



Ecocentrism in India: An Incredible Model of Peaceful Relation with Nature

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Abstract:

This article highlights the importance of traditional knowledge, culture and tradition practices in achieving sustainable development. Indian civilization is one of the most primitive and sustainable civilizations of the world. This review contains the description of eco-centric approach of different religions, community, ethnic groups and sects of India. It quotes the traditional practices to safeguard the environment. It has the description of sacred groves, environmental laws and some of the most significant environmental movements of India. The active participation of females in these environmental movements has also been mentioned. Every civilizations has its links with nature. We need to look back and incorporate the sustainable strategies our forefathers had adopted to establish peaceful coexistence with nature.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Bishnois, Chipko movement, Ecocentrism, Ecofeminism, India, Sthalavriksha

1.0 Introduction:

"Nature can cater to man's need but cannot cater to man's greed" is recently realized by humans as in the race of prospecting and industrialization, we never cared for nature and natural resources. As tiny rain drops become flood so are these minute negligence has led to global events like ozone hole, green house effect and climatic changes. In the present technocentric world where it is quoted "Change is only permanent" we are reminded about an important saying "Old is Gold". The Hebrew quote says "wisdom is more precious than rubies (NKJV, 1982). It has been rightly said "A wise man has great power, and a man of knowledge increases strength. For waging war you need guidance, and for victory many adviser (NKJV, 1982). The war against the melting ice caps at poles, acceleration in extinction rate, global climatic changes, have pushed man kind to look back in the system which may hold the future its existence. This review is a curtain raiser to understand Indian cultural system which encapsulates the environmental protection, making man to coexist in complete harmony with the nature. This review may be used as roadmap to protect the further damage to environment.

Ancient civilizations originated and spread in close association with nature. All civilizations evolved by

balancing the human needs and surrounding environment. Indian civilization is one of the oldest civilizations of the world. Archaeological excavation and literature clearly reveal; the people of Harappa, Mohanjodaro and around the Indus river basin (2500 BC) had well organised sanitary and drainage systems(A walk through lothal, 1998-2010). The fruit trees planted along Grand Trunk road in the Mauryan Period, later renovated by Sher Shah Suri, are maintained by Indians (Bond, 2006)shows the consciousness of King about the plantation.

Indians enjoy the plethora of natural resources endowed to them by their ancestors. It has rich and diverse ecosystems (Sridharan and Pachauri, 2003). India ranks among the top ten biological diversities on the earth and shows a high degree of endemism(MoEF, 2009). The rich natural resources which people enjoy today are the result of wise resource management and allocation strategies followed by their ancestors. Environment protection and sanitation were attributes of the Vedic culture(Thakur, 2007). Indian traditional medical system, *Ayurveda* is not only a system of herbal medicines but it also inculcates religion and philosophy as well(Lad, 1984). Indians developed several social, religious and cultural norms to preserve their natural heritage. This review contains very striking information on "how communities

enjoyed a healthy relationship with the environment which is still reflected in its lively culture". The manuscript aims at motivating people from different part of the world to peep into their history and develop interest in environment care. It will also act as guide for policy makers and environmentalist to evolve a more effective way for achieving sustainable development.

2.0 Extracts from Ancient Literature and Mythology

Indian civilization was always dominated by diversity in cultures, traditions, languages and religions. All these diversities have influenced aspects of life and the environment in their own unique way. India's ancient civilization, Harrapan civilization (2500 BC-1750 BC) originated and flourished on the bank of river Indus. The *Pasupati Mahadeva* i.e., the lord of animals (Proto-Shiva) was the chief male deity in the civilization. This has been depicted on seals (Mohenjo-Daro seal No. 420) as a central figure seated in yogic posture; surrounded by four animals as stated by the famous archeologist Sir John Hubert Marshall. However, there have been some contradiction about the actual identity of this deity (Srinivasan, 1984). Literature depicting environmental concern in India can be traced back around 321 BC. Kautilya's Arthashastra documents ancient Indian environmental laws. The Mauryans (400 BC to 5th Century AD) were the first to consider forests as resources. They considered elephant to be the most important product from the forest. Military power in those times depended not only upon horses and troops but also battle-elephants. They were dependent on forests for the supply of elephants. They tamed and trained them for war by the Chief of elephants(Kautilya, 1992). Kautilya's *Arthashastra* mentions the responsibilities of the officials to protect the forests as it sustains elephants. They were even ordered to kill anyone slaying an elephant (Rangarajan, 2001).

2.1 Vedic literature and Hindu mythology (Origin: about 2000 BCE)

The documented history of Indian religions begins with the religious practices of the early Indo-Aryans. These were collected and later compiled into the *Samhitas* (usually known as the Vedas). There are several literary document and sculptures which inscribes sustainable relation between man and nature. It is reported that there are four major Vedas (2500 to 1500 B.C.) namely; the *Rig*, the *Sama*, the

Yajur and the *Atharva* which forms one of the oldest literatures in the world.

The *Rigveda* describes the various components of eco-system which were later rediscovered by modern scientists. It states the plant as "God for Gods" thus giving it precedence above mythological God *Indra* (god of rain and thunderstorms) and the other Gods (Griffith, accessed 2013). Cutting or uprooting the green trees has been described sinful job; as it may break the food chain and thus may bring instability in the ambience (Goel and Goel, 2005). The nature has been personified and worshiped as different gods. The *Rigveda* has a description of 33 gods distributed in the three divisions of the universe, i.e., earth, air and heaven(Upinder 2008). Some of the Vedic deities representing the phenomenon of nature are :- *Indra*, *Maruts* (the storm deities), *Vāyu* (the god of wind), *Parjanya* (the god of rain and water), *Jal* (the god of water), *Prithivi* (the earth), *Dyaus* (the god of sky), *Agni* (the fire god), *Varuna* (the god of the sky, water and celestial ocean, as well as the god of law), *Mitra* (the god of friendship and alliances), *Savitr* (the solar deity), *Pusan* (the pastoral god), *prajapati* (the lord of creatures), *Asvins* (the god of wonder works and miraculous healing power), *Gandharvas* (the aerial spirits), *Surya* (the Sun), the goddesses *usas'* (dawn) and *Ratri* (night). It also states that the sun causes evaporation and brings rainfall (Prasoon, 2008). *Surya* has also been enchanted in the sacred *Gayatri mantra/hymn*(Radhakrishnan, 1953). Many rivers have been recietd in the *Nadistuti* (prayer of river) hymns of the *Rigveda*(Chopra et al., 2003). The river Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati finds a special place in Indian cultural and social traditions. They are respected as mothers. Even mountains like the *Kailash*, the *Barabar* and the *Govardhan* are considered sacred. They are believed to be associated with some gods or goddesses. The *Samaveda* mainly contains verses. These singing hymns are mostly taken from the *Rigveda*.

The *Yajurveda* mainly contains information about rituals(Gonda, 1975). It emphasizes to protect the animals as they are extremely important and helpful to environment. A ruler should never kill animals which are useful in agriculture like bullocks or cows which gives us milk. It is a punishable crime if a person kills or harms such animals. Killing is considered as the most sinful act in Hindu religion (Mandalia et al., 2012). It also states the significance

of the sun. This type of religious believe and sacredness has kept public away from exploiting these natural resources. The *Atharveda* states the relationship between green plants and the sun in maintaining the atmospheric conditions needed for the perpetuation of life on this planet. It states that plants and herbs destroy the poison 'pollutants'. In fact it establishes the significance of the sun as the ultimate source of energy on earth and green plants as primary producer. It also says about the detoxifying property of plants and herbs which help in bio-remediation and maintenance of healthy biogeochemical cycle. The significance of purity and quality of water has also been highlighted. It talks about herbal ways of treatment of diseases (Bloomfield, accessed 2013). It also considers the killing of innocent animals to be a sinful act(BBC, 2009).

The nature and religion have been directly connected in practically most of the religious scriptures. In Hindu religion different animals and birds are associated with different gods or goddesses and are adulated. So, their protection and preservation has been emphasized. The bird *Garuda* (eagle) is considered as the vehicle of Lord *Vishnu*, *Hansa* (goose) as the vehicle of goddess *Saraswati*, *Nandi* (a bull) as the vehicle of *Shiva*, the *Airavata* (an elephant) as the vehicle of *Indra*, the national bird of India, Peacock as the vehicle of Lord *Kartik* and seven horses as vehicle of *Surya*(the Sun). Owl and Rat as vehicles of Goddess *Laxmi* and Lord *Ganesha* respectively. Animals have also been deitified in Hindu religion. For instance, *Airawat*- the king-god of elephant, *Kamdhenu*- the sacred cow deity and *Shesh Naag*- the serpent god (Bansal, 2005). All these examples show that there is compassion for animals amongst Hindus of India. The *Purana* (4th century AD); one of the holy books of Hindus states that sacred basil (*Ocimum sanctum*) brings fortune if planted in the house (Padam Puran) and cutting of a green tree is an offense punishable in hell. In India, Peepal (*Ficus religiosa*), Sami (*Prosopis spicigera*) and Banyan(*Ficus benghalensis*) tree with sacred thread or holy cloth pieces tied to branches can easily be spotted. Fig.1 depicts, Sami (*Prosopis spicigera*) and sacred basil (*Ocimum sanctum*) being worshipped together with scented sticks and sindoor (Vermilion) or Kumkuma.

The *Vishnu Puran* states that god Krishna gives his blessings to those who do not harm any animals.

According to an another ancient literary work; *Manusmriti*, he who injures un-harmful being for pleasure will never find happiness. One who does not cause suffering to living creatures and desires the good of all beings obtains endless blessings and respect. Such people have great will power and they can achieve anything they strongly wish. The use of meat as food has been shunned as they are obtained by killing living animals (Muller and Buhler, 2001). *Manusmriti* also talks about the judicious use of the natural resources. In ancient India, human life was sub-divided into 4 stages: - *Brahmacharya* (celibacy), *Grihastya* (marital life), *Vanaprastha* (gradual detachment) and *Sanyasi* (renunciation of the world). During *Brahmacharya* life, students lived in *gurukulas* (ancient schools) in the lap of nature. They were concerned about its conservation. They protected and worshipped trees as *Vriksha Devta* (tree god), forest as *Van Devta* (the forest god) and rivers as goddesses. Whatever they grew in the field; they shared with all creatures living nearby. Wild life were also protected and cared, they were regarded with different names like *Nag Devta* (snake god), *Vanar-raj* (monkey), *Gaj-raj* (elephant) etc.



Fig. 1 Sami (*Prosopis spicigera*) and sacred basil (*Ocimum sanctum*) being worshipped together with scented sticks and sindoor (Vermilion) or Kumkuma

The Ramayana; a great epic of Hindu mythology is full of animal characters who helped King Rama (worshiped as god by Hindus) on his way to conquer Lanka. One can point out many instances from the Ramayana:- The monkey king, *Sugriva* lead the monkey division to fight against the Ravana's (a mythological character, the king of Lanka) army. Nal and Neel were two monkeys in the Rama's army whose role was vital in the construction of the **Rama Setu** bridge. They were cursed that anything thrown by them into water will float. They wrote the name Raam (Rama) on the stones and threw them into the sea water, constructing a very long floating-stone bridge between the Gulf of Mannar (southwest) and the Palk Strait (northeast). The *Gidh-raj Jatayu* (vulture king) fought bravely with Ravana while he was on his way to Lanka after abducting Sita, the wife of Lord Rama (Kishore, 2005).The epic also depicts two powerful mammals; *Hanuman*, a monkey (the son of Anjani and *Vāyu* , the wind god) as the most faithful to Rama and *Jaamwant* (the bear king) who lead the bears into the war against Ravana. These event shows a very high level of interaction and understanding between the animals and human beings of that time.

There are also literary works focusing agriculture and environment. The *Vrikshayurveda* (the science of plant life) a classic book by Surapala published around 1000 AD. This dealt with the application of various kinds of trees. It also contained knowledge of raising orchards, seed management, selection of soil, ways of irrigation, finding groundwater, using fertilizers and plant diseases (Knapp, 2005; Valsalakumari, 2008). This book recommends the practical ways of efficient farming.

2.2 Jainism (Origin: about 599-527 BCE)

Jainism originated in India and prescribes a path of non-violence towards all living beings and it also stressed spiritual independence and equality between all forms of life. Jainism states that we can save environment and its components by reducing our greed(Tater, 2010). Jains seers advice humans to live on pure vegetarian food with minimum harm to plants(Shah, 1998). In *Acharanga Sutra*, Lord Mahavira (the 24th and the last *Tirthankar*) has clearly stated that it is unethical to harm any animal and use their products. Even agriculture was forbidden as it was considered to injure the 'earth-body'(Tawney, 2004). Like other *Tirthankars*, Lord Mahavira lived in the forest for most of his ascetic

period. He attained *Kaivalya Jnan* or enlightenment under a Shal tree (*Shorea robusta*) on the bank of river Rijuvalika (Kothari, 2006). The *Bhagwati Sutra* discusses on environment issues. All the *Trithankars* lived their lives in hills, forests and understood the mechanisms of nature closely. After enlightenment, they preached in *Samavasharana* which is a complete ecosystem in itself.

2.3 Buddhism (Origin: about 563-483 BCE)

Gautam Buddha; the founder of Buddhism obtained enlightenment under the Peepal (*Ficus religiosa*) tree in a forest at Bodhgaya, Bihar (India). The Peepal tree forms a huge canopy and release high amounts of Oxygen in the environment during photosynthesis. It also creates cool ambience through transpiration and acts as a large carbon sink. It acts as a small ecosystem by nesting birds, ants, bees and other animals. It is also said that Lord Buddha's mother dreamed of a white elephant before the birth of Buddha. His childhood stories portray him as the guardian of poor animals.

According to Buddhism; environment and its components are not meant for humans. Human beings are only its part and should not show their supremacy over the different biotic and abiotic components of nature. Several of the literary works establishes Buddhism as an eco-centric religion. According to *Kutadanta Sutta*, it is the responsibility of the ruler to protect flora and fauna of his/her state. This has also been mentioned as one of the ten duties of the king; *Dasa Raja Dhamma*(Asian Tribune, 2007). The *Dhammapada* describes the way to live intimately with nature. It states that we humans should behave as bees which take away nectar from the flower without injuring it. In this way both help each other. *Suttanipata* states that all forms of life should be respected. The *Mahasukha Jataka* has the poetic description of the close relationship between the plant and animal kingdom. *Cakkavattisihanada Sutta* states that an ideal king is one who protects not only his people but also quadrupeds and birds.

The King Ashoka, who believed in Buddhism, placed various species of wild animals under protection. This was the first recorded historic event of a government writing policies for conservation and protection of forest and wild animals. Ashoka the great also established hospitals for both humans and animals. He was the first king in the world who

constructed special care centers and hospitals for all birds and animals (Gupta, 2011). He insisted on kindness to animals, and prohibited their killing, even for food (Dharmika, 1993). He was so attached to the Peepal tree that he felt ill when one of his wives tried to harm the tree (Jāvid and Javeed, 2008). Prestigious Indian symbol was adapted from Ashoka Stambhs (columns like structure) with lion's idol on top, was erected during his regime. When King Ashoka sent his daughter Sanghamitra and son Mahindra to Anuradhapura to Sri Lanka; he gifted them with the stem cutting from the original Bodhi Peepal tree; *Ficus religiosa*) (Kumar, 2010).

2.4 Sikhism (Origin: about 1469-1538 CE):

Sikhism, a monotheistic religion has its roots in India. Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh's holiest book; states that the purpose of human beings is to be in harmony with all creation. Man and material world are inter-dependent on each other and the domination of humans is to be rejected (Singh, 2010). It considers every creature to be the incarnation of God and hence their conservation is like following the God's wish. Guru Nanak explained not only the significance of air and water, but also day and night. It also preaches the prohibition from eating meat of animals killed in a religious ceremony through exsanguinations (Singha and Hemkunt, 1994). Thus, it inculcate the values of nature to its followers.

2.5 Bishnois Community:

There are many religious and social groups in India which shows great dedication in environmental protection. For instance, the Bishnoi community of Rajasthan is known for protecting several plants and animals (e.g.: Khejadi tree, Chinkara, Deer, Godawn) even at the cost of their own lives. Amrita Devi, a girl from Bishnoi family with her three daughters and hundreds of Bishnoi families sacrificed their lives to protect the trees earmarked for axing by the King's men. They were cut along with the trees they hugged for protecting. Their society does not allow killing of any animal. They are completely vegetarian. They follow the cultural tradition of planting and protecting certain trees around their houses. They follow the rules 29 {in Hindi language Bis (20) +Nau (9) = 29} made by their spiritual guru Jhambheswar (15th century); hence they are called Bishnois (McNeely and Pitt, 1985). According to the Bishnoi's religious philosophy all living creatures have a right to survive and share in the available

resources (Srivastava, 2001). They believe that the first produce of their field is not meant for them. It is for animals. Whatever is left by animals is to be used by humans. Bishnois differ from other Hindu communities, as they bury their dead instead of cremating them. This is because axing of trees is required to cremate dead. Such dedication to the environment and its components is rare around the entire world. The unique temple in Rajasthan "*Karni Maata Mandir*(the temple of goddess Karni)" (28.024° Latitude and 73.319° longitude) is inhabited by thousands of rats and people of region eat the food only after rats have tasted the food. These rats are highly respected and taken care by all the devotees.

3.0 Sacred Groves and *Sthalavriksha*

Spiritualism finds a significant place in the hearts of Indians. Sacred groves and *sthalavriksha* (temple tree) have been playing a major role in conservation of plants and animals. There are certain ethnic groups and communities in India which have been worshiping forests, trees and certain animals since time immemorial. Occurrence of sacred groves at several places in India, clearly defines the community's attachment to nature. Sacred groves are a very ancient practice of environmental protection. These sacred groves may range from a clump of tree to large stretches of forest area. These are protected from human interference as some religious cults are linked to them. These sacred forests support some of the rarest species of flora and fauna. These sacred groves have a high degree of endemism and diversity. They play a dynamic role in maintaining the ecological and agro ecosystem balance of the region (Nipunage and Kulkarni, 2010). The finest sacred grove in India is in the Sarguja district of Madhya Pradesh. Every village in this area has a grove of about 20 hectares. Locally it is called "Sarana" which means the sanctuary in English. Few other examples are Jayantia and Khasi hills of Meghalaya, groves of goddess Janni at Mangaon in Velhe Taluka of Poona district of Maharashtra (18.296° latitude, 73.637° longitude) (Malhotra et al., 2001).

Sthalavriksha or temple tree is a single plant worshipped as equal as the prime deity in the temples. In both Hinduism and Buddhism, temple tree worship holds a great significance. The flora primarily worshipped are Peepal (*Ficus religiosa*), Sami (*Prosopis spicigera*), Neem, Bael (*Aegle*

marmelos), Sandle wood (*Santlum album*), Lotus (*Nelumbium nucifera*), Sallow wood (*Shorea robusta*), Ashwantha (*Ficus bengalensis*), sacred basil (*Ocimum sanctum*) etc. Studies conducted by Gunasekaran and Balasubramanian (Gunasekaran and Balasubramanian, 2004) in 176 temples of Tamil Nadu, showed that 153 *Sthalavriksha* were

protected which included 64 species of 36 families. Most of the *Sthalavriksha* are trees but grass, herbs, shrubs and climbers have also been recorded **fig. 2**.

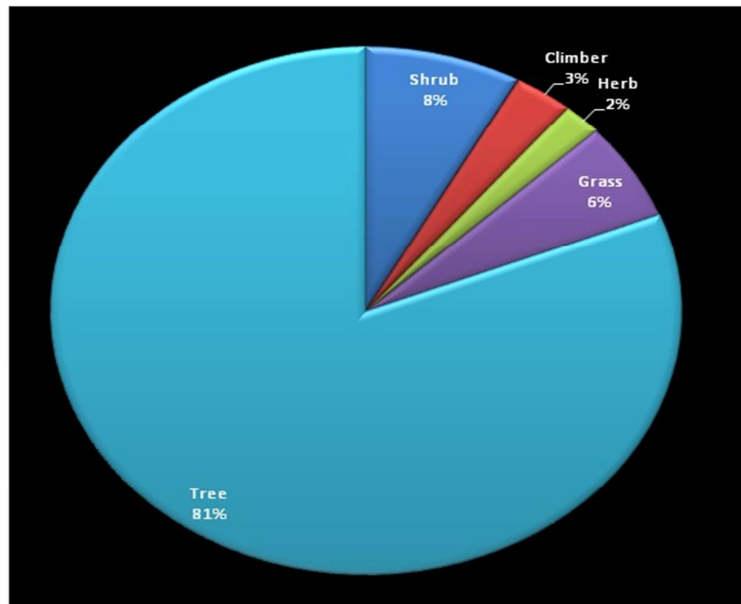


Fig. 2 Growth form of Sthalavrikshas in Tamil Nadu, southern India (n=64) (Gunasekaran and Balasubramanian 2004)

These *Sthalavriksha* and *Nanthavanams* (Temple Garden) have not only protected plants (germplasm bank) but also helped to sustain the natural ecosystem. They have played significant role in protecting live forms from extinction including Butterflies, monkeys, birds and snakes (Gunasekaran and Balasubramanian, 2010).

4.0 Ayurveda and Environment:

Ayurveda is one of the most comprehensive healing systems in the world, dealing integrally with body, mind and spirit. The *Susruta Samhita* and the *Charaka Samhita* are among the initial compilations on Ayurveda. These earliest literatures on the Indian medical practice appeared during the Vedic period in India. They contain descriptions of about 600 medicinal plants (Mishra, 2004). Ayurveda considers the whole universe is made up of five essential elements (*Panchamahabhutas*), building blocks that constitute all life forms. These are *Akasha* (ether), *Vāyu* (air), *Teja* (fire), *Aap* (water) and *Prithvi* (earth).

These five elements exist at all scales of life and in both organic and inorganic matter of the universe. Ayurvedic theory says that each human possesses a unique combination of *dosas* (analogous to classical humorism) : -*Vāyu* / *vāta* (air and space – "wind"), *pita* (fire and water – "bile") and *kapha* (water and earth – "phlegm") that define a person's temperament and characteristics. These three substances of *dosas*-are crucial for health. When they exist in equal quantities the body will be healthy; and when they are not in equal amounts, the body will be unhealthy in various ways. A harmonious state of these three *dosas* creates balance in health. Whereas any imbalance, in these three *dosas* will reflect in form of excess (*vridhhi*) or deficiency (*kshaya*), which are manifested as a sign or symptom of disease (Patwardhan et al., 2005). Indian traditional disease treatment system finds its roots in nature and its components.

5.0 Environmental Movements in India:

Most of the environment movement in India was led by women. It has been reported that forest community lead by women shows good environment management and economic progress (Agarwal, 2009; Schneider, 2013).

5.1 Chipko Movement:

The Chipko movement was probably one of the world's first environmental movements (Krishna, 2010). Chipko movement was born to oppose the forest policies in the Garwal, Himalayas (Uttarakhand). "*Chipko*" is a Hindi word meaning 'to cling', reflecting the protesters way of hugging the trees and not allowing the cutters to cut them. It was inspired by a real life story of a brave girl, Amrita Devi, who sacrificed her life while trying to protect the trees that surrounded her village. In 1730, the King of Jodhpur (Rajasthan) ordered his minister to arrange wood for the construction of his new palace. The minister with his workers went to a nearby village, to cut the trees where Bishnoi community lived. Amrita Devi, a girl from a Bishnoi family showed her courage by hugging the tree and challenging the king's men to cut her before cutting the trees. But unfortunately, she was cut along with the tree. Later, her three daughters and hundreds of Bishnoi families sacrificed their lives in protecting the trees. Such a legend about the human sacrifice for the environment has never been reported in the history of the world (NCERT Biology, 2010).

During the 1960s, India was struggling to enhance its pace of national economic development. The Himalayan region being rich in forests became the victim of government's tree cutting policy to export the wood to earn foreign exchange. The destruction of the trees in this area led to several natural calamities. Inspired by Amrita Devi's legend, a group of women in the 1970s launched a similar movement in the Garhwal, Himalayas which came to be known as "Chipko movement". The Chipko movement was further strengthened by an incident; where women showed extreme courage by hugging trees to protect them from being cut by contractors. The village's women leader, Gaura Devi, a widow in her 50s, gathered twenty-six women and rushed into the forest on 26 March 1974 night (Teheika, 2004). The women pleaded the woodcutters not to cut the trees. Further, the women threatened to hug the trees and die with them. The contractors and the worker had to retract. At the same time, in other

regions of India, women tied a sacred thread (*Raksha-Bandhan*) around the trees earmarked for cutting. Tying thread is a symbolic gesture in Hindu custom confirming the bond of brother-sister relationships. This tradition is still followed in many parts of India as a part of some religious rituals by the Hindus and the Buddhists.

5.2 Appiko Movement:

The Appiko movement was a revolutionary environmental conservation movement in South India. Appiko is the local term for hugging in Kannad language. In Karnataka state of southern India, Panduranga Hedge initiated Appiko movement to save forests of western ghats. In September 1983, men, women and children of Salkani (a village in western ghats) "hugged the trees" in Kalase forest (Ghanashyam, 2008; Srinivasaraju, 2005). The Appiko movement gave birth to a fresh awareness in the world about the public role in the environmental protection.

5.3 Girl Child Birth and Tree Planting Principle:

Apart from ancient traditions, regional customs to protect environment are also found to engrave in society. In the Piplantri village of Rajasthan, villagers plant 111 trees every time a girl child is born and 11 trees every time a family member dies. The community ensures the survival and maturity of these trees. Further stringent measures are adopted to make sure that the girl child is not discriminated (The Hindu, 2013). Another significant tradition is followed in Muzaffarpur district of Bihar; follow the tradition of planting ten Semal trees (*Bombax ceiba*) on the birth of every girl child. This tradition commenced in 1975 to meet the financial needs during marriage. The bride's family is expected to give money, jewels and assets as dowry to the groom's family at the time of marriage as gift which was regarded as symbol of social status. There were no financial banks during those periods, women of Mustafagunj village decided to plant Semal trees, which can be sold at the time of girls marriage. Resultantly, more trees were planted and presently more than 60% of the village land area which was earlier considered to be barren is covered by trees. This is not only strengthening their financial and social status but also improving the environmental conditions.

The women were the real heroes of the India's environmental movements. Ecocentrism has always

been the root value of all the environmental movements but the most recent environmental movements seems to be driven by the eco-feminism philosophy.

6.0 Ancient Vs Modern Environmental Rules:

Earlier, it was the society under the king or the local rulers, who framed the rules and regulations. Some rulers also deployed people to guard the natural resources of their territory. Society recruited people called as *Churpun*, *Neerkatti*, *Havaldars* or *Jaghyas* who managed and resolved water conflicts in the ancient time and even today water management system in some Indian villages is not done by the irrigation department but by the local managers (Kaushik and Kaushik, 2014). After independence, the Indian states started uniting and forming large territory, the need for standard laws emerged (Lokur, 2006). Stockholm Conference (1972) sparked the environmental issues globally. The environmental issues became a matter of global discussion. Thus, more and more brains synchronized to address these issues. Under Article 51-A (g) of Indian constitution, environmental protection is a fundamental duty of every citizen of India. It reads as follows: "It shall be the duty of every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures". And, in response to a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed in 1991, the Supreme Court of India issued directive to make all curricula environment oriented (Kaushik and Kaushik, 2004). The flexibility of Indian constitution enables it to modify or introduce new laws aimed to protect the environment.

7.0 Conclusion:

A glance at Indian history clearly exposes the environment-friendly attitude of her people. It is also full of legends who have sacrificed their lives for protecting the natural heritage. These legends inspire the environment lovers of this globe. Like India, other civilizations of the world have also emerged in close association with nature. Our ancestors learned the varied and crucial aspects of the environment. But, we are losing our tradition of following sustainable development. Today, the world is concerned about carbon emissions, deforestation and other environment issues. Looking back into history or sticking to some of the traditional

practices will surely make a way out of these problems. Modernization needs deep inspiration from nature!! We need to ponder over our approach towards development.

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