

CHAPTER III

*The ecological ideas in the
Vedas*

The Vedic text is a very old in human civilization. In the far antiquity people develop an advanced civilization. The advancement of a civilization depends upon the thought of the people. Moreover systematic thinking gives new ideas which ultimately lead to the different texts. In Vedic period people have developed such types of texts which are known as Vedas. N. J. Lockyer has said: The Vedas, in fact, is the oldest book in which we can study the first beginnings of our language and of everything which is embodied in all the languages under the sun¹.

The simple and sincere form of worship of environment is mentioned in Vedic texts. Many scholars have come to the conclusion that the Vedas are primarily concerned with cosmology, however, they are not in a position to show that Vedic cosmology has the solutions to the most difficult problems of modern cosmology². Some say, like dramas are played to remember history, the process of various shrauta yajnas describes the science of Cosmology³.

The ecological study is the study of interrelatedness with the all other beings. So this is a study of natural cycles of living and non-living things. Cycle is the periodic revision of any process. In nature every time there is a constant interaction between living world and non-living world with inflow and outflow of matter in equilibrium condition. Any cause for instability in the balance between all beings is properly addressed in a time duration and space. This cycle is called *Rita*, the term coined by Vedic people. It is controlling and sustaining power. In Rigveda it is described as --- It sustains sun in the sky⁴. *Rita* is a universal law which control and monitor everything in the whole universe. S.R.N. Murthy considers it as a law of gravitation i.e. common attractive force present between all beings, in simple form. According to H.W.Wallis - The principle of the order of the world, of the regularity of cosmic phenomena, was conceived by the Rishis to have existed as a principle before the manifestation of any phenomena. The phenomena of the world are shifting and changeable, but the principle regulating the periodical recurrence of phenomena is constant; fresh phenomena are continually reproduced, but the principle of order remains the same; the principle, therefore, existed already when the earliest phenomena appeared⁵.

Meaning *Rita* has an important place in Rigveda. Yaska in his Nirukta takes the term *Ritam* as water and it is derived from $\sqrt{ṛ}$ i.e ‘to go’. Water is called *Rita* as it goes to all lands⁶. All the Indian commentators such as Skandasvamin, Udgitha, Venkata, Madhava, Sayana, etc. have taken *Rita* as to mean sacrifice, or water or truth. But we find different meanings of the same term in different places. All these meanings and explanations are the creation of the post Vedic scholars. So we try to discuss these different approaches to understand the implication of the term *Rita* in the Vedic texts. ‘ From the alternative meaning which the Indian commentators offer for *Rita*, it appears that the true sense of the term was not known to them. Had they got the true sense of *Rita* they would not have given alternative meanings of the term in the same passage. These various meanings ascribed to the word *Rita* by Indian commentators rather seem to be post-Vedic’⁷

Rita is defined by modern scholars in different forms. Roth defines *Rita* as ‘order’ – order in nature, rituals, human life and broadly the order in everywhere. Luders defines *Rita* as truth. *Rita* as truth appears as power subduing the spirits as well as the material world. This belief is something between oath and magic⁸. Max Muller expresses the same view like Roth. He says *Rita* is a straight, direct or right line and in general sense the Law of nature⁹. Oldenberg, Griffith, etc. invariably take *Rita* as to mean ‘Cosmic Law’, or ‘Law Eternal’. Wallis writes : ‘ The word used to denote the conception of order of the world is *Rita*. Everything in the universe which conceived as showing regularity of action may be said to have the *Rita* for its principle. In its most general application the conception expressed by the word occupied to some extent the place of natural and moral law, fate or the will of supreme God’¹⁰.

V.S. Ghate has given the history of the meaning of the word *Rita*. According to Ghate – ‘ This word *Rita* in the Rigveda itself seems to denote three ideas, all allied to each other, or one idea under three aspects owing too the difference of dominions’¹¹. He says that the word *Rita* represents the ‘cosmic order’ in the first stage of development in Rigveda. In this stage *Rita* regulates the recurrences of the natural phenomenon, the rising and setting of sun, the coming of dawns and so on. In the second stage of development of its meaning *Rita* comes to denote the correctness and regularity of the cult of god-worship or sacrifice. It denotes the different types of gods worship, offering oblation, etc. lastly the moral law which every righteous man must observe, is *Rita* which may be described as Satya or truth, its opposite sense being conveyed by

anrita. Visnu Hari has given a different meaning of the word *Rita*. According to him vedic word *Rita* or *Ritasya* Panthah is synonymous with the Zodiacal belt, i.e. the sun's course north and south of the celestial equator¹². He translated the Rigveda 1.136.2 thus : The very wide path of *Rita*, i.e., the Zodiacal belt has become visible for the wide sacrifice. The sun in the Zodiacal belt has become united with the rays¹³. D.P. Joshi holds the idea that *Rita* is the inner balance of human nature and its manifestation to the outer world. According to him – *Rita* like later cosmic idea of *karman* manifests itself through all periods, soon after this cosmic order becomes the settled will of Supreme God – the law of morality and righteousness- just a development from the physical to the divine. What law is in the physical world that virtue is in the moral world¹⁴. C. Kunhan Raja holds the view that *Rita* cannot be identical with *Satya*, for according to him the former is that part which is permanent, unmoving, immutable and unchanging¹⁵. H.D. Velankar, defines *Rita* and *Satya* and has expressed the view that '*Rita* as its derivation suggests, expresses something which is established as an existing fact from beginningless time, something which precedes all, and stands supreme as their foundation.' '*Satya* on other hand', says he, ' refers to a thing which is yet to come into existence and which is expected to correspond to a will that is expressed, or a statement that is made'¹⁶.

Rita is the attributed as its nature and attribute, considering it as cosmic order. ' As to the views of western scholars, who translate *Rita* as ' Cosmic Order', or 'Eternal law', it may be said that this meaning is not the original one. 'Cosmic Order', or 'Eternal law' is attribute of nature. Though the attribute and the attributed are closely related, yet, for the first moment of its production, the latter is regarded as existing without the former. Nature, whose most essential attribute is 'Cosmic Order', should be taken as different from the latter for a moment, without undergoing any change in designation. Thus *Rita* as nature is the attribute and *Rita* as 'Cosmic Order' is attribute¹⁷.

Rigvedic seers were well known in the fact that *Rita* is the primeval cause of the universe and it produces the sky, the fire, the earth, the air etc. in the Rigveda it is stated that from *tapas* were born *Rita* and *Satya* and *Ratri* and then the watery fluid (Rigveda, X.190.1).

ऋतं च सत्यं चाभीद्धात्तपसोऽध्यजयत् ततः रात्र्यजायत् ततः समुद्रो अर्णवः ॥ Rigveda, X.190.1

From this statement it is clear that *Rita* was born first, and it is very subtle wherefrom all the gross objects are formed. Subtle regulates the all process as it is omnipresent and omniscient. The all things observe its order. When this order is disturbed a great chaos will happen and the phenomenon do not obey the order of *Rita*. in Rigveda it is mentioned that gods are the followers of *Rita* and also they are born of *Rita*. Agni is born of *Rita* (Rigveda, I.189.6), sun is born of *Rita* (Rigveda, IV.40.5), Brihaspati is born of *Rita* (Rigveda, II.23.15), Maruts are born of *Rita* (Rigveda, III.54.13). All these passages indicate that *Rita* is itself a procreative power from which all gods have originated.

Rita as nature includes all things of the universe i.e. the sun, moon, earth, air, etc. the sun rising upwards has been described as the pure and lovely face of *Rita* (Rigveda, VI.51.1). In another verse the sun is described as shining in the seat of *Rita* (Rigveda, IV.5.9). The dawn like other luminaries starts her journey from a fixed point in the *Rita* (Rigveda, IV.51.8). The vast earth and heaven belong to *Rita* (Rigveda, IV.23.10).

इदमु त्यत्पुरुतमं पुरस्ताज्ज्योतिस्तमसो वयुनावदस्थात् ।

नूनं दिवो दुहेतरो विभातीर्गतुं कृणवन्नुषसो जनाय ॥ Rigveda, VI.51.1

ता आ चरन्ति समना पुरस्तात्समानतः समना पप्रथानाः ।

ऋतस्य देवीः सदसो बुधाना गवां न सर्गा उषसो जरन्ते ॥ Rigveda, IV.51.8

ऋतं येमान ऋतमिद्वनोत्पृतस्य शुष्मस्तुरया उ गव्युः ।

ऋताय पृथ्वी बहुले गभीरे ऋताय धेनू परमे दुहाते ॥ Rigveda, IV.23.10

Various phenomena of nature are seen in their changing form in different seasons, which are connected with *Rita*. Owing to this connection of seasons with *Rita*, these seasons are called *Ritus*. The year is the wheel of *Rita* with twelve spokes (Rigveda, I.164.11). This wheel moves never ending.

द्वादशारं नहि तज्जराय वर्वर्ति चक्रं परि द्यामृतस्य ।

आ पुत्रा अग्ने मिथुनासो अत्र सप्त शतानि विंशतिश्च तस्थुः ॥ Rigveda, I.164.11

Nature gives all necessary things for existence of all living creatures. If a man enjoys all things, which have been granted to him, he is called a righteous man and when he disobeys the nature he is unrighteous and he should be punished. The beautiful

chirping of bird or the sweet smell of the fragrance of the flowers oozing out from the lawn and garden or spontaneous cool breeze flowing in the evening, all these compels the human beings to open the gate of the sense organs and enjoy their serene presence. All these are the gift received the nature. This is expressed in the (Rigveda, IV.23.8) hymn.

ऋतस्य हि शुरुधः सन्ति पूर्वोर्तस्यऋतस्य धीतिर्वृजिनानि हन्ति ।

ऋतस्य क्षोको बधिरा ततर्द कर्णा बुधानः शुचमान आयोः ॥ Rigveda, IV.23.8

So Rita is used as a term indicating nature in the first stage. It is derived from √r means 'to go'. Nature composed of different types of phenomena. All natural phenomena by nature are ever changing. For example, sun, moon, seasons, years, day and night, etc. all are moving regularly. As these are moving constantly these are called *Rita*. In R̥g veda flowing waters and rivers are called *Ritavari* (Rigveda, III.61.6). *Ritavari* does not mean 'full of water' or 'holy one' or 'truthful'. It only means one who moves. This movement in nature is not irregular. So *Rita* gives the idea of regular or ordered motion. The sacrifice mentioned in Rigveda is also governed by *Rita*. A symbolic sacrifice is mentioned where the spring season was clarified butter, i.e. *ghrita*, the summer was fuel, i.e. *idhma* and autumn season was the oblation, i.e. *havi*. The primordial self i.e. *purusa* was the sacrificial animal to be sacrificed in that sacrifice(Rigveda, X.90.6and15).

यत्पुरुषेण हविषा देवा यज्ञमतन्वत । वसन्तो अस्यासीदाज्यं ग्रीष्म इध्मः शरद्धविः ॥

Rigveda, X.90.6

सप्तास्यासन् परिधयस्त्रिः सप्त समिधः कृताः ।

देवा यद्यज्ञं तन्वाना अबध्ण् पुरुषं पशुम् ॥ Rigveda, X.90.15

Vedic people have a great respect on the mountain. In the early vedic time people used to live in the high mountain. So the mountain valley is the chosen area for settlement of the people. They praise mountain valley as – untouched by time, never lacking green trees and vegetation, with their voices they have caused heaven and earth to hear (Rigveda, X.94,123). They consider that stone present in the mountain is hard and permanent. Due to this quality stone is regarded for use in many purposes in daily life. Mountains with firm rock and high altitude indicate the nearness to the God. Even *Agni* or Fire who eats everything but leaves aside the rock stone. Fire

sometimes burns all trees plants on the mountain and appears like shaved head – Who in his wrath shaves a hill as a barber shaves a head (Rigveda, X.142,144). Stone present in the mountain contains many mineral. Vedic people have this idea and they have the idea of how to recover the minerals from the mountain rock. Agni is required for getting iron mentioned in Atharvaveda, V, 27-28. So mountains are considered to them as the treasure house.

Another important geographical parameter they understand is the importance of rivers. Vedic people are settled on the banks of rivers. River is by nature is flowing continuously with an untiring zeal. Vedic people understand the importance of the flowing river. It is not only the life-giving parameter for the human beings but the life-dynamics of all living beings are closely related with the flowing river. The first major geographic-ecological novelty encountered was the perennial great rivers with abundant supply of running water available for as long as they would settle along the river banks and fields. This would have been a marvelous situation for people coming from dry climates and steppes, no wonder that the rivers are repeatedly eulogized and invoked. Water was hailed as the great cleanser: extensive and intensive agriculture became possible. The dialogue between *rishi* Visvamitra and the rivers (Rigveda, III; 33) now called Beas, formerly Vipasa, and Sutlej, formerly Sutudri, does not only illustrate the sentiment of marvel that the Aryans felt in the presence of the great rivers, but it also shows the urge to gain knowledge through understanding of what goes on in nature; in fact the water cycle is accurately described: evaporation, cloud formation, precipitation, percolation, formation of rivulets and rivers, then the ocean and evaporation again.

प्र पर्वतानामुशती उपस्थादश्वेइव विषिते हासमाने ।

गावेव शुभ्रे मातरा रिहाणे विपाट्छुतुद्री पयसा जवेते ॥ Rigveda, III; 33.1

The hymn also describes how a dam caused by a landslide that blocked the river flow was destroyed by Indra's thunderbolt¹⁸.

Plants in the nature have got a great importance in Vedas. Trees have an important role on this earth, used as the fodder for domesticated animals, for food of human beings, fuel to cook the food items, manure for cultivation, for making furniture, for building house, for making instruments in household purpose, decoration by flower, leaves etc., religious sacraments and for cremation of the dead bodies. Tree worship is

present in the earliest stage of human civilization. Speaking of the natural tendencies of tree worship James Ferguson says :

Where we miss the point of contact with our religious notion is when we ask how anyone could hope that a prayer addressed to a tree was likely to be responded to, or how an offering presented to such an object could be appreciated. Originally it may have been that a divinity was supposed to reside among the branches, and it was to this spirit that the prayer was first addressed, but anyone who has watched the progress of idolatry must have observed how rapidly minds at a certain stage of enlightenment weary of the unseen and how willingly they transfer their worship to any tangible or visible object. An image, a temple, a stone or tree may thus become an object of adoration or of pilgrimage and when sanctified by time, the indolence of the human mind too gladly contents itself with an idol which previous generations have been content to venerate¹⁹.

In Rigvedic period trees are treated as different embodiments of God. Entire hymn is dedicated to their praise (Rigveda, 10.97).

या ओषधीः पूर्वा जाता देवेभ्यस्त्रियुगं पुरा । मनै नु बभ्रुणामहं शतं धामानि सप्त च ॥

Rigveda, 10.97.1

The sacrificial items are deified. The sacrificial post is praised in Rigveda, 3.8 mantra. Several terms are used in Rigveda mantra. Generally Vriksas and Virudh are used in Rigveda and Samhitas. The most celebrated plant Soma is mentioned in Rigveda. The whole of the ninth mandal of Rigveda and six hymns in other mandalas are devoted to the praise of the plant. Other trees are mentioned in Rigveda are salmali or silk cotton tree, khadira, sinsapa and vibhidaka. In Atharvaveda the two trees sami and plaksa are mentioned. Iksu or sugarcane was also cultivated in the vedic period. In Rigveda and Atharvaveda the flower bearing trees are mentioned as pavan or palasa, lotus and kumuda; the fruit bearing trees are urvaruk, karkandhu, kuvala, udumbara, khajura and biva are mentioned in Rigveda and Atharvaveda. According to Theodore Goldstucker, “ Soma (Moonplant or Asclepias Acida) is in the Vedic hymns, the God who represents this plant, and one of the most popular deities of the Vedic religion”²⁰.

In Rigveda Soma is praised as creator :

These herbs, these milch-kine and these running waters, all these, O Soma, thou hast generated. The spacious firmament has thou expanded and with light thou hast dispelled the darkness. (Rigveda, 1.91.22)

त्वमिमा ओधधीः सुम विश्वास्त्वमपो अजनयस्त्वं गाः ।

त्वमा ततन्थोर्वऽन्तरिक्षं त्वं ज्योतिषा वि तमो ववर्थ ॥ Rigveda, 1.91.22

The following Rigvedic hymn illustrates the importance of trees during that period:

कथा महे रुद्रियाय ब्रवाम कद्राये चतकितुषे भगाय ।

आप ओषधीरुत नोऽवन्तु द्यौर्वना गिरयो वृक्षकेशाः॥

शृणोतु न ऊर्जा पतिर्गिरः स नभस्तरीयाँ इषिरःपरिज्मा ।

शृण्वन्त्वापः पुरो न शुभाः परि सुचो बबृहाणस्याद्रेः ॥ Rigveda, 5.41, 11-12

May plants, the waters and the sky preserve us, and woods and mountains with their trees for tresses... May the swift wanderer, Lord of refreshments, list our songs, who speeds through cloudy heaven. And may the waters, bright like castles, hear us, As they blow onward from the cloven mountain. (Rigveda, 5.41, 11-12)

Atharvaveda offers a prayer for protection against wild animals:

Up from here have stridden three—tiger, man, wolf, Since hey ! go the rivers, hey ! the divine forest tree. Hey ! Let the foes bow. (Atharvaveda, 4.3,1)

A prayer is offered for the growth of vanaspati:

Vanuspatis mount up with a hundred branches, that we may mount with a thousand, thou whom the sharpened hatchet has brought for great auspiciousness. (Rigveda, 3.8.11)

In Atharvaveda trees are considered as lord of the forests and can deliver man from sin:

We call on God, on the trees, lords of forests, herbs and plants, on the learned teacher, a vedic scholar and the sun may they deliver us from sin. (Atharvaveda, 11.6.1)

There are prayers to God for the purpose of making plants and herbs sweet and invigorating:

May the plants and herbs be sweet (i.e. efficacious for all). May the heavens, the waters and the mid-regions be all sweet (i.e. healthful and invigorating) for us. May the producer of grains and vegetables be sweet (i.e. friendly and helpful) for us. Let us follow him (act according to his wishes and conveniences) being free from disease and trouble of any sort.

(Rigveda, 4.57 .3)

Vedic seers are well known about the medicinal quality of plants and herbs :

The plants, described by learned sage, (Angiras) which the eagles and the heavenly raghats (falcons) know, which the birds and the flamingos know, which all winged creatures know, which all wild animals know, I call them all to aid this ailing man. (Atharvaveda, 8.7.24)

याः सुपर्णा आङ्गिरसीर्दिव्या या रघटो विदुः। वयांसि हंसा या विदुर्याश्च सर्वे पतत्रिणः।

मृगा या विदुरोषधीस्ता अस्मा अवसे हुवे ॥ Atharvaveda, 8.7.24

Atharvaveda claims the ability of herbs and plants in controlling the age of human beings :

Ye arise: it is thundering and crashing, Ye plant, since Parjanya (the God of rain) is favouring you, O children of Prisni (the spotted cloud) with his seed (water).

The strength of this Amrita (ambrosia) do we give this man to drink. Moreover, I prepare a remedy, that he may live a hundred years. (Atharvaveda, 8.7.21-22)

उज्जिहीध्वे स्तनयत्यभिक्रन्दत्योषधीः । यदा वः पृश्निमातरः पर्जन्यो रेतसावति ।

तस्यामृतस्येमं बलं पुरुष पाययामसि । अथोकृणिमि भेषजं यथासच्छथायनः ॥

Atharvaveda, 8.7.21-22

In Atharvaveda says that certain plant can remove the sinful or evil effect:

यद् दुष्कृतं यच्छमलं यद् वा चेरिम पापया ।

त्वया तद् विश्वतोमुखापामार्गाप मृज्महे ॥ (Atharvaveda, 7.65.2)

Whatever evil we have done, whatever vile or sinful act, with thee, O Apamarga, who lookouts all ways, we wipe it off.

पुमान् पुंसः परिजातोऽश्वत्थः खदिरादधि ।

स हन्तु शत्रुन् मामकान् यानहं द्वेष्मि येच माम ॥

Asvatha and Khadira these two plants have been introduced as the protector of enemies and evil spirits whom I hate despise. (Atharvaveda, 3.6.1)

In Rgveda there is a hymn of six slokas which are devoted to the Goddess or chief guardian of the forest. Through these slokas sages describe the importance of the chief of the forest. Feminine figure is the chief of the whole forest. Forest is cooperative existence of different species. Some are originated from plant, some originated from animal and other from microbes. So relation or cooperation with intra species and

inter species is a continuous process going on in the forest system. From forest many types of trees, creepers, grass etc. like plant bodies are produced. Similarly tiger, elephant, wolf, fox, deer, snake, etc. different types of animals are originated. Many fungal bodies with different forms are present in every forest. As Mother Goddess she creates all the beings, gives nourishment to all and preserves all. This is the idea behind the consideration of feminine figure as the chief of the forest. This Goddess is addressed as Aranyani. She is the part of the whole cosmic order. In this cosmic order everything is sacred. All these are the part and parcel of one rhythm.

‘Aranyani is sacred as part of *r̥ta*, the Cosmic Law and order and because all Nature is sacred not because it was created, but because it is intrinsically sacred. She is sacred as a mother who gives all she has and in turn requests only respect and love; she is sacred because she must be well taken care of to enable her to carry on the work of her own generous self. She is a deity in the sense that she is an abstract-form, the summation and integration of a concept that cannot be seen physically as a separate self-contained body, she can only be sensed through her parts and works; she is a deity with her own attributes, forms and functions; she is elusive and beyond grasp; she is perhaps better represented mentally as the spirit of the jungle. As appropriate of the feminine nature and of all mothers, although selfless and generous, she may cause death if ill-treated, misused or insulted by the wayfarer, the villager or 'another' (verse 5) who does not know her manners and restrictions²¹.

All forests are sacred in India and each has a presiding deity. The name of the deity is named in different name in different place. Everyone has to pay respect her before entering into the forest. In latter time many stories are written in the form of episode to describe the power and greatness of the Goddess. If she pleases she gives the best things like wood item, edible seeds, honey, gums, eggs, animals as food items. But who do not care her and try to vilify her sanctity she does all types of harm even death.

All sacred forests in India, and once upon a time all forests were sacred, have a presiding deity, a protectress, each with a different name proper to the place, but almost always it is a female deity whose general connotations are the same everywhere and who is to be worshipped to ensure protection before entering and using the forest. Everywhere there are endless stories of hunters or gatherers or woodcutters who entered the forest without having propitiated the deity or did not ask her permission to carry out their business or did not offer puja. They were severely

punished to the point of losing their life under an elephant's foot or a tiger's teeth or a snake bite or a poisonous plant. On the other hand, rich rewards are given to those who have acquitted themselves of their duty towards the queen. The duties towards Arariyani vary from place to place and from person to person; they may refer to the season or time for particular activities, such as collecting fuel-wood or grasses and leaves and branches for worship or fodder or thatching; or honey and plants for medicines and food, or edible seeds and fruits, or wax, oils and essences, gums, eggs, bigger animals for food and hides and horns, fish and so on. Whatever the item collected or allowed to be grazed upon, must be harvested in a moderate manner, with gratitude and leaving enough in place for conservation and replacement. This is the law of jungle must be obeyed by all²².

अरण्यानि अरण्यानि असौ या प्रऽइव नश्यसि ।

कथा ग्रामम् न पृच्छसि न त्वा भीऽइव विन्दती ॥१॥

बृषऽरवाय वदते यत् उपऽअवति चिच्चिकः ।

आधातिभिऽइव धावुन् अरण्यानिः महीपते ॥२॥

उत गावऽइव अदन्ति उत वेश्मऽइव दृश्यते ।

उतो इति अरण्यानिः सायम् शकतीऽइव सर्जति ॥३॥

गाम् अङ्ग एष आ ह्वयति दारु अङ्ग एषः अप अवधीत् ।

वसन् अरण्यान्याम् सायम् अक्रुक्षत् इति मन्यते ॥४॥

न वै अरण्यानिः हन्ति अन्यः च इत् न अभिऽगच्छति ।

स्वादोः फलस्य जग्ध्वाय यथाऽकामम् नि पद्यते ॥५॥

आञ्जनऽगन्धिम् सुरभिम् बहुअन्नाम् अकृषिऽवलाम् ।

प्र अहम् मृगाणाम् मातरम् अरण्यानिम् अशंसिषम् ॥६॥

The Goddess of the forest is present in everywhere of the forest. She is immediately vanished in the path of the sight of human beings. She does not feel afraid in staying inside the forest because all parts of the forest is her own body.

In the forest she is never alone. Insects in the forest are creating a continuous sound cici. Moreover other animals make their characteristics sounds. If anybody stands still

inside the forest feels a silence. In this silence also a sound is still present and ringing continuously. All these sounds are nothing but the sound of the life present in the forest. It is a some sort of the expression of the life in the forest. This expression of life is changing continuously from day to night, from season to season, from place to place.

In the evening when the cattle and other animals goes to the distant village for rest. She is ever attentive and invigorating with life energy. She is actively regenerating the forest elements in the ecosystem cycle where the constant cyclic process of the conversion of matter into energy is going on.

In the forest each one is pursuing the duty. Someone is grazing the cattle, someone is collecting the wood items, others are engaged in different activities abiding the law of the forest. But if they do not know the rule of the forest and transgress it, he immediate faces the darkness or night. The darkness is the sign of the night. It is fearful to all beings. Darkness is fearful because all fell some unnatural feeling in darkness, a feelings of death.

She is providing all who are abiding the rule of the forest with respect. She gives all items of the forest for their nourishment or wellbeing. But she is equally dreadful to all who disobey the rule in a vindictive attitude.

She is called queen, mother of the all natural beings, plants, animals, winds, etc. All beings are exists in her fold. Mother forest is sweet scented and balm of plenty as she does not do effort of cultivation but is the store house of plenty of food. As mother is a figure who is the store house of food for her offspring. Similarly sages of the Veda has described the forest as mother, a repository house of food, sustainer of life process on the earth.

The mother in a house is serving, protecting and fragile. She is all time do sort of duties to all members of her family with utmost sincerity and care. So mother in a house is always respected, loved and revered by all the house mates. Similarly forest as mother who is provider and doing all nourishment to all, should be respected, loved and revered.

‘Aranyani is the forest personified for the sake of a more direct, more physical tangible representation of the complex entity that is the forest ecosystem; consequently the concise hymn dedicated to the spirit, or the essence of the forest, is as beautiful, suggestive and awe inspiring as the forest itself. For this reason it is a hymn without a second. The generous forest, giver of all, dangerous and protective,

powerful and fragile, is to be cherished, respected, loved and revered in the same manner as the Lady of the House is cherished, respected, loved, revered and obeyed by husband, in-laws, sons, dependents, domestic animals and the whole clan, who all equally depend on her wisdom, experience and resilience. The Lady of the Forest and the Lady of the Household are the depositaries of strength, power and endurance of their respective ecosystems, the forest and the family'²³.

In the latter period Aranyani is mentioned as the term which includes trees, animals, water body, other items included in the forest. So the term Aranyani is developed as an independent part of the earth's ecosystem. Its ecology is a continuous giving and taking process among the constituent beings present in the forest with a balance dynamics. Any time any dislocation caused due to some impairment in the dynamics gives some adverse effect leading to some casualty of any of the constituents.

Big, gigantic and huge appearance of the trees is the guardian of a deep forest and they are called Vanaspati - Lord of the Forest. They are usually called Vanaspati or lord of the Forest. Vanaspati is the Lord of the forest is due its big appearance, usefulness and helpfulness to humankind. From sacrificial post, utensils, fire generating items, food items, soma juice preparation, item for making house for man, furniture for civilized society, etc. in all cases products of tree are highly useful to human need.

'Vanaspati is the Lord of the forest because of its stature, strength, usefulness and above all because he is wood. Wood burns, it is the food of Lord Agni and the *aranis* are made of wood; the sacrificial post, the *yupa*, is made of wood; the container for the pressed soma juice was made of wood and in a similar manner, the container for pressed grapes juice is traditionally still made of wood. Of 'good forest wood' is made the boat which will carry physically and symbolically the bride and bridegroom to the other margin of the river after the wedding is over (contemporary marriage mantra). To this day wine is kept in wooden casks, oak wood being the best; oak is one of the most imposing of the giant trees. Finally (Rigveda, X; 101) the most important structures of nomadic and settled Vedic man, the chariot as well as the beams, doors and windows of the house were made of wood. Some utensils and tools, the hoe and the plough themselves were, and still are, made of wood. Logically, frequent invocations and requests for blessings are addressed to Vanaspati.

Vanaspati is also the Lord of all the plants and animals which live in the domain that he oversees from his roots in the soil up to the lofty, majestic height of the canopy. Alive and standing, the tree overrules the living forest and when recumbent over his mother's bosom (Rigveda. III; 8, 1) after being felled by age or man, he becomes the material for the worship of all gods by nourishing Agni who sublimates the material into spirit and is the intermediate between man and the Supreme²⁴.

Followings are the portion of Vedas describes trees or plants as –

Lord of the forest, rise with a hundred branches, so that with thousand branches we may rise to greatness— Rigveda. III. 8. 11

वनस्पते शतवल्शो वि रोह सहस्रवल्शा वि वयं रुहेम ।

यं त्वामय स्वधितिस्तेजमानः पर.णिनाय महते सौभगाय ॥ Rigveda. III. 8. 11

Soma is called the Lord of medicinal plants and it is said that Soma's glories are in the plants..... Rigveda. I.23. 20 – Rigveda. X; 97

अप्सु मे सोमो अब्रवीदन्तर्विश्चानि भेषजा ।

अग्निं च विश्वशम्भुवमापश्च विश्वभेषजीः ॥ Rigveda. I.23. 20

May you ever gracious us with blessings..... Rigveda. VII; 34.

तन्न इन्द्रो वरुणो मित्रो अग्नेराप ओषधीर्वनिनो जुषन्त ।

शर्मन्त्याम मरुतामुपस्थे यूयं पात स्वस्तिभिः सदा नः ॥ Rigveda. VII. 34. 25

In Vedas there is co-existence between man and his environment is found. Man is highly towards to its natural surroundings. Man in vedic period has established the friendly relationship with the animals. Gradually, with passage of time people try to overpower other species also.

During perhaps more than 99 percent of man's history so far, man's religion has been neither the worship of himself nor the quest of the rational-spiritual reality behind the phenomenon of the Universe. It has, as we have noted, been the worship of the forces of non-human nature : animals, trees, stones, earth, water, winds, rain, storm, sun, moon and stars. Throughout the food gathering stage of human history, which has been the first stage of it and by far the longest stage so far, mankind was at the mercy of non-human nature; and we worship things in whose power we feel ourselves to be. Conversely, we cannot worship things that we have mastered; and since man has mastered nature the primeval religion of nature-worship has receded²⁵.

Animal worship is prevalent in ancient vedic period because people consider that whole creation comes out from the one supreme Brahman. In this creation sky, planets, stars, sun and moon all are created from the one Brahman. Similarly animals, birds, trees, flowers, rivers, mountains etc. are also originated from one being. So man are very much like to interact with surrounding animals. It is represented in the Atharvaveda:

त्वज्जातास्त्वयि चरन्ति मर्त्यास्त्वं बिभर्षि दिवपदस्त्वं चतुष्पदः । तवेमे पृथिवी पञ्च
मानवा येभ्यो ज्योतिरमृतं मरत्येभ्य उद्यन्त्सूर्यो रश्मिभिरातनोति ॥ Atharvaveda,

12.1.15

Born on Thee, on Thee move mortal creatures;
Thou bearest them – the biped and the quadruped;
Thine, O Earth, are the five traces of men, to whom,
Mortals, Surya (sun) as he rises spreads,
With his rays the light that is immortal. (Atharvaveda, 12.1.15)

Vedic people are very much cautious about the importance of the cow and the utility of cow in the daily human life. They have praised in many names to indicate the utility of cow. Several legends are depicted to describe the power and divinity of the cow.

Parjanya, Soma, Agni and Rudra are all Vedic deities represented as bull-gods. The importance of cattle in Vedic India was not merely economic; animals also fulfilled significant ritualistic and symbolic roles in Vedic society. Cow's milk and dairy products were used in ceremonies and offered as oblations to Gods. Towards the end of the Vedic period, cow dung and (clarified butter) were used in religious ceremonies for purification. Most of the animals domesticated today were domesticated in India in the remote period of the Rigveda. These include cows, goats, sheep, buffalo, dogs and elements. The cow, however, has been sacred since the time of Rigveda. The cow has also been regarded as a goddess.

Several legends of Kamadhenu narrated the power of the cow to bestow bliss, happiness, sons and wealth upon human beings. Kamadhenu, "wishcow," is a miraculous cow of plenty who can give her owner whatever he desires. Also known as Surabhi, Kamadugha, and Nandini, she first appeared on earth in the churning of the ocean. Her usefulness as a source of milk with rich medicinal properties for health cannot be denied even nowadays. As a religious duty in the form of cow worship,

people in brahmanical age were enjoined to accord the animal sanctification, protection, and honour.

In Rigveda, the cow is accepted as Adhni, worthy of protection and bestower of fortune. Macdonell and Keith, for example, cite in the Rigveda and Atharvaveda the frequent use of the stem Aghnya/ Aghni (not to be slain) in reference to cattle as an indication of the animal's sanctity.

सूयवसाद्भगवती हि भूया अथो वयं भगवन्तः स्याम ।

अद्वितृणमध्न्ये विश्वदानी पिब शुद्धमुदकमाचरन्ती ॥ Rigveda, 1,164.40

O Aghnye! mayst thou be rich in milk through abundant fodder; that we also may be rich (in abundance), eat grass at all seasons; and, roaming (at will) drink pure water. (Rigveda, 1,164-40)

Killing of animals for food was prevented in Rigveda. Any person committing such an act is called Yatudhan :

The Yatudhan who fills himself with the flesh of man, and he who fills himself with the flesh of man, and he who fills himself with the flesh of horses or of other animals, and he who steals the milk of cows – Lord cut off their heads with thy flame. (Rigveda, 10.87.16)

Animals are also prevented from being killing in Yajurveda, where it is mentioned that the service to animals is an pious activity:

No person should kill animals helpful to all and by serving them one should obtain happiness. (Yajurveda, 13.47)

It is also mentioned in the same Upanishad that king should punish the man who has killed the animals:

O King! You should never kill animals like bullocks useful for agriculture or like cows which give us milk and all other helpful animals and must punish those who kill or do harm for such animals. (Yajurveda, 13.94)

तुभ्यमारण्याः पशवो मृगा वने हिता हंसाः सुपेणा शकुन्ता वयांसि ।

तव यक्षं पशुपते अप्स्वेऽन्तस्तुभ्यं क्षरन्ति दिव्य आपो वृधे ॥

For thee were forest beasts and sylvan creatures placed in the wood, and small birds, swans and eagles. Food, lord of beasts! Contain thy living beings: to smell thy strength flow the celestial water. (Atharvaveda, 10.2.24)

शिशुमारा अजगराः पुरीकया जषा मत्स्या रजसा येभ्यो अस्यसि

न तै दूरं न परिष्ठास्ति ते भव सद्यः सर्वान् परि

पश्यसि भूमिं पूर्वस्माद्धंस्युत्तरस्मिन् समुद्रे ॥

Porpoises, serpents, strange aquatic monsters, fishes and things unclean at which thou shortest. Nothing is far for thee, naught checks thee, Bhaga! The whole earth in a moment thou surveyest. From the east sea thou smites in the northern. (Atharvaveda, 10.2.25)

The ecological understandings of the Vedic people revealed from the Vedic literatures are manifested in different directions.

People in the vedic times feel oneness with the surrounding nature. This oneness ultimately gives the idea of interconnected principle i.e. all are connected through one principle. Their connectedness with nature is expressed by various hymns of Vedas—we solicit the happiness afforded by the hills, the rivers, the sun.... Rigveda. VIII; 31, 10

Vedic people live with nature with meditation and introspection. Ultimate they solve the doubts through their ingenious wisdom. They consciously feel to keep these treasure of knowledge intact form and develops an eco-friendly teaching-learning process. They teach their successors in two ways firstly by citing examples of the surrounding nature and secondly by chanting or repeating the mantras with correct rhythm and appropriate pronunciation

People are very clever to utilize the nature for their well beings. Use of fire and its use to extract the minerals like iron from the ore are known to them. 'By the rta the Angirasa have broken the rock and cleft it asunder'..... Rigveda. IV; 3, 11. They use the plants and animals for their needs. One example is the use of soma juice as invigorating liquor for strengthening the body and mind. They have developed the ethnological, scientific and technological knowledge from taking lesson of the surrounding nature.

Vedic people know the use of fire to improve the taste and nutrition value of the food. They know the process to keep the food items for a long time. The fermentation is the process by which milk, fruit juice etc. are converted to more stable food items i.e. curds, cheese, wine, etc. Moreover people are sometime could not consume the pure food items. But the fermentation process is the digestion by the microbes makes the food items healthier for body.

People know the biological cycle present on the earth in vedic time. They know the water cycle present on the earth, Earth as the provider and holding substance of all beings, Air dynamics as the principle of life flow, fire as thermodynamic principle and latter in Atharvaveda Ether as the unified principle of all sorts of forces.

People regard plants and plant world as living entity. So they can easily personify them as different deities helpful for human beings. They pay love and respect to all plants like some close relative of any human being. These give all sorts of hymns where plants are depicted as their benefactors. Concept of sacred forest is generated from this idea. Where all living kingdom are staying with cooperative, symbiosis and participative zeal.

In vedic time peoples are very much feeling for the other animals in surroundings. They easily understand their useful role in human civilization. One of the timid and gentle animal is cow which is attracted to much attention to the vedic people. They understand the utilities of cow in a community living pattern. So they described cow as powerful deity which can satisfy all types of wishes of the human beings.

The follow diagram schematically expresses the above concepts regarding the ecological concept and environmental awareness of the people present in Vedic time from the vedic text.

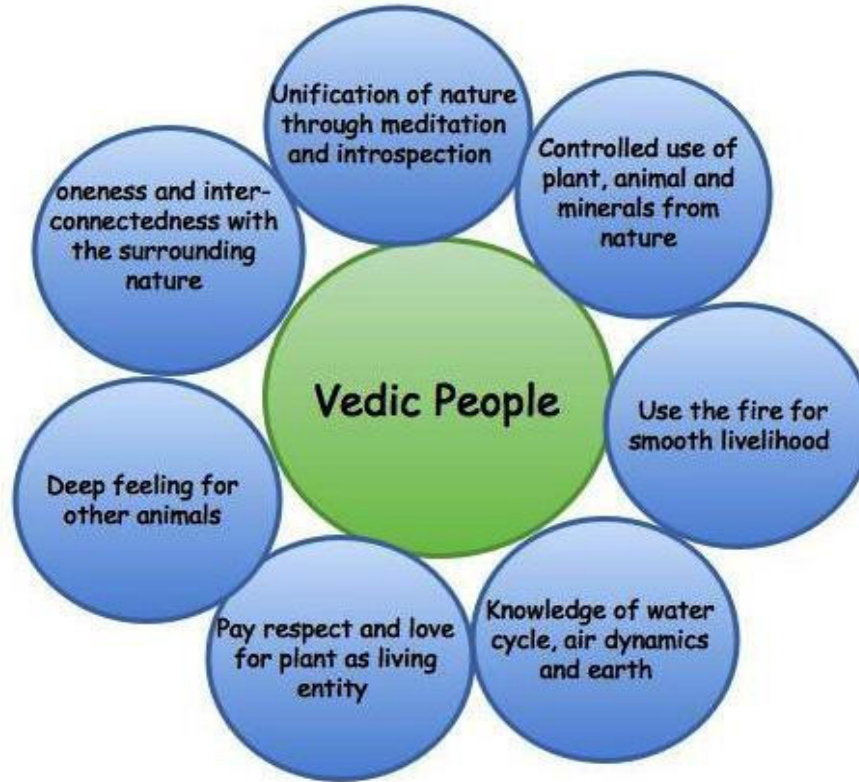


Diagram-5: Environmental awareness of the Vedic people

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