



*International Journal of Humanities & Social Science Studies (IJHSSS)*  
*A Peer-Reviewed Bi-monthly Bi-lingual Research Journal*  
*ISSN: 2349-6959 (Online), ISSN: 2349-6711 (Print)*  
*Volume-II, Issue-I, July 2015, Page No.247-252*  
*Published by Scholar Publications, Karimganj, Assam, India, 788711*  
*Website: <http://www.ijhsss.com>*

---

## **R̥gvedic Perspective on Environment**

**Nibedita Hazra**

*Asst. Teacher, Burdwan Raj Collegiate School, West Bengal, India*

### **Abstract**

*Human & environment has an adhere relation. But human are continuously damaging the environment for maintaining their external happiness. This unbridled damage is spoiling the balance of the environment. Today, realising the importance of the environment, human are trying to eliminate the crisis by organising different programmes in different way. We can mention Vedic Era as source of this awareness. Time to time the definition of the environment changed, but it is found ardour on preservation of the environment in every era. In this article I want to highlight the awareness on environment by the people of ancient India and will only talk about the people of R̥gveda due to the extensive of the Vedas.*

***Key Words: Balance, Environment, R̥gveda, Vedic Era, Vedic Sages.***

---

The main topic of modern science is the environment and its elements. This topic has been described very carefully &with detail. 'Environment' word has been taken from French word 'Environ'.Which means, 'that which surrounds' or 'surrounding circumstances'. Therefore Environment is the surroundings where creature lives in. Today environment is getting polluted for the different reasons as population-exploration, urbanization, industrialisation, abundance of transport, usages of radioactive & chemical substances & natural calamities. As a result, balance of the environment is getting spoiled. The world is moving due to the existence of soulpower.And to continue mobility& protection of the soul power, there is need of favourable environment & its elements. Only favourable environment can give healthy life to the animal. Otherwise it becomes the sufferings of the animal life and occurs existential crises. Animals are mortal. As an animal that is as a human being we may be intelligent from other animals but we cannot deny the death. So, really if we human beings are intelligent, then our duty is to protect the environment & its elements in every possible way. In order that our future generation live a beautiful life & can stay nearer to the nature. Therefore, there is need to protect the environment.

This requirement has been established by the twenty-first century scientists. But the first thought about this were found long time ago in the Vedic era even in Vedic literature. Actually, animal& environment are integral part of this world. Animal can't be imagined without the environment. From the beginning of the creation animal, especially human in fear, in wonder, in respect wants to know the nature for own safety as well as for own virtue.

The world's oldest literature is Vedic literature and the Veda is the first book of human civilization. This book is quarry of social & religious knowledge. Religion, human & nature in these three concepts Vedic thought has been rotated. In ancient India population-exploration did not happen. Population was much lesser. Agriculture & animal husbandry was profession. In the past, biological fertilizer was used. In Vedic era, humans'healthy& simple living kept balance of the

nature. Imagining the mother figure of the nature, human being has served her. Power of nature & its element which are out of control of human, are being greeted with down headed & worshiped as God. Until we have accepted with down headed to the power of the nature, till that time our well-being add provision. Or else it becomes our own suffering. Though, the rays of the sun benefit our environment, but direct vision to the sun rays gives trouble to our eyes. This Vedic mantras are nourished by the prayers to the Godasaccolade, benediction, and description to get things done as per the wish. It doesn't only reflect usefulness & importance, reflect beauty of the beast. In this article will discuss how human beings had imposed God on the environment & its elements with knowing or without knowing & how they had played a leading role in environmental protection.

Though here is a lot hymns found on 'Dyāvāpṛthivī' in the Vedas but only one hymn found on the connection to the earth.<sup>1</sup> Where three mantras described three forms of the earth. In the First *mantra*, the earth is divine as soulful, in the second *mantra* the earth is full of life & in the third *mantra* the earth is firm. In the Vedas the earth has been welcomed as mother in many *mantras*.<sup>2</sup> It has been prayed to the earth that she shall expand herself, as if there are no danger that she has to be inhabitable for us<sup>3</sup>. The earth is heated by the extreme sunlight & get wet by the rainfall by the help of Vayu God. 'Stogo na kṣāmatyeti pṛthvīm mihaṃ ba vāto vi ha vāti bhūma'<sup>4</sup> As if the Vedic Sage want to say-As Mother is blissful to her children likewise the earth is also blissful to the all the animals and as a decent child on all the possible way protects & serves her mother likewise we need to protect & serve our mother earth. The earth not only contains human beings & animals, also hold firmly to the trees & plants in heavy rain<sup>5</sup>.

The rain fall is *Apah*. The Water has been classified in five parts in the era of the R̥gveda as rainwater, cascade, well, lake & river –

**“Yā āpo divyā uta vā sravanti khanitrimā uta vā yāḥ svayamjāḥ  
Samudrārthā yāḥ śucayaḥ pāvakāstā āpo devīraha māmavantu”<sup>6</sup>**

Earlier human had understood the importance & necessity of water. In ancient times, most of the civilization developed based on the river which is another prime source of water. Creature do not live without water; in life of plant also, the importance of water is immense. The physical base of life, protoplasm carries 70-90 percent of water. In Rig-Veda the water has been given status as nectar<sup>7</sup>. Drinking the water, which would made the cattle healthy, that water has been compared to Goddess<sup>8</sup>. That water was not be contaminated. Today, the science, by experimenting have established the presence of various minerals in water. But people of the Vedic era were aware of this fact. So they said-all the medicines & herbs are present in the water. In the R̥gveda it is said that all kinds of therapeutic are available in the water-‘Āpaśca viśbabheṣajīḥ’<sup>9</sup>. And on other *mantras* it is said that water contains all types of herbs<sup>10</sup>.

The cloud that carries water is *parjanya*. This *parjanya* is roaring, showering & benefactor<sup>11</sup>. The surface water of the earth vaporises & showers in the form of rain-This notion of modern science, sounded long before on the voice of Vedic sages.

**‘Mahantaṃ kośamudacā niyīṅca syandantāṃ kūlyā viṣitaḥ purastāt’<sup>12</sup>.**

Water is a very vital element for seed germination. This scientific theory was also known to the Vedic sages<sup>13</sup>. *Parjanya* is producer of food<sup>14</sup> & play vital role on growth of herb & water<sup>15</sup>. Though rain decreases growth of desert, heavy rain can be grave, expecting that, the Vedic sages probably prayed to stop the rain-“Avarṣirvarṣamudu yu gṛbhāyākardhasvanvānyatyetavā.”<sup>16</sup> Who resists dropping out the rain, is *Vritra* & Indra is the God who removes the barrier to drop out the rain<sup>17</sup>.

In the classification of water, on out of five of them, river is one of them. In R̥gveda *Bipāśa*, *Śśatadru* & *Sindhu* etc rivers are mentioned. As a river *Saraswatī* has an important place in the

Veda. Afterwards, river *Saraswatī* has been worshiped as *Vagdevī*. *Saraswatī* that is 'flow of water'. In the *Ṛgveda*, *Sarasvati* in one look is flow of water i.e. river, on another look she is flow of life i.e. women & on other look she is *Viśvajananī*- 'Amvitame nadītame devitame saraswatī'<sup>18</sup>. But the sages of the Vedic era were not stupid to say a river as mother & pray her as the Goddess. They knew all the importance aspect of the river and that is why this river has been given lot of importance in Vedic Era. As said before, in ancient time almost all the civilization was river centric. In the banks of *Saraswatī River*, Vedic culture was expanded in large extent & it is mentioned in the *Ṛgveda*.

**chitro id rājārājakā id an'yakethakesarasbatīmaānu'**<sup>19</sup>.

*Vāyu* is the principal God in the sky. There is no form of air. Air only can be felt by the sound & by touching it<sup>20</sup>. The origin of air is before the rain<sup>21</sup>. As the Vedic sages describes the beneficial form of the air, same way describes the horrific form of air in storm<sup>22</sup>. Vedic sages knew the importance of the air. Life & air both was similar to them. They knew the air of the nature, likewise they also came to know the air in the body. Air sustains life. That's why air is prayed to flow in therapeutics & remove the harmful things-

**"Ā vāta vāhi bheṣajam vi vāta vāhi yadrapaḥ"**<sup>23</sup>

They knew that pollution free air could give long life to human being, that's why they prayed to flow air with all his good qualities.<sup>24</sup>

*Agni* is the principal God in the earth. It is said that the first development of the civilization was discovery of the fire. In the Vedas there are about 200 hymns available on *Agni*. In Vedic era it was found in the Aryans house always *garhapatya agni* was burning, this placed the importance of fire. When the forest become dry or rubbing of woods created forest fire, the Vedic sages were also aware of this- "**Śisriyāṇam bane bane**"<sup>25</sup>.

Quality, Work & depending on the condition of the sun has been recognised in different diverse names like *Savitā*, *Aditya* & *Aryamā* etc. 'Jyotiruttamam' that is, the sun is the best light in the sky. The light of the sun spreads out all over the world- perhaps, imaging this theme in Vedic *mantra* the sun had been named as 'Urucakṣāḥ'<sup>26</sup> & 'Dūredṛṣe'<sup>27</sup>. Sun rays are the source of solar energy. For animals to live a good life, essential need of heat & light where the sun is the main source. The sun shines more than any other star or planets in the sky. Day & night is also decided by the Sun '**Bi dyāmeṣi rajaspr̥thavahā simāno abhuktiḥ**'<sup>28</sup> In the extreme light of the sun, other stars are not visible that also been sounded in the voices of the Vedic sages<sup>29</sup>. The sun rays vaporises the water – '**Yāḥ sūryo raśmibhirātātāna**'<sup>30</sup> In the day where the direct sun rays helps to grow trees, plants, seeds etc. that way in night the moon light which is enlightened through the sun rays, also helpful for the human beings. This truth is known to the Vedic sages that is why they said the hotness & the coldness of the sun to the earth is blessing for human beings<sup>31</sup>. In the scientific look of the sages, its seen, the sun stands for all moving-non-moving, with life-without life- all the soul-

**"Sūryo ātmā jagatastasthūṣaśca"**<sup>32</sup>.

The present government to protect the balance of the environment, impute importance on plantation. Plantation has been taken as festival. But in Vedic era this thing was not counted by the sages. This is because that time nature was covered with plants & the range of the forest was unimaginable-

**"Araṇyānyaraṇyānyasau vā preva naśyasi"**<sup>33</sup>.

'*Araṇyanī*' that is, Queen of the forest who protects plants & animals of the forest. It could be considered that based on this concept, divinity on tree was imposed. This *Araṇyanī* ' is the shelter for deer even for all & mother to all<sup>34</sup>. As the queen of the forest there is *Araṇyanī* ', that way there is '*Vanaspatī* ' i.e. king of the forest. In the *Ṛgveda* the *Oṣadhi* hymn is a subject of medicine &

treatment. Although herbs used to cure the diseases, the Vedic sages feels the pain for the loss of herb tree. So, they prayed to the herbs to born in the soil more in nos<sup>35</sup>. They prayed, being the excavator, they do not get damaged & for whom the digging is going on, he also not to get damaged- **‘Mā vo riṣat kṣnitā yasmai cāhaṃ khanāmi baḥ’**<sup>36</sup> Thinking about the beneficent part of the medicine, the Vedic sages concentrated their thought process on preserving the same. They prayed so that medicine can protect each other –

**‘Anyā vo anyāmatvanyā nyasyā upāvata’.**

**‘Tāḥ sarvāḥ samvidānā idam me pravatā vacaḥ’**<sup>37</sup>.

Today’s Ayurveda treatment root lies in Vedic era, it is proved in this hymn. As mother eliminates the trouble for her child, medicine also cures from diseases, probably that’s why the sages of the Vedic era has imagined medicine as mother of all –

**‘Oṣadhīriti mātaraṣṭadvo devīrūpa vruve’**<sup>38</sup>

The environment & the birds & the animals has a very close relation with each other. In Vedic era animal has been classified in three part. Like animal that flies in the air like bird; wild animal & cattle-**‘Vāyavyānārāṇyān grāmyāśca ye’**<sup>39</sup>. To maintain the balance of the environment, wildlife protection is required. Knowing this, today many of the forest has been declared as sanctuary. Actuary i.e. fearless forest, as an important part of the environment, different wild animals can live fearlessly. Cow, horse, Camel etc. marked as resources, has been mentioned as offering<sup>40</sup>. Whether is to protect the environment or to increase their own wealth, prayers were made to gift the God by donating cow, lamb, horse etc. animals<sup>41</sup>. And also it is heard of prayer to donate donkey & ewe – **‘Śatam me gardabhānām śatamurṇā vatīnām’**<sup>42</sup>. That, donkey is used for different works of home & for dairy or procreation of the animal, importance of the ewe is directed here. Not having the law like as today’s world on preservation of wild animals, the sages of the Vedic era has given importance to the animals & prayed good health for these wild animals<sup>43</sup>.

On the above discussion, it can be said that today’s scientist shall be proud of the sages of the Vedic age on their thought process & imagination on the environment. The sages of the Vedic era has given importance on animals, plants even on the all elements of the environment. In their view, some deterioration of the environment found, and to protect the balance of the environment & to protect the friendly environment, they voiced in deep ardour –

**‘Madhumatīroṣadhīrdyāva āpo madhumanno bhavavantarikṣam**

**Kṣetrasya patirmadhumānno astu....’**<sup>44</sup>

There is stability in between creation & destruction. This stability is protection & must be the security. Creation & destruction may be periodic but security is not permanent but also severe. Human greed, the desire to consumption & extreme dependence on machineries has created ‘Global Warming’. This results to create in acid rain, greenhouse effect, hole in ozone layer etc. resulting serious damage to human health. Today by implementing different law, people are trying to get back the balance in the environment. But implementing law, establishing green bench or creating convention on the earth, will not help to stop the decadence of the earth. This requires willingness & conscious attitude of the people. Today my understanding is that, people have understood that they have caused serious damage to the environment. And today we see people to participate in the ‘movement of Chipko’, ‘Save Narmada movement’, ‘protect the Ganges movement’, ‘Swachha Bharat Aiviyan’ etc. Actually, this environment is ours. So Our sincere effort only possible way to save & protect the environment.

**References:**

1. R̥gveda-5/84
2. Ibid-1/164/33, 10/18/11
3. Ibid-1/22/15
4. Ibid-10/31/9
5. Ibid-5/84/3
6. Ibid-07/49/02
7. Ibid-1/23/19
8. Ibid - 1/23/18
9. Ibid-1/23/20
10. Ibid-1/23/20, 10/9/6
11. Ibid-5/83/1
12. Ibid-5/83/8
13. Ibid-5/83/1,4
14. Ibid-7/102/1
15. Ibid-7/101/2
16. Ibid-5/83/10
17. Ibid-1/40/5, 1/32/12
18. Ibid-2/41/16
19. Ibid-8/21/18
20. Ibid-10/168/4
21. Ibid-10/168/3
22. Ibid-10/168/1
23. Ibid-10/137/3
24. Ibid-10/186/3
25. Ibid-5/11/6
26. Ibid-7/35/8
27. Ibid-10/37/1
28. Ibid-1/50/7
29. Ibid-1/50/2
30. Ibid-7/47/4
31. Ibid-10/37/10
32. Ibid-1/115/1
33. Ibid-10/146/1
34. Ibid-10/146/6
35. Ibid-10/97/2
36. Ibid-10/97/20
37. Ibid-10/97/14
38. Ibid-10/97/4
39. Ibid-10/90/8
40. Ibid-10/6/46-47
41. Ibid-4/2/5
42. Ibid-10/56/3
43. Ibid-1/114/1
44. Ibid-4/57/3

**Bibliography:**

- Anirban, *Veda-Mimansa* (Vol-II & Vol-III) Sanskrit Book Depot, Kolkata, January 2015 (Reprint).
- Aziz, Abdul Al Aman (Ed.) *Rigveda Samhita* (Vol-I, Vol-II), Haraf Prakashani, Kalkata, 1383 (B)
- Bandyapadhyay, Udaychandra. *Veda Sankalan*, (Vol-I, Vol-II) Sanskrit Book Depot, Kolkata, January, 2001.
- Basu, Jogiraj, *Beder Parichay*, Farma KLM Pvt. Ltd. Kolkata 2012 (8<sup>th</sup> Edition)
- Bhattacharya, Bhabani Prasad & Adhikari Taraknath(Ed.). *Vaidic Sankalan*, (Part-I & Part-II), Sanksrit Book Depot, Kolkata, Sept. 2000.
- Bhattacharya, Sukumari. *Prachin Bharat: Samaj O Sahitya*, Ananda Publishers Pvt. Ltd. Kolkata, 1398 (B)
- Ghosh, Bidyut Baran, *Sanskrita Rachanay Pratifalita Paribesh Sachetanata*. Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, Kolkata, 2012 (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition).
- Saha, Biswarup. *Vedic Selections*, Sadesh, Kolkata, 2007.

\*\*\*\*\*