisfactory, then it has only negative value. If *samsāra* and everything in it has only negative value, then it lacks positive intrinsic value.

The instrumentalist interpretation requires further clarification. Within many Indian texts and traditions, morally praiseworthy and blameworthy actions are typically accompanied by merit and demerit, respectively. Instances of this claim are so widespread that they hardly need mention. *Manusmṛiti* 5.52-53, for example, reads:

“No one else is a producer of demerit as much as the person who, outside of (acts of) worship to ancestors or gods, desires to increase his own meat by means of the meat of another. The one who performs the horse sacrifice every single year for 100 years and the one who will not eat meat are equal; the fruit (results) of the merit (meritorious actions) of these two is equal”.⁹⁴

For the person who eats meat indiscriminately, verse in the *Manusmṛiti*-5.55, plays on a whose meat (*māṅsa*) I eat in this world, he this, the wise say, is the derivation of the thought is that by eating meat, an individual being eaten, or some equivalent pain, in another birth.⁹⁵ The *Mahābhārata* makes identical claims as follows:

“He, O King, who will not eat any meat for his entire life, he will attain a large place in heaven. In this [I have] no doubt. Those who eat the living flesh of beings are also eaten by those living beings. Of this, I have no doubt. Since he (*sa*) me (*mām*), therefore I will eat him as well. Let you know, O Bharata, this (is) the derivation of the word *māṅsa*”.

These passages make clear that both ahimsa and *himsā* have consequences in the form of merit and demerit, respectively. The punishment for harm is subjection to (at least) equivalent harm. One reward for non-harm is a lavish place in heaven.

⁹⁴Jha, Ganganath;(1999), (edit.) *Manusmṛiti with the ‘Manubhāṣya’ of Medhātithi*, Delhi: MotilalBanarsidass, 5, P.52-53

⁹⁵Ibid

Furthermore, it is a platitude within the Indian traditions that demerit is counter-productive to the attainment or realization of *mokṣa*.

So, presumably part of what the proponents of the instrumentalist interpretation mean when they say that ahimsa is a means to *mokṣa* is that ahimsa is a means to avoiding the demerit that both arises as a result of *himsā* and postponements of *mokṣa*. Roy W. Perrett takes Lal to be making this point when he says that from an Indian point of view the reason one should avoid meat-eating and harm to animals more generally is not that it is immoral to eat meat, but that it is imprudent to do so, since it leads to one's further entanglement in the cycle of rebirth and suffering.⁹⁶ Harm to animals produces demerit, which prolongs *samsāra*, and hence postpones that which one attains when one escapes *samsāra* - namely *mokṣa*. It is because the postponement of moksha is of intrinsic disvalue that demerit has instrumental disvalue, and *himsā* has instrumental disvalue because it produces demerit. At the very least, *ahimsā* is a means to avoiding these consequences of *himsā*, and its value is at least partly explained by this. The benefits of *ahimsā* are not entirely negative, however. It is also a platitude within the Indian traditions that certain forms of merit are a condition of the eventual attainment or realization of *mokṣa*. Consider a straightforward argument for this claim: in order to be born a human being, one must have sufficient merit. In order to attain *mokṣa*, one must be born a human being. Hence in order to attain *mokṣa*, one must accrue sufficient merit. Hence *ahimsā* is a means to *mokṣa* at least in part because it is a means to merit.

O. P. Dwevedi in his essay *Dhārmic ecology*⁹⁷ mentioned about Eco-spirituality from four different angles. *VasudevaSarbam, vasudhaivakutambakam, sarva-bhuta-hita*. One of the main postulates of *Bhāgavad Gitā* is that the Supreme Being resides in all.⁹⁸ Chapter -7, verse - 9 of *Gitā* states,

Only after taking many births is a wise person able to comprehend the basic philosophy of creation; which is: whatever is, is *Vasudeva*. If anyone understands this fundamental, such a person is indeed a *Mahātma*.

⁹⁶Perrett, Roy W. (1993) 'Moral vegetarianism and the Indian tradition', in Ninian Smart & Shivesh Thakur (eds) *Ethical and Political Dilemmas of Modern India* (New York NY: St Martin's Press)

⁹⁷*Hinduism and Ecology*, 2000, edit. Christopher Key Chappel and Mary Evelyn Tucker, Harvard University Press. , p-5

⁹⁸*Bhāgavad Gitā*, 7:9.

In *Gītā*-13:13, lord Krishna says, “He resides in everywhere.” The same way of explanation being found in *ŚrīmadBhāgavadMahāpurāṇa*,⁹⁹ “ether, air, fire, water, earth, planets, all creatures, directions, trees and plants, rivers and seas, they all are organs of God’s body; remembering this, a devotee respects all species.” The basic concept is that the presence God in all and treating the creation in respect without harming and exploiting others. In the *Mahābhārata*,¹⁰⁰ it is claimed that all living beings have soul, and God resides as their inner soul: *sarbobhūtāmbhūtastho*. This means that no species will encroach upon the other rights without permission. This stipulation is also endorsed in another stanza in *Mahābhārata* which is as follows:

“The father of all creatures, made the sky. From sky He made water, and from water he made fire and air. From fire and water the earth came into existence. Actually mountains are his bones, earth is the flesh, sea is the blood, and sky is his abdomen. The sun and moon are his eyes. The upper part of the sky is his head, the earth is his feet. The directions are his hands.”¹⁰¹

This shows that the God and the nature are one and the same in Indian philosophical tradition. Hence if *Brahman* is being realized by *Atman* and *Brahman* exists in all and realization of *Brahman* is the ultimate liberation (*moṅṣa*) which is being considered having intrinsic value than all creations of *Brahman* too have the same value.

4.6: Scriptural importance of Hindu Environmental Ethics

Ethics in general can be confirmed with concerned theories. But religious ethics is always obligatory to their respective scriptures. Unless and until there is definitely a matured moral thinking, scripture of a religion cannot be explicable. Acceptance by a group or a sect is not the issue. The issue is how far the moral law is justifiable to scriptures. The salient features must be disciplined according to the scriptural text even if it is revealed in different times and situations. The value of

⁹⁹*SrīmadBhāgavad Mahāpurāṇa*,2: 2- 41.

¹⁰⁰*Mahābhārata, MakshadharmāParva*, Trns, Ganguly, Kishori Mohan 182: 20.

¹⁰¹*Mahābhārata, MakshadharmāParva*, Trns, Ganguly, Kishori Mohan 182:14-19

language, whether it is sacred or ordinary, is not important while its significance lies in the concurrence to scripture.

Vedas contain justifications in value of nature and its intrinsic capacity. The *Rig*, *Yajur*, *Sāma* and *Atharva* explain the patterns of worship and its dignitaries. Each *Veda* has *mantra*, *Brāhmaṇa*, *Āraṇyaka* and *Upaniṣad*. *Mantras* are *Samhitās*. It gives order of rituals. *Brāhmaṇa* explains the *Prajāpati* as *Iṣwara* or Almighty. *Āraṇyakas* are secret spiritual advices. *Upaniṣads* explain spiritual wisdom and noble paths to *moṁṣa*. *Gitā* gives *Bhakti Mārga* significantly, in the midst of *Karma mārga* and *jñānamārga*. *Gitā* is the gospel for liberation from *ajñāna*. *Gitā* explains *bhakti mārga* as *Karma mārga*. We can summarize *Vedas* as exemplifying *Sādhāṇadharmā* rather than *Viśeṣadharmā*. But *Gitā* emphasizes *Viśeṣadharmā* that gives responsibilities of *Brāhmin*, *Ṙṣatriyas*, *Vaiśyas* and *Śudras*, which are entirely different. Each category has each *Viśeṣadharmā*. But every life has equal *āśramadharmas* - *Brahmacarya*, *Gārhasthya*, *Vānaprastha* and *Sanyāsa*.

The *Vedas* expresses concern for nature by providing a metaphysical union between the human and non-human beings, the adherence to which seems necessary for us to establish and sustain a proper relationship between the physical nature and us. In ecological terms the Vedic hymns provide us with a number of insights. *Vedas* speak of an inexplicable unity of creation and a mysterious interconnectedness of everything to everything else. Each thing has an interest and purpose to fulfill in the web of being. It is this that makes each and everything worthy of moral consideration.

A remarkable feature of the Hindu religious tradition pointed out by Billimoria, is that ethical ponderings from its very beginnings were closely related to the awareness of nature. The underlying principle is *Ṙta* or the cosmic order. According to the *Ṙta* the highest good is identified with the total harmony with the cosmic or natural order. Crawford writes:

“The ethical impact of *Ṙta* on the vedic mind is seen in the confidence it generated in respect to the goodness of life in the world - consciousness of *Ṙta* imported the feeling of being at home in the world. It offered solidarity and security. The world was not a place where blind, capricious forces held

sway, but was a benevolent habitat in which men could expect to enjoy all the good things of life - material and spiritual.”¹⁰²

We can find in *Atharva Veda* that *satya* is identified with *Dharma* which is the law that governs all beings, there by rendering the notion of *Ṛta* in a deeper ethical sense.

With the *Upaniṣads*, the early ritualism of *Vedas* gave way to metaphysical knowledge that contributed significantly in evolving a worldview that accorded the highest or transcendental prominence to the supreme principle called *Brahman*. *Brahman* was conceived as the ultimate reality that characterizes the Self of all beings. In fact *Brahman* as the indivisible, ultimate reality of which no greater can be conceived becomes the presupposition for all other thinking, be it intellectual, social or moral. This metaphysical view is called *Vedānta* philosophy. However in some dominant forms of *Vedānta*, the reality of the world and all things and relations within them is taken to be illusory, the only reality being *Brahman*. Thus, *AdvaitaVedānta* speaks of the world as *māyā*, as ultimately unreal.

Hinduism is a religious tradition where we can find the interconnected concepts of non-injury (*ahimsā*), the oneness of all living beings and self- realization. Environmental ethics acquires a vital significance in Hindu scriptures. According to Naess, all Hindu scriptures have become part of the vocabulary of environmental ethics. He interprets *Bhagavad Gitā* and other texts of Hinduism as supporting Deep Ecology. Verse 6:29 of *Bhagavad Gitā* is very significant to Environmental Ethics. It reads:

“*Sarvabhuta-sthamatmanamSarva-bhutamcatmaniiksate
yoga yuktatmasarvatraSamadarsanah*”.

This means, “He sees himself is yoked in discipline, and who sees the same everywhere.” It is but natural for any one with some knowledge of the religious traditions constituting Hinduism to find the interconnectedness between human and his environment, which provides universal harmony. Without self-realization, the above-mentioned harmony will be impracticable. However not all environmental

¹⁰²Crawford. S. C.: *The Evolution of Hindu Ethical Ideals*, Asian Studies Program, University of Hawaii, 1982, p. 14

thinkers would agree with the Hindu conception of discipline and the ideal of self-realization as necessary requirements for environmental ethics. Thus Jacobsen argues:

“Environmentalism teaches neither liberation from the world nor the ultimate value of the social order. On the contrary environmentalism has *samsāra*, the world of the natural processes of birth, flourishing of life, decay and death as its ultimate concern.”³²

If so, what is the relevance of the *Gītā* and how does it relate to ecosophy? Jacobsen investigates to tackle these hurdles through the commentaries of the *Gītā*. This helps us to acquire a coordinated concept, which forms a methodology in Hindu environmentalism. The *Gītā* comprises chapters -23 to 40 of the *Bhīṣmaparva* of the *Mahābhārata*, but it has been treated as a separate work. It recounts the dialogue between the God Krishna and one of the Pāṇḍava brothers, Arjuna, just before the beginning of the battle of Kurukṣetra between the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas. Arjuna was a Kṣatriya and it was therefore his duty to fight battles.

At the beginning of the Kurukṣetra battle Arjuna suffers a breakdown and wants to withdraw from the battle because he feels that killing other humans would be wrong and would destroy social order or *dharma*. But Lord Krishna convinces Arjunathat there is a superior order for ahimsa and its *dharma* is the knowledge of the self. It transforms the material principles of *dharma* to a conception of *svadharmā*.

This conception of *dharma* exhorts one to perform one’s duties by forgetting the results of one’s actions. The unique message of the *Gita* is that if one’s duties are performed without attachment to the fruits of action, that is, without egoism, one is not bound to the world of rebirth (*samsāra*). Discipline is more important than *ahimsā*. Self-realization is nevertheless an acknowledged fact of discipline. *Ahimsā* is only a distinguished reality of discipline. *Ahimsā* cannot survive the entire gamut of being. If *ahimsā* is taken into account in its entirety the systems of organic life will collapse. Brockington points out that “*Dharma* is incomplete, if it contemplates *ahimsā* alone.”¹⁰³

³² Jacobsen, Knut A. : *Bhagavadgita, Ecosophy T. and Deep Ecology* in *Inquiry*, Vol. 39, No.:2, June 96, p 233.

¹⁰³Brockington, J. L, (1996), *The Sacred Thread: Hinduism in its Continuity and Diversity*, Quoted in Knut A. Jacobsen: *Bhagavadgita, Ecosophy T. and Deep Ecology* in *Inquiry*, vol. 39, No. 2, p.220.

Ramanuja gives a purely religious interpretation of *Bhagavad Gitā*. According to him the world is part of God and totally dependent on him, but it is a mistake to identify the self with the body and the natural processes. Inequality belongs to *Prkṛiti*. Living beings do not share one self, but the selves of beings are similar. Thus, when one knows one's own self, one knows that all other *ātman*s have the same form. Mādhva reads the import of Hindu texts not as espousing monism but as monotheism. He believed in a personal God (*paramēśvara*). God controls everything. However all these commentators accord the real identity of the self and its relationships as conducive to a genuine environmental ethics.

The contemporary thinkers like Gandhi and Radhakrishnan have played a major role that could creatively reinterpret Hinduism as supporting the deep ecology to a great extent. Monastic traditions defined Hinduism with a focus on the liberation from the world. Contemporary thinkers used the religious foundations of Hinduism as a tool to eradicate the social evils in Hindu society. This improvement gave new meanings to the concepts of dharma, self-realization and the unity of all beings. Modern Indian thinking is radical in interpreting *Bhagavad Gitā* as a science of salvation.

Arvind Sharma affirms the combination of ascetic and contemplative ideas of Gandhi and Radhakrishnan to a programme for political action.¹⁰⁴ Gandhi thought *Mokṣa* as inseparably related to one's social duty (*dharma*). He found the essence of the *Gitā* (18: 2-55 and 2-72). He calls them as the markings of a *satyāgrahi* (*sthitaprajña*). Naess notes: Gandhi recognised a basic common right to live and blossom to self-realisation applicable to any being having interests or needs. Gandhi made manifest the internal relation between self-realization, non-violence and what is sometimes called bio-spherical egalitarianism. Radhakrishnan comments on the *Bhagavad Gitā*, 6: 29, in the following way:

Though, in the process of attaining the vision of self, we had to retreat from outward things and separate the self from the world, when the vision is attained the world is drawn into the self. On the ethical plane, this means that there should grow a

¹⁰⁴ Sharma, Arvind, *The Hindu Gita: Ancient and classical interpretations of the Bhagvatgita*, Quoted in Knut A. Jacobsen, op.cit., p.226

detachment from the world and when it is attained, a return to it through love, suffering and sacrifice for it. The sense of a separate finite self with its hopes and fears, its likes and dislikes is destroyed.¹⁰⁵

Arne Naess' statement on Gandhi is also relevant to the above interpretation given by Radhakrishnan. From this discussion we can say, according to the philosophies of oneness, the path goes first inwards only to lead out again to everything. The path of action, *Karmamārga*, leads a *Karmayogi* into contact with all creatures. This path enables one to see the greater self everywhere.

4.7: Ahimsā and Environmental Ethics

Let us examine the role of *ahimsā* as the ethical principle and virtue par excellence. *Ahimsā* as a central concept of ethics, and virtue in particular, creates some moral dilemmas with regard to certain environmental paradoxes. *Ahimsā* can be defined as 'sanctity of life' in western parlance while it is 'non-injury' principle in the east. We can see religious-moral connotations of ahimsa in *Chhāndogya Upaniṣad*, which speaks of non-injury, safety and protection. Ahimsa can be a universal moral principle, which keeps the ultimate goal of life as liberation. However, there are disputes on accepting ahimsa as moral principle because of its conditional, partial sense. Thus Young asks: 'Can *ahimsā* be called as a moral principle when it is conditional and partial in sense?'

But this issue is not very serious before modern ethical thinkers who encouraged *ahimsā* as an immediate tool to solve several ethical issues. Hindu concept of ahimsa states 'what ought to be done rather than what is useful to do'. Heterodox Hindu movements (Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism) also upheld the validity of ahimsa. The desire to live and the avoidance of death are common to all sentient beings. We can see several passages from *Mahābhārata*, which claims that one who is wise gives the gift of fearlessness (*abbaya*) to all beings. This improves our understandings about ethics and our environmental need. Our ethical life provides concentration in future security. Our violence is certainly reflective upon

¹⁰⁵Radhakrishnan, S,(1996),*The Bhagvatgita*, Quoted in Knut A. Jacobsen: Bhagvatgita, Ecosophy T, and Deep Ecology' in *Inquiry*, Vol 39, No: 2, p 230.

environmental ethics. The *Yajurveda* states ‘may all beings look at me with a friendly eye, may I do likewise and may we all look on each other with the eyes of a friend’ (*Yajurveda*36: 18).

A benevolent world is not automatic. It is the responsibility of the people as upholders of cosmic order to uphold life itself by holding back fear and ensuring confidence. This confidence in one’s life creates truly donors of life to others. Protect ourselves through causing no harm to others.

Ahimsa, through environmentally sound ethical principles, is given exemplary significance in Jainism. According to Jainism ‘The virtue of protecting a single creature is greater than the charity of the whole earth, for life is dear to man so much so that even by receiving the whole earth in his sway he does not want to die’¹⁰⁶. At the core of Jainism lie the five vows that dictate the everyday lives of its adherents. These five vows are *ahimsā*(nonviolence), *satya*(truthfulness), *asteya*(not stealing), *brahmacharya*(sexual restraint) and *aparigraha*(non-possession). One undertakes these vows to ensure that no harm is brought to all possible life forms. For practicing Jainas, to hurt any being would result in the thickening of one’s Karma, which would hinder the progress towards liberation. As pointed out by Chappell, the worldview of the Jainas might be termed as ‘bio-cosmology’. The Jaina vows can be reinterpreted in an ecological sense as fostering an attitude of respect for all life forms¹⁰⁷.

Gandhian theory of non-violence has been a great influence in keeping social and political moral values sincerely. The practice of ahimsa is not at the level of an abstract, intellectual, plane but is an experiential fact that has significance throughout our life. *Mahābhārata* conceives non-violence with two terms –*abhayadanam* (the gift of fearlessness or security) and *sarvadanebhyahuttāman* (the noblest of all gifts). Gandhi realises that absence of wish or renunciation of the feeling of enmity is very much involved in implementation of non-violence principle. Gandhi does not exclude the nonhuman beings in the process of bringing harmony across the universe.

¹⁰⁶ Walli, K, *Conception of Ahimsa in Indian Thought* Bharata Manisha, 1974, p 61.

¹⁰⁷ Chapple, Christopher K. ‘Hinduism, Jainism, and Ecology’, Center for the Study of World Religions, 2000, p. 19-54.

Harmonious life is the life of life (*JivoJivasyaJivanam*). Gandhi gives a positive connotation to the notion of *ahimsā* by defining it as ‘love’. This active love or non-violence is not a cloistered virtue to be practiced by the individual for his peace and final salvation, but a rule of conduct for society if it is to live consistently with human dignity. Gandhi makes non-violence as an obligatory discipline to all. It is a religion, which transforms all human relationship as a way of life. Gandhi sees *ahimsa* as an ocean of compassion. *Ahimsa* ruled out all forms of selfishness including ‘blind attachment’ to life. Gandhi affirms the doctrine of non-violence in such a way that preservation of life is not to convince others about the moral duty to protect life, particularly when one’s life itself is uncertain. It is my conscience that judges at the end of my life if it permits harmony and non-violence.

4.8: *Vedas* and *Upaniṣads* on environment

The root of environmental issues can be traced back to the days of *Vedic* and *Upaniṣadic* period of Indian Philosophy. Contemporary Indian thoughts also ignited these issues time to time. A study of Indian Philosophical texts shows that there is no specific independent ethical branch in Indian Philosophy which makes a spectacle elaboration on environmental ethics like western philosophers do. More clearly, plugs on intrinsic values were rarely discussed in *Vedas* and *Upaniṣads*. However, environmental issues were cornered from different metaphysical entities.

Thousands of years ago, *Vedas* were written. That the *Vedas* are likened to the great Himalayas is an emphasis of dealing with environmental issues. Kālidasa in the first *śloka* of the *Kumārasambhavam* has a beautiful description of the Himalayas, standing like a great measuring rod by which alone the depth and the grandeur of human history and civilization can be measured. The *Vedas* are like the Himalayas because in the same way that the life-giving streams come down from the Himalayas to irrigate the land below, so also our great scriptures have flown down to the present day. And if the *Vedas* are like the Himalayas, then the *Upaniṣads* are like those great

peaks bathed in the eternal sunshine of wisdom that you see if you are flying parallel to the Himalayas¹⁰⁸.

The *Upaniṣads*, therefore, signify in some ways the high inscription of our cultural, spiritual and environmental tradition. The *Upaniṣadic* thoughts are the representations of different dialogues between the guru and the *śiṣya*, the sage and his disciples and hence *Upanishads* are not monolithic commands issued by some invisible deity as believed in western tradition. And the dialogues deal with the great questions of human existence, of why we are here, what is our goal in life, what is the meaning of everything around us, what is the power that energizes all of us, our minds, our hearts, our bodies and which saturates the entire universe and most importantly our place in the universe and our relation to it. This gives us spectacular glimpse of our relation and responsibility to nature and the uniqueness of it which can be augmented for the argument to establish that there is an entity in nature which can be considered as intrinsic.

The Upanishads are known as Vedanta because they come chronologically at the end of the Vedic collection. At the end of the Vedic collections is the *Jnanakanda*, the way of wisdom, the Upanishads, the high watermark of knowledge. Traditionally there were supposed to be 108 Upanishads. The important ones that have come down to us upon which AdiShanakaracharya has written his great luminous commentaries are ten: the *Isha*, the *Kena*, the *Katha*, the *Prashna*, the *Mundaka*, the *Mandukya*, *Taittiriya*, *Aitereya*, *Chandogya*, *Brihadaranyaka*. These ten and the *Shwetashwatara* represent the major Upanishads. They range from cryptic texts like the *Mandukya* which has only 12 verses, the *Ishavasyopanishad* which has 18 verses, to much larger texts like the *Brihadaranyaka* and the *Chandogya* with hundreds of verses.

Now the Upanishads are so vast and varied that it is difficult even to begin to try and condense them. But one important cardinal concept of Upanishads must have highlighted what represents the very concept of environment and nature. This will

¹⁰⁸Karan Singh, (2001), Source: India International Centre Quarterly, Vol. 28, No. 3, RELOCATING IDENTITIES (MONSOON), India International Centre, p.100-108

also show that the teachings of the Vedanta are in fact becoming more and more relevant and important as we hurtle headlong into the 21st century.

The most important cardinal concept of *Vedanta* is of the all-pervasive *Brahman*: the power, the light that pervades this entire universe; not only this tiny speck of dust that we call the planet earth, but the billions upon billions of galaxies in the endless universe around us, *Ananta kotibrahmanda*. Everything in this magnificent universe is the *Brahman*. Everything that has manifested, and everything that will be manifested, is illuminated by the same spiritual power. The concept of the *Brahman* in the Upanishads is as it were the spiritual correlate of the unified field theory to explain the multifarious phenomenon around us. So the first basic concept of the Upanishads is the concept of the all-pervasive *Brahman*.

Another important concept of Upanishad is the concept of Atman, the Self; the realization not of God but of the self. This is not about the false self, not the ego that accompanies us every day with self-importance, but the deepest self which is in the inner recesses of our being, of our consciousness - that is known as the Atman. It is this Atman which is present in every creature and every being. As we move up the ladder of evolution to come to the human race, the Atman there becomes self-consciousness. As Shri Aurobina points out, for the first time with the advent of the human race we have a creature capable of self-consciousness and self-realization. The Upanishads have a marvelous term for the human race, *amritasyaputrah*: the 'children of immortality'. The *Atman* is the divine spark encapsulated by the very fact that we are human in our consciousness. It is fanning this spark of divinity within us into the blazing fire of spiritual realization that is the true goal of human existence: the joining of the *Atman* and the *Brahman*.¹⁰⁹

Indeed, the rise of the Advaita philosophy may be traced to the realization that human beings live in a more than human world, characterized by mutual interdependence and more importantly, that any alienation of the two spheres could spell doom for the earth. In the *TaittiriyaBrahmana*, we are told that "the same divine milk that circulates through creatures here on earth lights the suns - all the suns of the

¹⁰⁹ Karan Singh, (2001), India International Centre Quarterly, Vol. 28, No. 3, RELOCATING IDENTITIES (MONSOON), p. 100-108

galaxy. It condenses also into the forms of the clouds. It pours down as rain and feeds the earth, the vegetation and the animals. The individual with the awareness of this secret cannot be avaricious for any portion of the abundant food that may come to him. He will share it willingly with his companions. He will not wish to break the circuit by hoarding the substance to himself.... His food avails him nothing: when he eats, eats his own death”¹¹⁰. Those aphoristic words from Aruni to his son “That thou art” (*Tat tvamasi*) sum up the entire Vedic conception of reality including the nonhuman sphere. *Tat tvamasi* enjoins one to be aware of the identity of one’s core essence with the hidden substance of all and everything, and not to be alienated from the nonhuman world.

The *Upanishads* thus had exhibited the place of human in this cosmos and their duties towards nature even though they do not directly tell us about the intrinsic value of nature. But in analyzing these cardinal concepts also make us aware that the spiritual attachment of human beings with nature is a kind of attachment with something permanent entity having a sort of intrinsicness.

4.9: Nature in the *Brahmanas* and *Aranyakas* *Brahmanas*

The *Brahmanas* are texts written in Sanskrit prose that deals with detailed description of sacrifices and other rituals. They give proper rules for the conduct of *yajnas* in which *Vedic* mantras are used in order to propitiate Gods like Indra, Agni, Soma etc. In addition to the ritualistic material, the *Brahmanas* also contain religious philosophy, stories etc. which support the *yajna* mode of worship. Each *Veda* has its own *Brahmana*. Some scholars include *Brahmanas* also under the title of *Veda*. The *Brahmana* portions are traditionally followed by *Aranyakas* and *Upanisads*. The *Aranyakas* explain the various forms of *Upasana* and the *Upanisads* are philosophical treatises. The authors of the *Brahmanas* understood that Sun is actually nothing else than fire. Rituals were done to praise the Vedic deities who in turn protected the living beings and fulfilled their desires. Rain was essential for a prosperous life. The

¹¹⁰Radhakrishnan S. (1989), *The Principal Upanishads*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. P. 525-563

Vedic people knew that rain is produced from clouds, clouds from smoke, smoke from fire. At the same time they recognize that fire and water has mutual enmity.

Importance of rainy season is that it has the capacity of the fulfilling of one's desires. Plants are the result of the swelling of waters. Because the plant grow whenever the water swells. According to the *Brahmanas* is the womb of waters. The waters have their own light. *Satapatha Brahmanas* says that lightning is the light of water.

Aranyakas

The authors of these texts believe that the water is born of fire. Water is the nectar. Cosmic waters are the rains. This entire world is established in cosmic waters. Clouds, lightning, thunders and rains are the four forms of water. Cosmic waters are there in all directions. Herbs are produced from earth.

According to *Aranyaka* Agni is the nourisher, Agni is the abode of waters and Agni is the sun. Agni is verily, the lord of food grains. Water is born of fire. Agni is the lightning. As is the sun in the heaven so is the eye in the head. Lightning is placed in the sun. Sun is the soul of movable and immovable world. Sky is established on the earth and everything is installed in the sky. Earth came out of water. Herbs grow on earth and the clouds satisfy the earth. The earth was born form water. The earth is honey to all beings. Of all created beings earth is the essence and from the earth the herbs are produced. The importance of water and plants to live on earth is being taught in the *Upanisads*.

In *Aitareyopanisad*, Vayu is the deity that never sets. From ether was born air. This prana is vayu. The air entered into the nostrils assuming the form of breath. The *Upanisad's* injunction with regard to kala (time) is "Do not decry the seasons", Time, nature, necessity, chance, the elements and the Purusa should be regarded as the causes. These must be pondered upon. The month verily is Prajapati. Its dark half is indeed food or matter.

4.10: The Concept of Nature in *Ramayana*

The author of *Ramayana*, Valmiki was a son of nature. According to the

legend Valmiki was a hunter in his early life. He turned to asceticism advised by the saptarsis and lived in the forest in his Asramas and he became a great sage. In his *Ramayana*, which is the first kavya, it is no wonder that nature is a main subject of description. The inspiration for Valmiki's writing of *Ramayana* was given from a tragic experience he had accidentally in the forest. In the morning while he was on the banks of the Tamasa River, a hunter came there and killed one of the Kraunca bird couples. The cry of the he-bird at the death of his mate deeply disturbed Valmiki's mind. He felt compassion towards the bird and anger towards the hunter. At that time from his sorrowful mind the first poetry was produced.

*Maa Nishada Pratistham Tvamagamahsāsvati Samaa
YatKraunchamithunaadekamAvadhiKaamamohitam*

This verse is indeed a caution against the greed of humans who interfere in the forest and destroy its living beings. Valmiki's attitude towards nature is clearly visible in his first poem. In *Ramayana* most part of the story is taking part in the forest. Valmiki gives the first forest experience to Rama and Laksmana when they were young boys. Visvamitra comes to the palace of Dasaratha and requests to send Rama and Laksmana and they went to Visvamitra's hermitage which was far away from Ayodhya. On the way they had to cross rivers, forests and valleys by foot. They had to first cross the Sarayu on the banks of which Ayodhya existed. They watched the place where Sarayu meets Jahnavi.

Rama, Laksmana and Visvamitra spent the day on the banks of the sona river. The sona river joined Jahnavi the holy river worshipped by ascetics. Having seen that sona river furnished with sacred water and frequented by swans and cranes, Rama and Laksmana were very delighted and they took up their quarters on the bank of that river. Where the two holy rivers become one, there they spent that night. Next morning they were crossing the river then they heard a thunderous noise. Then the sage told the story about the cause of that noise. Brahma once created out of his mind a lake, which is named Manasa Sarovara. This river Sarayu comes out of it and flows all along the edge of Ayodhya city. In this spot Sarayu blends with the golden water of the river Ganga.

After a while they reached a dark forest. No light from the Sun could filter into the forest. So thickly was the tree branches intertwined. There the beetles were making shrill music and the wild animals were roaring and making their characteristic noises. Even the birds seemed to cry harshly and there was no music emanating from their throats. Thus the forest was so dark to see anything.

Visvamitra was pleased with the natural curiosity of the young brothers. Then he told the story of that forest. Once that forest was a country named Malada and Karusa. There lived a terrible demoness Tataka by name. She was ugly, horrible to look at and cruel by nature. This demoness had occupied the place of entrance to the countries and no human beings dared to enter there. She was extremely fond of human flesh. Thus that country became a horrible forest and it is known as Tatakavana.

Birds and deer dwelling in Siddhasrama followed the high souled Visvamitra having asceticism for wealth. On the way to Mithila they entered the hermitage of Gautama. There Ahalya who was turned to a rock by Gautama's curse was waiting for the touch of Rama's blessed feet to purify her and to sanctify the ashrama. After liberating her from the curse Rama and Laksmana saluted her and flowers rained from the heavens on them. On their way to Mithila they spent that night on the banks of sona river. In the morning the music of the birds and the rustling of the river woke them up. After morning ceremonies they walked fast towards the north. They saw the sacred river Gargi. They were thrilled at the sight of the river with swans and lotuses floating on its surface. Then Rama wants to hear the story of the sacred river Ganga, How the Ganga was flowing in three directions and embracing the three worlds, falls into the lord of streams and rivers. Visvamitra started the story, 'There is a mountain by name Himavan. Himavan is the lord of all mountains and he had two daughters

4.11: Conclusive Remarks

In this chapter we have examined the eco-aesthetic concern of ancient literature in Sanskrit. The pantheism of the Vedas reflects the intimate relation between men and deified natural forces. *Agni, Indra, Varuna* and other Vedic deities clearly shows that they are personified natural forces. They were most powerful. In the *Brahmanas* there is a desire to subjugate nature by magical powers. During this

time the external nature were studied extensively and the ancient science like Ayurveda began to flourish. After the Vedic period the yajna cult became weak and the worship of personal Gods became popular. In *Valmiki's Ramayana* the description of nature is given importance. Nature is presented as a coherent and harmonious system of existence. The seers in the *tapovanas* are portrayed as examples of the natural life. *Ramayana* is always supplied with the energy of nature and Sita is the true daughter of nature. When compare to *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana* is friendlier towards forests. The two epics together draws an ecological map of India from Himalayas to Srilanka. Kalidasa has followed the style of Valmiki in describing nature and human life.

Before we conclude we must note one clear difference between Hindu ethics and Environmentalism. Hindu ethics upholds the freedom from samsara but on the other hand environmentalism upholds the preservation of samsara. However Hindu ethics and Environmentalism do not neglect the need of universal harmony, which we can confirm from the above mentioned findings. Environmentalism once more disagrees with Hindu ethics in the self-realization methodology. In Hindu ethics, particularly in Advaita, self-realization stands for the negation of plurality between beings while environmentalism defines self-realization as realization of the non-difference of oneself and the processes of the natural world without sacrificing plurality.

Environmentalism is capable of a theory, which gives unity al beings but does not mean that all beings share the same self as that of Hindu theology. From the above, we can observe the importance of nature and how it becomes an organic form with man as its head. When man becomes a Buddha (an enlightened one) one begins to attend to the need of protecting nature and hence the beginnings of a proper Environmental Ethics. Man is the custodian, guardian and overseer, but he cannot escape from his confirmed positions throughout the daily routine of nature.

From the above discussions we may note that Semitic and non-Semitic religious teachings have contributed significantly to environmental ethics. East-West hermeneutics helped Environmental Ethics to a greater extent in the midst of limitations of any one paradigm. As seen from our discussions on the religious ethical

teachings, we note that both anthropocentrism and ecocentrism have their roots in various religious doctrines. Thus in the next two chapters we take up these perspectives for a critical appraisal.

One theme within contemporary environmentalist discourse concerns the idea that the way in which people treat their natural environment can be related to their religious beliefs and practices. While the majority of studies have tended to emphasize instances where religion is believed to have played a positive and beneficial role in environmental conservation, religion can also act against the interest of environmental protection (Nelson the Judaeo-Christian tradition is often “environmental crisis” because of humanity and nature. Nature deals with this area of religious traditions as inherently. In particular, it is argued that religious traditions teach that the earth is significant (it has “intrinsic value”) because recognition of this “bio-divinity” environment and to be careful in their treatment of the natural world. While “bio-divinity” has been a feature of many religious-cultural traditions throughout history, it is, however, important to distinguish this from what we have called “religious environmental-ism”, which involves the conscious application of religious ideas to contemporary concerns about an environmental crisis.