

REGULATORY ROLE OF RELIGION AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION: LOOKING BACK TO SCRIPTURES

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ABSTRACT

Protection of the environment is considered a late development and the policy struggle to contain human practices is also well-known. It may sound like the earlier generations till 19th century were unaware of environmental consequences of their actions and the need to conserve. However, the fact is that the ancient vision was more towards settling human civilization in an environment friendly ways. The ancient policy and regulatory currents used to flow from the religions and an examination of the religious conditioning of life well establishes that environment was a concern. The religious texts and consequent practices are examined without comparing different religions for their environment friendly values and sermons. Reason for non-comparative study and analysis is that different religions developed at different times and at different locations. Contemporary time and geography being different, the conservation needs were also different. A religion which originated and grew on a water scarce location could have had more sensitive guidance for water. Another religion could have had value for some other natural resource. Therefore, minus comparison, many religions are covered and their religious prescriptions are cited. Basic premise remains the same; that all religions had value for environmental conservation. The same has been examined and elaborated in the paper. Perspective is that rejuvenating the religious practices, may be after due confirmation with modern researches, will give a boost to the environmental conservation movement with ordinary efforts on regulation.

Introduction

“Protecting our environment is an urgent imperative and a sacred duty for all people of faith and people of conscience.”¹ Religion can evoke a kind of awareness in persons that is different from scientific or technological reasoning. Religion helps make human beings aware that there are limits to their control over the animate and inanimate world and that their arrogance and manipulative power over nature can backfire. Religion instills the recognition that human life cannot be measured by material possessions and that the ends of life go beyond conspicuous consumption. Law is a late evolved tool to regulate human conduct. Earlier, religion and society used to exercise control over the regulatory rhythms. The entire gamut of family laws is an evidence of how religions have shaped the practices of people and how powerful is the influence of religions over their followers that they even agree to face difficulty and losses for the sake of religious compliances. World religions, each in their own way, offer a unique set of moral values

and rules to guide human beings in their relationship with the environment.² Religion plays a great role in shaping our attitude towards the natural world. Religion is sometimes defined as the relationship between people and that which they regard as holy, often in supernatural terms. Nine of the world's major faiths represent billions of people worldwide. They include 1.161 billion Hindus, 506 million Buddhists, 14.7 million Jews, just under 2.282 billion Christians, 1.907 billion Muslims, and 5 million Bahais³. All faiths around the world share a common ethic based on harmony with nature, although a wide gap is often perceived between the religious texts and the current practices of the adherents of those religions.⁴

Religious values and practices are deeply entwined in the fabric of daily lives, and the leaders of churches, mosques, Knesset, temples, and other religious communities play an important role in shaping attitudes, opinions, behaviors, and addressing societal

¹Ban Ki-moon, Former UN Secretary-General; SG/SM/16710-

ENV/DEV/1510, 28 APRIL 2015 available at

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sgsm16710.doc.htm> visited on 30th

July, 2021

²Environmental Ethics And Religious Traditions In Environmental Protection: An Overview Anju & R. Satyawan International Journal Of Environment, Ecology, Family And Urban Studies (Ijeefus) Issn(P): 2250-0065; Issn(E): 2321-0109 Vol. 3, Issue 5, Dec 2013, 1-10

³Parker, C. (2019). Popular religions and multiple modernities: A framework for understanding current religious transformations. *Religions*, 10(10), 565.

⁴<https://iefworld.org/unepegc21.htm> (last visited Jan 6 2021)

challenges. India had an ancient tradition of paying constant attention to protection of environment.⁵

Role of Religion and Environment

Long before Environment became the refrain of the global song at Stockholm and Rio, the ancient Indic heritage had already provided a spacious spiritual home for the environmental ethos. The Hindu, Islam, Jain, Vedic and Buddhist traditions established the principles of ecological harmony centuries ago - not because the world was perceived as heading for an imminent environmental disaster or destruction, nor because of any immediate utilitarian exigency, but through its quest for spiritual and physical symbiosis, synthesized in a system of ethical awareness and moral responsibility.⁶ Religion protects and nurtures nature. If we take a look at Hinduism, we worship the sun, wind, land, trees, plants, and water which is the very base of human survival. Likewise, respect and conservation of wildlife—garuda, lion, peacock, and snake—are part of our cultural ethos from time immemorial.⁷

Environmental ethics inculcate a precious code in the individuals and societies and ought to be developed in each person, to command him/her as a force from within to make decisions and take actions on the different aspects of the environment which are not harmful to the local, national and international community. Environmental ethics has to sharpen the judgments of a person not to jeopardize the health and security of other fellow beings for the sake of material and political gains. The ethics command us not to endanger the health of an individual and communities, but to serve as a proud and honest person in the service of humanity.⁸ Religions and traditional cultures

tell us another narrative. For instance, to receive a seed and watch its germination is to enter into the universal order of things present in the manifestation of florescence without which we would not be here. To seek water is to be conscious of the intimate exchange of ocean and cloud. Thus the question today is how to achieve the convergence of science and religion wherein “objective analysis” and “subjective communion” are distinct yet complementary aspects of our experience and perception of the natural world.⁹

Hinduism is a religion where the concept of dharma is considered to be the universal organizing principle that governs all reality and guides how all things—animate or inanimate—ought to be, connoting a sense of duty, virtue, and moral righteousness that all Hindus should uphold.¹⁰ In the context of the human-nature relationship, protecting the environment has thus been considered by some to be an expression of dharma.¹¹ As worded in the Hindu Declaration on Climate Change, it is a “dharmic duty to ensure that we have a functioning, abundant, and bountiful planet.”¹² Another central concept to Hinduism¹³ is karma, which holds that every action has consequences and that there is a causal relationship between one’s actions and one’s future fate, even in subsequent lifetimes.¹⁴ Thus, karma is also closely related to the concept of rebirth, or Samsara. Both concepts further illustrate the Hindu conception of the human-nature relationship in two ways: (1) that there is a continuity and an intimate relationship among all forms of beings on Earth, and so it is essential that no harm is done to any of them¹⁵; and (2) that one’s behavior toward the environment will have karmic consequences, which means one can

⁵ <https://opentextbc.ca/introductiontosociology2ndedition/chapter/chapter-15-religion/> (last visited Jan 6 2021)

⁶ Environmental Ethics And Religious Traditions In Environmental Protection: An Overview Anju & R. Satyawan International Journal Of Environment, Ecology, Family And Urban Studies (Ijeefus) Issn(P): 2250-0065; Issn(E): 2321-0109 Vol. 3, Issue 5, Dec 2013, 1-10

⁷ Soliman, S. M., Hagar, M., Ibid, F., & El Sayed, H. (2015). Experimental and theoretical spectroscopic studies, HOMO–LUMO, NBO analyses and thione–thiol tautomerism of a new hybrid of 1, 3, 4-oxadiazole-thione with quinazolin-4-one. *Spectrochimica Acta Part A: molecular and biomolecular spectroscopy*, 145, 270-279.

⁸ Soliman, S. M., Hagar, M., Ibid, F., & El Sayed, H. (2015). Experimental and theoretical spectroscopic studies, HOMO–LUMO, NBO analyses and thione–thiol tautomerism of a new hybrid of 1, 3, 4-oxadiazole-thione with

quinazolin-4-one. *Spectrochimica Acta Part A: molecular and biomolecular spectroscopy*, 145, 270-279.

⁹ [https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/8696/Environment_religion_and_culture_in_the_context_of_the_2030_agenda_for_sustainable_development-last visited Jan 6 2021](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/8696/Environment_religion_and_culture_in_the_context_of_the_2030_agenda_for_sustainable_development-last%20visited%20Jan%206%2021)

¹⁰ Rinehart, R., & Rinehart, R. (Eds.). (2004). *Contemporary Hinduism: Ritual, culture, and practice*. ABC-CLIO.

¹¹ Pankaj Jain, “10 Hindu Environmental Teachings”, The Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale, April 10, 2011, <http://fore.yale.edu/news/item/10-hindu-environmental-teachings/> (last visited Jan 6 2021)

¹² Skarpeid, J. (2020). Liberation of Mother Earth? A Hindu Declaration on Climate Change. In *Eco-Theology* (pp. 150-163). Ferdinand Schöningh.

¹³ Huntington, S. L., & Huntington, J. C. (2014). *The Art of Ancient India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain*. Motilal Banarsidass.

¹⁴ Sanford, A. W. (2013). Hinduism and development. In *Handbook of research on development and religion*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

¹⁵ Coward, H. (2003). Hindu views of nature and the environment. In *Nature across cultures* (pp. 411-419). Springer, Dordrecht.

accumulate good karma by actively protecting the environment.¹⁶

Hinduism is a religion deeply rooted in nature. The sacred text (Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Epics) has many references of divinity related to nature, such as rivers, mountains, trees, animals, and the earth. To protect them, Hinduism encourages environmental protection and there are organizations who promote sustainable development and support the protection of the environment through awareness campaigns and actions (GreenFaith, 2010).¹⁷

Hinduism Connections and Reflection on Environment: “I shall now explain the knowable, knowing which you will taste the eternal. Brahman, the spirit, beginning less and subordinate to me, lies beyond the cause and effect of this material world.” (Bhagavad Gita 13.13)¹⁸

“According to the different modes of material nature — the mode of goodness, the mode of passion and the mode of darkness — there are different living creatures, who are known as demigods, human beings and hellish living entities. O King, even a particular mode of nature, being mixed with the other two, is divided into three, and thus each kind of living creature is influenced by the other modes and acquires its habits also.” (Bhagavata Purana 2.10.41)¹⁹

“There is an inseparable bond between man and nature. For man, there cannot be an existence removed from nature.” (Amma, 2011)²⁰

Religious texts provide more insights into the different ways the Hindu tradition makes sense of the environment, and in turn, the human-nature relationship. The Rig Veda—believed to be one of the earliest Hindu religious texts—contains various hymns describing the sacred

phenomena of nature, with different environmental elements perceived as extensions of the divine. Another Vedic text—the Atharva Veda—has mantras that remind Hindus of the need to behave respectfully toward “Mother Earth” by making sure that any personal activities do not hurt her vitals, body, or appearance.²¹ The culture of conservation of nature dates back to the ancient Vedic Period. The four Vedas — Rig-Veda, Sama-Veda, Yajur-Veda and Atharva- Veda — are full of hymns dedicated to the supremacy of various natural entities. The Rigvedic hymns refer to many gods and goddesses identified with sun, moon, thunder, lightening, snow, rain, water, rivers, trees etc. They have been glorified and worshipped as givers of health, wealth and prosperity. The rain-god Indra has the largest number of hymns attached to him. The Gāyatrī mantra of the Rig-Veda, which is chanted on every auspicious occasion, is full of praise for the sun. Similarly, the Atharva-Veda highlights the importance of nature and has a beautiful hymn in praise of the earth. With remarkable foresight, Thiruvalluvar’s Kural, an ancient text in Tamil from south India stresses the need to remain under nature’s protection: ‘Sparkling water, open space, hills and forests constitute a fortress.’ Guru Granth Saheb states, ‘Air is the guru, water is the father, and earth is the great Mother of all.’

The worship of the pipal tree (also known as Bodhi tree, *ashvatthain* Sanskrit, *Ficus religiosa*) became a folk ritual, and the pipal was called the king of trees in *Brahma Purāṇa*. In the course of time, many such plants and trees came to be associated with various gods and goddesses and were worshipped accordingly. The Hindu Hymn to the Earth, “The Prithvi Sukta, the 12th chapter of the Artharva Veda, recognizes the intimacy of earth nurturance and human cultivation. Hindus are enjoined to protect animals and to respect nature and the river by not contaminating it with sewage or domestic wash water. Buddhism sees in the composite nature of phenomena, the insight of transience and the instance of enlightened awareness — an awareness of the value of life by not destroying

¹⁶ Pankaj Jain, “10 Hindu Environmental Teachings”, *The Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale*, April 10, 2011, <http://fore.yale.edu/news/item/10-hindu-environmental-teachings/>.

¹⁷ <https://www.unep.org/about-un-environment/faith-earth-initiative/religions-and-environmental-protection> (last visited Jan 6 2021)

¹⁸ <https://www.unep.org/about-un-environment/faith-earth-initiative/religions-and-environmental-protection> (last visited Jan 10 2021)

¹⁹ Soliman, S. M., Hagar, M., Ibid, F., & El Sayed, H. (2015). Experimental and theoretical spectroscopic studies, HOMO–LUMO, NBO analyses and thione–thiol tautomerism of a new hybrid of 1, 3, 4-oxadiazole-thione with quinazolin-4-one. *Spectrochimica Acta Part A: molecular and biomolecular spectroscopy*, 145, 270-279.

²⁰ Soliman, S. M., Hagar, M., Ibid, F., & El Sayed, H. (2015). Experimental and theoretical spectroscopic studies, HOMO–LUMO, NBO analyses and thione–thiol tautomerism of a new hybrid of 1, 3, 4-oxadiazole-thione with quinazolin-4-one. *Spectrochimica Acta Part A: molecular and biomolecular spectroscopy*, 145, 270-279.

²¹ Dwivedi, O. P. (2006). Hindu religion and environmental well-being. In *The Oxford handbook of religion and ecology*.

human, animals and plants. Confucian thought engages the realities of the natural world in a manner to cultivate the inner spontaneities of the human mind and heart, the Sage Personality, and the ability of those who possess absolute sincerity.²² Rig Veda says, "Thousands and Hundreds of Years If You Want to Enjoy the Fruits and Happiness of Life Then Take Up Systematic Planting of Trees."²³ "Do Not Harm the Environment; Do Not Harm the Water and The Flora; Earth Is My Mother, I Am Her Son; May the Waters Remain Fresh, Do Not Harm the Waters"; "Do Not Cut Trees, Because They Remove Pollution." (Rig Veda, 6:48:17)²⁴

"The waters in the' sky, the waters of rivers, and water in the well whose source is the ocean, may all these sacred waters protect me" (Rig-Veda 7.49.2)²⁵

Yajur Veda "Do Not Disturb the Sky and Do Not Pollute the Atmosphere." (Yajur Veda,5:43)²⁶

Charaka wrote about Vikrti (pollution) and disease, he mentioned air pollution specifically as a cause of many diseases (Charaka Samhita, Vimanastanam III 6:1.9)²⁷

"A person, who is engaged in killing creatures, polluting wells, and ponds and tanks, and destroying gardens, certainly goes to hell" (Padmapurana, Bhoomikhananda 96:7-8).²⁸

Moreover, Hinduism Recognizes That the Human Body Is Composed of And Related to

These Five Elements, And Connects Each of The Elements to One Of The Five Senses. The Human Nose Is Related to Earth, Tongue to Water, Eyes to Fire, Skin to Air and Ears to Space. This Link Between Our Senses and The Elements Is the Foundation of Our Human Relationship with The Natural World. For Hinduism, Nature and The Environment Are Not Outside Us. They Are an Inseparable Part of Our Existence.²⁹

A Quote From Vishnu Purana States: "As The Wide-Spreading Nargodha (Sanskrit For Banyan) Tree Is Compressed In A Small Seed, So At The Time Of Dissolution, The Whole Universe Is Comprehended In Thee As Its Germ; As The Nargodha Germinates From The Seed, And Becomes Just A Shoot And Then Rises Into Loftiness, So The Created World Proceeds From Thee And Expands Into Magnitude."³⁰

The VarahPurana Says, "One Who Plants One Peepal, One Neem, One Bar, Ten Flowering Plants or Creepers, Two Pomegranates, Two Oranges and Five Mangos, Does Not Go to Hell."³¹

Other texts like the various Hindu folklore or epics include similar teachings, but further illustrate the human-nature relationship through narratives, sometimes to make the teachings more relevant or to provide more specific guidance. The Puranas are one such collection of Hindu myths and traditional lore. For example, some are related to the Ganges River, or Ma Ganga, which is depicted as a goddess who descended to Earth to save the world.³²

Customs like worship of tree was quite popular and one of the best practice to conserve the groves of forest. The evolution of the concept of natural resource management is not new. The fact remains that the conservation and

²²https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjyJ_bibfvAhUzzjgGHZq5AjkQFjAAegQIAhAD&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwedocs.unep.org%2Fbitstream%2Fhandle%2F20.500.11822%2F8696%2F-Environment%2C_religion_and_culture_in_the_context_of_the_2030_age_nda_for_sustainable_development-2016Environment%2C_religion_and_culture_in_the_context_.pdf%3Fsequence%3D2%26isAllowed%3Dy&usq=AOvVaw2GqWUQFhKOQxInG0TXXLth(last visited Jan 6 2021)

²³<https://www.lawyered.in/legal-disrupt/articles/environment-protection-dharma-and-duty-which-establishes-code-conduct-every-bhartiya-and-person-arou/> (last visited Jan 6 2021)

²⁴Soliman, S. M., Hagar, M., Ibid, F., & El Sayed, H. (2015). Experimental and theoretical spectroscopic studies, HOMO–LUMO, NBO analyses and thione–thiol tautomerism of a new hybrid of 1, 3, 4-oxadiazole-thione with quinazolin-4-one. *Spectrochimica Acta Part A: molecular and biomolecular spectroscopy*, 145, 270-279.

²⁵Soliman, S. M., Hagar, M., Ibid, F., & El Sayed, H. (2015). Experimental and theoretical spectroscopic studies, HOMO–LUMO, NBO analyses and thione–thiol tautomerism of a new hybrid of 1, 3, 4-oxadiazole-thione with quinazolin-4-one. *Spectrochimica Acta Part A: molecular and biomolecular spectroscopy*, 145, 270-279.

²⁶<https://www.lawyered.in/legal-disrupt/articles/environment-protection-dharma-and-duty-which-establishes-code-conduct-every-bhartiya-and-person-arou/>(last visited Jan 10 2021)

²⁷<https://www.lawyered.in/legal-disrupt/articles/environment-protection-dharma-and-duty-which-establishes-code-conduct-every-bhartiya-and-person-arou/> (last visited Jan 10 2021)

²⁸Soliman, S. M., Hagar, M., Ibid, F., & El Sayed, H. (2015). Experimental and theoretical spectroscopic studies, HOMO–LUMO, NBO analyses and thione–thiol tautomerism of a new hybrid of 1, 3, 4-oxadiazole-thione with quinazolin-4-one. *Spectrochimica Acta Part A: molecular and biomolecular spectroscopy*, 145, 270-279.

²⁹Soliman, S. M., Hagar, M., Ibid, F., & El Sayed, H. (2015). Experimental and theoretical spectroscopic studies, HOMO–LUMO, NBO analyses and thione–thiol tautomerism of a new hybrid of 1, 3, 4-oxadiazole-thione with quinazolin-4-one. *Spectrochimica Acta Part A: molecular and biomolecular spectroscopy*, 145, 270-279.

³⁰Soliman, S. M., Hagar, M., Ibid, F., & El Sayed, H. (2015). Experimental and theoretical spectroscopic studies, HOMO–LUMO, NBO analyses and thione–thiol tautomerism of a new hybrid of 1, 3, 4-oxadiazole-thione with quinazolin-4-one. *Spectrochimica Acta Part A: molecular and biomolecular spectroscopy*, 145, 270-279.

³¹Soliman, S. M., Hagar, M., Ibid, F., & El Sayed, H. (2015). Experimental and theoretical spectroscopic studies, HOMO–LUMO, NBO analyses and thione–thiol tautomerism of a new hybrid of 1, 3, 4-oxadiazole-thione with quinazolin-4-one. *Spectrochimica Acta Part A: molecular and biomolecular spectroscopy*, 145, 270-279.

³²Ganga Action Parivar, *Ganga in Scriptures*, accessed April 17, 2019, <https://www.gangaaction.org/about-ganga/national-heritage/ganga-in-scriptures/>.(last visited Jan 12 2021)

protection of the natural resources has been significant since ages. It has been noticed that there has been a direct link between resource management and traditional societies with the continuous interaction and dependency of communities on natural resources. This dependency reflects in terms of ecosystem services such as food, fodder, fuelwood, fresh air, water, medicinal plants and herbs etc, apart from soothing and recreational qualities that accomplish the basic requirement of the communities residing in and around natural areas. In the earlier time most of the rural societies were highly dependent on these services but there were certain measures recognized to conserve the natural resources. They had realised that these services are limited in nature and there is a need to protect them. In this direction certain beliefs, custom and tradition have been evolved and established their connection with the natural environment.

The oldest visual image of the human fascination, love, and reverence for nature in India can be found in the 10,000 year-old cave paintings at Bhimbetka in Central India depicting birds, animals, and human beings living in harmony. The Indus Valley civilization provides evidence of human interest 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 psyche and faith, reflected in religious practices, folklore, art and culture permeating every aspect of the daily lives of people. Scriptures and preachings that exhort reverence for nature and relate to conservation can be found in most of the religions that have flourished in the Indian subcontinent.³³

Twenty-two centuries ago Emperor Ashoka decreed that it was a king's duty to protect wildlife and the trees of the forests. He got edicts inscribed on rocks and iron pillars throughout his kingdom, prohibiting the destruction of forests and the killing of various species of animals. This historical evidence, surviving to this day, is the first recorded measure on conservation anywhere in the

world.³⁴ In more recent historical times, Mughal Emperor Babur's memoirs (Baburnama), Guru Nanak's hymns on 'Baramasa' (the seasons) depicting each month with a dominant bird image, and Emperor Jehangir's memoirs showing his keen interest in and study of wildlife provide fine illustrations of this Indian tradition.³⁵

Not only Hinduism but almost all religions address the issue of the creation of the universe, or universes, in different forms and with varying degrees of clarity or detail.

Buddhism: The notion of karma alone, being an important part of Buddha's lessons, conveys the values of conservation and responsibility for the future. It is said that the morality of our actions in the present will shape our character for the future, an idea close of sustainable development.³⁶

Buddhist Connections and Reflection on Environment: "As a bee – without harming the blossom, its color, its fragrance – takes its nectar and flies away: so should the sage go through a village." (Dhammapada IV, Puppavagga: Blossoms, 49)³⁷

"Drop by drop is the water pot filled. Likewise, the wise man, gathering it little by little, fills himself with good." (Dhammapada IX, Papavagga: Evil, 122)³⁸

Jainism: Originated from India, the main teaching from Jainism is Ahimsa, the non-violence, in all parts of life. Verbally, physically and mentally, Jainism doctrines focus on a peaceful and disciplined life. Kindness to animals, vegetarianism and self-restraint with the avoidance of waste are parts of Jains life. In addition, in 1990, The Jain Declaration on Nature was written to mark the

³⁴Soliman, S. M., Hagar, M., Ibid, F., & El Sayed, H. (2015). Experimental and theoretical spectroscopic studies, HOMO–LUMO, NBO analyses and thione–thiol tautomerism of a new hybrid of 1, 3, 4-oxadiazole-thione with quinazolin-4-one. *Spectrochimica Acta Part A: molecular and biomolecular spectroscopy*, 145, 270-279.

³⁵Soliman, S. M., Hagar, M., Ibid, F., & El Sayed, H. (2015). Experimental and theoretical spectroscopic studies, HOMO–LUMO, NBO analyses and thione–thiol tautomerism of a new hybrid of 1, 3, 4-oxadiazole-thione with quinazolin-4-one. *Spectrochimica Acta Part A: molecular and biomolecular spectroscopy*, 145, 270-279.

³⁶ <https://www.unep.org/about-un-environment/faith-earth-initiative/religions-and-environmental-protection>(last visited Jan 10 2021)

³⁷Soliman, S. M., Hagar, M., Ibid, F., & El Sayed, H. (2015). Experimental and theoretical spectroscopic studies, HOMO–LUMO, NBO analyses and thione–thiol tautomerism of a new hybrid of 1, 3, 4-oxadiazole-thione with quinazolin-4-one. *Spectrochimica Acta Part A: molecular and biomolecular spectroscopy*, 145, 270-279.

³⁸Soliman, S. M., Hagar, M., Ibid, F., & El Sayed, H. (2015). Experimental and theoretical spectroscopic studies, HOMO–LUMO, NBO analyses and thione–thiol tautomerism of a new hybrid of 1, 3, 4-oxadiazole-thione with quinazolin-4-one. *Spectrochimica Acta Part A: molecular and biomolecular spectroscopy*, 145, 270-279.

³³ <http://ccrtindia.gov.in/readingroom/nscd/ch/ch11.php>(last visited Jan 10 2021)

entry of the Jain faith into the WWF Network on Conservation and Religion (The Jain Declaration on Nature, 1990).³⁹

Jainism Connections and Reflection on Environment: "Do not injure, abuse, oppress, enslave, insult, torment, torture, or kill any creature or living being." (Mahavira)⁴⁰

"As a highly evolved form of life, human beings have a great moral responsibility in their mutual dealings and in their relationship with the rest of the universe. It is this conception of life and its eternal coherence, in which human beings have an inescapable ethical responsibility, that made the Jain tradition a cradle for the creed of environmental protection and harmony." (The Jain Declaration on Nature, 1990).⁴¹

Islam: Hundreds of Qur'an verses support the protection of the environment. Many some Islamic organizations promote the relation between Islam and sustainability. Islam also approaches environment from a stewardship perspective. The earth is God's creation, and as humans, we have been entrusted to preserve it as we found. The responsibility of humanity is to protect and ensure the unity (Tawheed) of the God's creation. Moreover, Islam prohibits the excessive consumption of resources the planet provides to the humanity (Qur'an 7:31, 6:141, 17:26-27, 40:34). In fact, Qur'an mentions wasteful consumption (Isrāf) as the thirty-second greatest sin. In 2015, the Islamic Climate Change Symposium adopted the Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change. Muslim Connections and Reflection on Environment: "Devote thyself single-mindedly to the Faith, and thus follow the nature designed by Allah, the nature according to which He has fashioned mankind. There is no altering the creation of Allah." (Qur'an 30:30)⁴²

³⁹Soliman, S. M., Hagar, M., Ibid, F., & El Sayed, H. (2015). Experimental and theoretical spectroscopic studies, HOMO-LUMO, NBO analyses and thione-thiol tautomerism of a new hybrid of 1, 3, 4-oxadiazole-thione with quinazolin-4-one. *Spectrochimica Acta Part A: molecular and biomolecular spectroscopy*, 145, 270-279.

⁴⁰Soliman, S. M., Hagar, M., Ibid, F., & El Sayed, H. (2015). Experimental and theoretical spectroscopic studies, HOMO-LUMO, NBO analyses and thione-thiol tautomerism of a new hybrid of 1, 3, 4-oxadiazole-thione with quinazolin-4-one. *Spectrochimica Acta Part A: molecular and biomolecular spectroscopy*, 145, 270-279.

⁴¹Soliman, S. M., Hagar, M., Ibid, F., & El Sayed, H. (2015). Experimental and theoretical spectroscopic studies, HOMO-LUMO, NBO analyses and thione-thiol tautomerism of a new hybrid of 1, 3, 4-oxadiazole-thione with quinazolin-4-one. *Spectrochimica Acta Part A: molecular and biomolecular spectroscopy*, 145, 270-279.

⁴² <https://www.unep.org/about-un-environment/faith-earth-initiative/religions-and-environmental-protection> (last visited Jan 10 2021)

"Do not strut arrogantly on the earth. You will never split the earth apart nor will you ever rival the mountains' stature" (Qur'an 17: 37).⁴³

"It is Allah who made for you the earth a place of settlement and the sky a ceiling and formed you and perfected your forms and provided you with good things. That is Allah, your Lord; then blessed is Allah, Lord of the worlds." (Qur'an, 40:64)⁴⁴

The Sufi Master Rumi recommended us if we want to "make peace with the universe" we should "take joy in it". Then "it will turn to gold. Resurrection will be now. Every moment, a new beauty."⁴⁵

In Judaism, the Torah outlines a series of ethical obligations including several relevant to the conservation of nature. The Torah says: "When God created Adam, he showed him all the trees of the Garden of Eden and said to him: 'See my works, how lovely they are, how fine they are. All I have created, I created for you. Take care not to corrupt and destroy my universe, for if you destroy it, no one will come after you to put it right'" (Ecclesiastes, Rabbah).⁴⁶

Christianity teaches that all creation is a loving act of God and that humanity may not destroy biological diversity or destroy God's creations without the risk of destroying itself. In the Christian Bible, the book Ecclesiastes states in chapter 3, verse 19: "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts ... as the one dieth, so dieth the other ... so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast." There are other comparable passages in the Bible on the conservation of wildlife (Deuteronomy, chapter 2, verses 6 and 7, and Genesis, chapter 9), agricultural lands (Leviticus, chapter 25, verses 2 to 4) and the preservation of fruit trees (Deuteronomy, chapter 20, verse 19, and Genesis, chapter 19, verses 23 to 25). Christmas itself was originally a time of pagan celebration of the winter solstice, and

⁴³Soliman, S. M., Hagar, M., Ibid, F., & El Sayed, H. (2015). Experimental and theoretical spectroscopic studies, HOMO-LUMO, NBO analyses and thione-thiol tautomerism of a new hybrid of 1, 3, 4-oxadiazole-thione with quinazolin-4-one. *Spectrochimica Acta Part A: molecular and biomolecular spectroscopy*, 145, 270-279.

⁴⁴Soliman, S. M., Hagar, M., Ibid, F., & El Sayed, H. (2015). Experimental and theoretical spectroscopic studies, HOMO-LUMO, NBO analyses and thione-thiol tautomerism of a new hybrid of 1, 3, 4-oxadiazole-thione with quinazolin-4-one. *Spectrochimica Acta Part A: molecular and biomolecular spectroscopy*, 145, 270-279.

⁴⁵Rumi, J. A. D., & Barks, C. (2005). *Rumi: The book of love: Poems of ecstasy and longing*. HarperSanFrancisco.

⁴⁶ <https://iefworld.org/unepgc21.htm>

Christmas trees came from sacred groves dedicated to a pagan goddess.⁴⁷

Sikhism teaches that all forms in the universe exist under God's command and that, having brought a life form into being, God will protect it. The teachings of Sikhism are based on a premise of life liberated from conspicuous consumption.⁴⁸

According to the above mentioned details there are many points of religious agreement in environmental ethics, like:

- The natural world has value in itself and does not exist solely to serve human needs
- There is a significant continuity of being between human and non-human living beings, even though humans do have a distinctive role. This continuity can be felt and experienced.
- Non-human living beings are morally significant, in the eyes of God and/or in the cosmic order. They have their own unique relations to God, and their own places in the cosmic order.
- The dependence of human life on the natural world can and should be acknowledged in ritual and other expressions of appreciation and gratitude.
- Moral norms such as justice, compassion and reciprocity apply (in appropriate ways) both to human beings and to non-human beings. The wellbeing of humans and the wellbeing of non-human beings are inseparably connected.
- There are legitimate and illegitimate uses of nature.
- Greed and destructiveness are condemned. Restraint and protection are commended.
- Human beings are obliged to be aware and responsible in living in harmony with the natural world, and should follow the specific practices for this prescribed by their traditions.⁴⁹

The philosophy of sufficiency is deeply rooted in the human past. Materialism was denounced by all sages, from Buddha to Mohammad, and every world religion is rife with warnings against the evils of excess. These religious founders disagreed with each other on various issues but they all emphasized with one voice that if made material wealth our paramount aim, this would lead to disaster.

At present the dilemma of environment degradation become a matter of concern at global level and emerged because of rapid industrialization, growing urbanization, rigorous cultivation and other developmental activities posed detrimental impact on environment. The major environmental issues identified are deforestation, pollution (air, water and land) and loss of biodiversity, depleting ground water sources etc. The air pollution mainly concentrated in ten cities because of the eighty percent industrial areas are located with in these cities. Besides this the heavy volume of traffic causes pollution and adding significantly in the severity of problem. The huge population of a developing country like India highly dependent on natural resources for their food, shelter, fodder, medicinal plants etc and causing a greater pressure on the existing resources.

At the same time, India is also no stranger to widespread environmental problems, and the situation has been dire due to population growth, rapid industrialization and agricultural activities, and the depletion of natural resources.⁵⁰ Religious activities do constitute a part of those problems, especially when it comes to the pollution of bodies of water that hold religious and ritualistic significance to the Hindu communities. There have been various studies on how worshipping activities like the KumbhMela festivals, the annual Ganesh Chaturthi festivals, or the daily aarthi ceremonies contribute to the pollution problem for rivers such as the Ganges and the Yamuna, especially with the use of religious offerings that are usually non-biodegradable and often contain heavy metals or plastic. However, the Ganges is unique in that it has been viewed as a sacred river for 5,000 years. Mentioned in all

⁴⁷<https://iefworld.org/unepegc21.htm> (last visited Jan 12 2021)

⁴⁸Soliman, S. M., Hagar, M., Ibad, F., & El Sayed, H. (2015). Experimental and theoretical spectroscopic studies, HOMO–LUMO, NBO analyses and thione–thiol tautomerism of a new hybrid of 1, 3, 4-oxadiazole-thione with quinazolin-4-one. *Spectrochimica Acta Part A: molecular and biomolecular spectroscopy*, 145, 270-279.

⁴⁹ Pedersen, K. P. (2018). Environmental ethics in interreligious perspective. In *Explorations in global ethics* (pp. 253-290). Routledge.

⁵⁰ Parikh, J. K. (1977). Environmental problems of India and their possible trends in future. *Environmental Conservation*, 4(3), 189-197.

major Hindu texts and scriptures, the river is seen as the physical manifestation of a divine Goddess. Bathing in the Ganges is thought to cleanse the soul, leading tens of millions of Hindus to bathe in its waters and also to immerse the remains of their loved ones.⁵¹ While there have been many calls for efforts to clean these sacred rivers, the paradox is that there are also devotees who believe that since these rivers are part of the all-powerful divine, any human practices—whether to pollute or to clean—are insignificant and inconsequential. Furthermore, even if there are ways to promote more environmentally-friendly religious practices through the use of biodegradable offerings, there are also other deep-rooted cultural practices—motivated by the same set of religious beliefs—that are much more difficult to address, such as bathing in the Ganges or cremating bodies near the Ganges to then scatter the ashes into the river.⁵²

One might then question the effectiveness of appealing to religion or faith to promote positive environmental action; as seen in the case of Hinduism, even a religion that seems to have deep underpinnings of ecological sensibility can also indirectly promote a level of indifference for environmental harm. Critical action is needed by the international community to address urgent and increasing environmental degradation, and related challenges of social and economic unsustainability. Religion and culture can significantly address climate change, biodiversity and ecosystem loss, pollution, deforestation, desertification and unsustainable land and water use, and other urgent issues.

Constitutional Provisions

It is noticeable that Environment Protection in India has been recognised as an integral and fundamental right under the garb of Article-21 of the Indian Constitution, on the lines of the Western Civilisations by virtue of Judicial Activism exercised to develop the Right's oriented Environmental Jurisprudence.

The provisions in the Indian Constitution, which specifically talks about the Environment

Protection are as follows,

Part IV: Directive Principles of State Policy

Article 47- "The State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and standard of living of its people and improvement of public health as among its primary duties."

Article 48A- "Protection and Improvement of Environment and safeguarding of Forests and Wildlife. - The State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country."

Part IVA: Fundamental Duties

Article 51A(g)- "It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife, and to have compassion for living creatures."

Article 51A(j)- "It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievements."

Moreover, it is also of great significance to quote that expressly Part IV of the Indian Constitution is neither enforceable nor justiciable by virtue of Article 37 which states, "The provisions contained in this Part shall not be enforced by any court, but the principles therein laid down are nevertheless fundamental in the governance of the country and it shall be the duty of the State to apply these principles in making laws."

The aforementioned similar express rider for enforceability is absent for Part IVA (Fundamental Duties) of the Indian Constitution and this silent move on the part of the Constituent Assembly has many times raised an issue as to who shall be made liable, punished, compensated for and compensated by in the matters pertaining to Environmental Pollution and Degradation.

Further, as to the justiciable nature of Fundamental Duties, there exists contradictory views among various High Courts, as well as in the Supreme Court as well. This contradiction of views to uphold the pious duty to preserve & Protect the Environment and rise of the Environmental Degradation in past 10 decades (after the Industrial Evolution) coupled with lack of responsibility on the part of Executive and Legislature has obliged the Judicial Organ of the Government to step-in while exercising

⁵¹Alley, K. D. (2002). *On the banks of the Gaṅgā: When wastewater meets a sacred river*. University of Michigan Press.

⁵² Vazquez, M. (2018). People Moving Water: Religious and Secular Perspectives at Play in Legal Water Management. *Quaderni di diritto e politica ecclesiastica*, 21(2), 437-466.

the Judicial Activism, by bringing this duty to Protect Environment be recognised under Part III of the Indian Constitution, for the basic reason that Constitution of India very well provides for a systematic machinery for effective enforcement of Rights and thus, this was only the way by which this duty could be enforced for the protection, preservation and improvement of Environment by manifesting it as a Right, but in reality Environment Protection was and is and in future shall be a DHARMA and DUTY casted upon everyone. So, to say it owes a nature as that of a Right, categorically would go wrong.⁵³

According to Paul W. Taylor (1981)⁵⁴, 'the ethics of respect for nature is made up of three basic elements: a belief system, an ultimate moral attitude, and a set of rules of duty and standards of character. These elements are connected with each other in the following manner. The belief system provides a certain outlook on nature, which supports and makes intelligible an autonomous agent's adopting it; ultimate moral attitude brings forth the respect for nature, that it recognizes the attitude of respect to be the only suitable or fitting attitude to take towards all forms of life. Living beings are now viewed as the appropriate objects of the attitude of respect and are accordingly regarded as entities possessing inherent worth. One then places intrinsic value on the promotion and protection of their good. As a consequence of this, one makes a moral commitment to abide by a set of rules of duty and to fulfill the same, certain standards of good character in which the attitude of respect for nature is manifested. The overall well being of *Homo sapiens* is dependent upon the ecological soundness and health of many plant and animal communities, while their soundness and health does not in the least depend upon human well being! If such has been the tradition, philosophy and ideology of world religions, what then are the reasons behind the present state of environmental crisis? Our ethical beliefs and religious values influence our behaviour towards others, including our

relationship with all creatures and plant life. If, for some reason, these noble values become displaced by other beliefs, which are either thrust upon the society or transplanted from another culture through invasion, then the faith of the masses in their own cultural tradition is shaken. As the foreign culture, language and system of administration slowly takes root and penetrates all levels of society, and as appropriate answers do not come, it is only natural that the people or the locals will become more inward looking and self-centered. Under such circumstances, religious values, which acted, as sanctions against environmental destruction do not retain a high priority and more often than not economic factors display respect for nature.

As evident, policies have been struggling for adequate implementation and the desire to develop has always taken huge toll over the goals of conservation. Agenda conservation will always demand curbs in the lifestyle and policy may always fall short of such influence. Deterrence may also not be able to do the desired. In such situation, rejuvenating the religious aspects for environmental conservation may provide some solution. For this, appropriate researches combining modern science with religious practices will be of help.

⁵³<https://www.lawyered.in/legal-disrupt/articles/environment-protection-dharma-and-duty-which-establishes-code-conduct-every-bhartiya-and-person-arou/>(last visited Jan 6 2021)

⁵⁴ Taylor, P. W. (1981). The ethics of respect for nature. *Environmental ethics*, 3(3), 197-218.