



## Sanctification of Nature in Vedas

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Nature is the word generally used for the physical universe represented by the Heavens, the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, the light, the Air, the Water, the Earth and everything on it or from it, for example human beings, the trees, the beautiful flowers, the birds and the animals. According to Vedas, nature is the power underlying all the phenomena of physical world, the power by which all objects of the world are regulated and it is the blood, the life and the spirit of things.

### (i) Two Aspects of Nature

According to Indian tradition, there are two aspects of nature: the transitory being is related with those objects which constant change or in the process of destruction such as flowers, birds, trees and humans; the latter which are not the process of destruction such as sun, day and night, sky, cloud and wind. The life of our world depends upon the purity and balance of the five elements and all things are the result of the combination of these elements. The sanctification of these elements is admitted in all schools of Indian philosophy and all the systems give the way to maintain the balance of these elements. Each element has its own life, but all are interconnected with each other. A sequence ordering of these elements, according to their decreasing subtlety—namely, space, air, fire, water and earth (*akasa, vayu, tejas, ap, prithvi*) is stated in the *Upanishads* which explain the doctrine of the five elements in a holistic way in relation to *Brahman*, the Ultimate Reality. *Brahman* is the cause of the universe. The *Tattiriya Upanishad* says :

From Brahman arises *akasa*, from *akasa* arises *vayu*, from *vayu* arises *tejas*, from *tejas* arises *ap*, and from *ap* arises *prithvi*.

After creation, the transcendental *Brahman* enters into the universe as its life and consciousness. This is the basis of the affinity of humans with the natural world. The physical world is a manifestation of the Ultimate Reality and this world is God's world and all things of the world belong to Him. The five elements are the creation of God and He is independent of the five elements, but the five elements are not independent of God in the same way like as waves belong to the ocean; the ocean does



not belong to the waves.

## (ii) Sanctity of Five Elements

The sanctification of five elements is mentioned in the Vedas.

### Akasa

*Akasa* is the generic term for space, the subtlest and most pervasive of the five basic elements. *Loka* is the perceptible space that fills space and it sustains people and it has to be sustained by cosmic powers.

### Air

Air being the basis of human life, is recognized as breath of life or *prana* of all living beings including fire that cannot exist without air. Pure air is medicine in itself and directs that pure air is necessary for protecting the environment.

### Fire

Fire is life energy or the energy responsible for the dynamics of nature. It indicates to constant evolution and development of everything. It is mentioned in the *Rgveda* :

Oh, Agni, like a father to his son, be thou easy of access to us,  
be with us for our welfare.

### Water

Water is a life-sustaining, life-preserving and life-purifying element and it is one of the most common of all substances. Water cures all diseases and it cures all the pains of eyes, legs etc. and it is a remedy for heart-troubles as well. Rain water works as an elixir to remove all diseases and to give long life.

### Earth

Earth is regarded as a mother because she feeds us, provides us with shelter and gives material for clothes. Earth's resources are for the entire humanity so it is called *dharani*, as she sustains all her children.

The *Vedas* emphasized on the preservation of five elements to ensure the purity of environment and also sanctioned performance of *yajna* in human life and when the balance between these elements is disturbed, the process of destruction begins. The cause of disturbing the balance is pollution and the ways to prevent the pollution, according to *Vedas*, are the following : to plant more and more trees; to pay attention to protect forests; to stop from polluting land and water.

In the times of *Rgveda*, tree worship has been quite popular and it is symbolized attributes of God . They regard plants as having divine powers, with one entire hymn devoted to their praise and their healing properties. It is mentioned in *Rgveda* that trees



### *Jambhani Darshan Ayam Paryavarn*



and plants are a source of strength for the entire mankind and trees, plants, forests and herbs-all these are God's gifts to man. Without them, man's survival is impossible.

The *Artharaveda* says that gods dwell in trees and destroy the demons of all types of pollution and in the *Yajurveda* it is mentioned that water and herbal plants are our friends and trees are the protectors of mankind. The *Rgveda* says: "Trees remove pollutions, do not fell them." The *Yajurveda* forbids us from cutting down trees and plants or harming them in any way.

In Vedic period, the cow has also been regarded as a other and cow's milk, dairy products and ghee were used in religious ceremonies. Many animals were domesticated in this period and these include cows, goats, sheep, buffaloes and elephants.

Vedas elicits positive awareness towards the nature and in creating such an awareness, understands man that there are limits to control over nature and it also provides a system of moral guidelines towards environmental preservation and conservation.