

Interconnectedness of Man and Ecology in the Puranas: A Study in Eco- Ethics

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Abstract

One of the burning issues of the present day world is the ecological imbalance which has resulted in generating an adverse situation for mankind on the surface of the earth. The development of the productive forces and technology have resulted into the unrivalled use of natural resources as useful objects for human beings under the capitalistic system, which has transformed nature beyond all recognition. Human kind currently faces the prospect of environmental disaster coupled with irreducible climate change because of its passionate pursuit of material wealth. It has quite simply upset the balance of nature and endangered the very ecosystems that make human life possible. It has also destroyed the interconnectedness between man and ecology which begins with the evolution of man on earth. Initially the created ecologies. (Manmade structures) were in harmony with the natural ecologies. The entire development was sustainable. However, the desire to become the 'master of universe' has led to extreme exploitation of natural resources. Human avarice and greed has destroyed the interconnectedness of man and the natural world and has resulted in the establishment of 'Anthropocentrism' i.e. Human Chauvinism. Human race has thus become dominant over other species and the environment. Primitive religions often drew no distinction between humans and other forms of life, and for that matter, little distinction between living and non-living objects. All things are alive, stones, rivers, mountains, and even the earth itself, often conceived of as 'Mother Earth. My paper seeks to explore how we can bring in the interventions from our ancient wisdom and re-establish this interconnectedness through ecological consciousness and a sense of 'Holism' that can be found in different Indic scriptures.

Keywords: Man, Ecology, Interconnectedness, Holism, Puranas.

"Dyauh shantihi, Antariksha shantihi, Prithvi shantihi, Aapah shantihi, Aushadhayah shantihi, Vanaspatayah shantihi, Vishvedevaha shantihi, Brahmah shantihi, Sarvh shantihi, Shantirev shantihi, sa ma shantiredhi." (Shukla Yajurveda, Madhyandina Shakha, 36/17).

It means “May peace radiate there in the whole sky, as well as in the vast ethereal space everywhere. May peace reign all over this earth, in water, and in all herbs, trees and creepers; may peace flow over the whole universe; may peace be in the Supreme Being Brahma; and may there always exist in all peace and peace alone.”

This *mantra* (hymn) from the *Yajurveda* recognizes the need for peace on earth, space and the entire universe, and wishes that peace be upon one self and all being. It speaks volumes about the Eco-ethics and the peaceful co-existence of human beings and all the elements. It speaks about the harmony and the inter-connectedness between all elements biotic, abiotic or physical and energy components that are found to exist in the environment.

According to some environment geographers external elements are necessary for the growth and development of biotic communities like human beings animals, plants etc. These living entities are surrounded by the physical attributes such as land, air water etc. Thus, environment or '*paryavarana*' (derived from Sanskrit, which means that which covers man from all sides), includes nature wherein physical attributes support and affect life in the biosphere. It has been observed by environmentalists that the elements of nature are closely related to one another. There is a constant interaction among the elements especially between natural ecologies and the created ecologies (man-made structures). The natural environment is at the root of human development and the responses of human social structures to the environment. That is why a harmonious and peaceful, syncretistic as well as symbiotic relation between both man and environment is mandatory. In olden days, people were highly conscious of their surroundings and the elements of environment, which were objects of human veneration as sacred entities of the cosmos. The entire development of mankind was sustainable. However, human avarice and greed has led to the exploitation of natural resources, has destroyed the interconnectedness of man and the natural world. We have forgotten the golden rule of sustainable development.

Ecologists have criticized the most basic assumption upon which conventional ideology is based. The humanist ideologies of the Renaissance commit the mistake of believing that human beings are

the centerpiece of existence. Ecologists argue that this anthropocentric exclusive concern for humans has damaged the relationship between the human species and the natural environment. Instead of preserving and respecting the earth and the diverse species that inhabit it, constituting its biotic community, human beings have sought to become in the words of John Locke, 'the masters and possessors of nature.' (Heywood, 2015: 253)

The ancient Indic Scriptures are replete with the wisdom that establishes the inter-connectedness of man and everything in the cosmos. The *Ishopanishad* says:

*"Ishavasyam idam sarvam, yat kinchat jagtyamajat
Tein tyakten bhunjithaha, ma gridhah kasyasvidhanam."* (Ishopanishad. 1.1)

"Whatever there is in this world, is covered by *Ishvar* (God) and belongs to him. Man should consume what is righteously his and not covet what by right belongs to others." (My translation).

This verse epitomizes man- nature relationship in its perfect harmony towards the preservation of earthly resources as well as realization of the simple fact that environment is for all, not for human kind alone. Thus 'Anthropocentrism' is the new ideology and human race has become dominant over the other species and the environment. Joanne Macy in '*Towards a Healing Self and World in Key Concepts in Critical Theory- Ecology* by Carolyn Merchant states: "Anthropocentrism means human chauvinism. Similar to sexism, but substitute *human race* for man and *all other species* for woman. [It is about the human race being oppressive of the species and the environment.]" (Merchant, 1996: 292). The harmony, the interconnectedness is lost. We have turned the peace of our environment into violence, which expresses itself form of floods, cloud outburst, landslides, storms, heat waves etc. This ecological imbalance coupled with massive climate change, has become one of the burning issues of the present day world. The development of productive forces and technology has resulted in the unrivalled use of natural resources as useful objects for human beings under the capitalist system, which has transformed nature beyond all recognition. Andrew Heywood in his '*Political Ideologies: An Introduction*' rightly comments:

“Human kind currently faces the prospect of environmental disasters, coupled with irreducible climate change because of its passionate pursuit of material wealth. It has quite simply, upset the balance of nature and endangered the very eco-systems that make human life possible.” (Heywood, 2015: 268)

Christopher Manes in the chapter ‘*Nature and Silence*’ in ‘*The Ecocritical Reader Landmarks in Literary Ecology*’ quotes a Tuscarora Indian remark that unlike his people’s experience of the world, for Westerners, the uncounted voices of nature are dumb. Manes states:

“The language that we speak today, the idiom of Renaissance and Enlightened Humanism, veils the processes of nature with its own cultural obsessions, directionalities, and motifs that have no analogues in the natural world.” (Glotfelty, 1996: 15).

We are so anthropocentric in our attitude that despite Copernicus, all the cosmos rotates around our little globe; despite Darwin, we in our hubristic attitude consider ourselves superior to nature, are contemptuous of lesser species and exploit nature according to our whims and desires. This unchecked, rampant exploitation driven by a merciless capitalistic economy has led to a skewed idea of development and the resultant environment crises that we face today.

To re-establish the peace, balance and harmony we need to redefine our approach towards environment or ecology. Andrew Heywood in his iconic book ‘*Political Ideologies*’ also establishes the idea that ecologism requires a new style of politics which starts not from a concept of reductionism to see nature in parts rather than as an interconnected whole, but from a vision of nature as a network of precious but fragile relationships between living species- including the human species- and the natural environment.

Perhaps the most influential concept for modern ‘Greens’ has been developed by looking back to pre-Christian ideas. Primitive religions often drew no distinction between humans and other forms of life, and for that matter, little distinction between living and non-living objects. All things are alive, stones, rivers, mountains, and even the earth itself, often conceived of as ‘Mother Earth.’ In ‘*Gaia, A new look at Life on Earth*’ (1979) James Lovelock developed the idea that the planet itself is alive and gave it the name ‘Gaia’ after the Greek goddess of the Earth.

Thus, ecology becomes a kind of outlook or sensibility that stresses interconnectedness of creatures with each other and all the habitat that sustains them. As Carolyn Merchant in '*Key Concepts in Critical Theory- Ecology*' puts it:

"Tribal societies pursued their needs through the imitation of nature. Human beings became as much like the animals they hunted as possible. Power over nature, hence self-preservation was achieved through imitative magic. Enlightenment thinking disenchant nature by removing that magic and turning the subject into an object, and that process of objectification distance subject from object." (Merchant, 1996: 2)

Lynn White Jr. in the chapter 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis' states:

"In Antiquity, every tree, every spring, every stream, every hill had its own genius loci, its guardian spirit. These spirits were accessible to men, but were very unlike men; centaurs, fauns, and mermaids show their ambivalence. Before one cut a tree, mined a mountain, or dammed a brook, it was important to placate the spirit in charge of that particular situation, and to keep it placated. By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects." (Glotfelty, 1996:10).

Though, ecology has been regarded as a modern movement by Western thinkers, it has been the very identity of the Indian way of life and ancient scriptures. Ecological consciousness can well be traced to ancient Indian *Vedic* and *Puranic* literature and other philosophical scriptures and treatises that have since time immemorial echoed the ethos of environmental consciousness. What modern Western ecologists have now begun to voice their concerns over, was an intrinsic part of the holistic living in ancient India. Ancient texts are replete with examples about the entire biotic as part of the same cosmos reflected in:

"Yat pinde, tat Brahmande"

(Whatever is in the material body is in the cosmos).

My paper seeks to explore how we can bring in the intervention from our ancient wisdom and re-establish the ecological consciousness and a sense of 'Holism' that can be found in different Indic scriptures. The *Chhandogya Upanishad* speaks of the fundamental synthesis of cosmology through the concept of '*Sarvam*

Khalu idam Brahmah' i.e. everything in the cosmos is '*Brahmah'* or the Ultimate Consciousness /Absolute Truth. (3.14.1).

The *Agnipurana* expresses thus:

*"Sarobhuteshu va atmanam, sarobhutani cha atmani
Sam pashyinnatma swarajyamadhighachhati."* (Agnipurana 1.65.9).

"One must treat all living beings with respect as part of one's soul. This shows the basic syncretism among all things, creatures, creeds, thoughts, sects and systems." (My translation).

The *Puranas* contemplate the idea of the survival of man; but it should be interpreted as the ability to co-exist and co-operate in complex relationship with earth's biotic community, rather than the ability to kill, exploit and suppress nature. 'Live and Let Live' is a powerful ecological principle of the *Puranas*, than 'either it's you or me.'

*"Har harim vidyataaram ya pashyatya ekrupinam
Sa yati paramanandam shashtranameva nishchayah."*
(Vayupurana 6.49).

Jonathan Bate provides an example from Wordsworth's poem 'The Excursion' and the insight that "Everything is linked to everything else, and most importantly the human mind must be linked to the natural environment." (Bate, 2013: 66). Andrew Heywood in "*Political Ideologies'* quotes the Australian philosopher Warwick Fox who advocated the concept of "transpersonal ecology", the essence of which is the realization that 'things are', that human beings and all other entities are part of a single unfolding reality." (Heywood, 2015: 266-267).

A need for ecological wisdom and a way of life that encourages compassion for fellow human beings, other species and the natural world is reflected in the *Vishnupurana*, where it is stated that God smiles upon him who is compassionate towards the living beings and does not harm them:

*"Na tadyati no hanti praninoanyashch ya dehinah
Yo manushyo manushyendrastoshyate tena Keshavah."*(Vishnupurana. 3.8.15).

One way to practice this compassion is mentioned in the *Yoga Sutra* of Maharishi Patanjali.

“Ahimsa-satyasteya-brahmacaryaparigraha yamah. Yoga Sutra II.30”

(Bryant, 2009: 242-243).

“The *yamas* are non-violence, truthfulness, refrainment from stealing, celibacy, and renunciation of (unnecessary) possessions.”

(Bryant, 2009: 488).

I.K. Taimni in ‘The Science of Yoga’ explicates that: “*Ahimsa* really denotes an attitude and mode of behaviour towards all living creatures based on the recognition of the underlying unity of life.”

(Taimni, 2015:210).

The *Yoga Sutra* as also Jainism and Buddhism emphasize that the ideals of *Ahimsa* and *Aparigraha* should be followed. ‘*Aparigraha*’ is an ethical concept in the sense that it underscores the fact that a man should keep as his possessions only that he requires for his livelihood and not subsume what is rightfully of others. Such an individual does not assert his ownership of anything nor is his individual ego tied up with such possessions. *Aparigraha* as Taimni comments in *The Science of Yoga* is not only absence of greediness but also non-possessiveness.

This concept is reflected in the term “Buddhist economics” advocated by E.F. Schumacher (i.e, the principle of right livelihood) which is also reflected in the words of *Yayati*, the King in the *Kurmapurana*. He says that no amount of riches, wealth and resources are enough to fulfil the greed of man. So, one must follow the principle of *Aparigraha* and abstain from keeping more than is necessary.

“*Parityajyarth kamau yausyatham dharmvarjite Sarolokviruddhashch dharmampyacharennanu.*” (Kurmpurana. 2.16.1).

“Deep ecologists have viewed nature as the source of moral goodness. Nature thus has ‘intrinsic’ or ‘inherent’ value, not just instrumental value deriving from the benefits it brings to human beings.” states Andrew Heywood. (Heywood, 2015: 275).

The ‘Ecological egalitarianism’ proposed by the Norwegian ecologist Arne Naess in the concept of Deep Ecology (Merchant, 1996:121) finds expression in the concept of *Panchtatva* (the five elements from which the material world is made of) and refrainment

from violence towards all living entities as mentioned in various Indic texts of yore:

*“Na hinsyat sarobhutaninaintrin va vaden kwachit
Nahitamnapriyavakyamstensyat kadachan.”* (Kurmapurana. 1.16.1).

The *Puranas* are also replete with descriptions of human dependence on the resources of nature. The mountains, forests, rivers, etc. were considered to be gifts of nature creating resources for the sustenance of living beings. According to *Agnipurana- ‘Aditya’*, the Sun God) favours the earth with rainfall. Rain water produces ‘anna’ (food) and then the ‘prajas’ (human beings) come down to Earth. (*Agnipurana. 216.11*). The Sun has been praised in the *Matsya Purana* (125. 27-35) as the sustainer of all living beings.

The *Agnipurana* mentions that water is the elixir of life, so God’s first creation was water:

*“Apo naraitiprokta apo vaei nar soonavah
Ayanam tasya taha purvam te narayana smritah.”* (*Agnipurana 70.7*).

The scriptures state that the earth’s biotic environment was a living, breathing entity and animate with its own spirit. In the *Atharv Veda* the *Rishi* (sage) says that water can be seen and heard (by our sensory perceptions); water also has a heart that can feel:

“Idam va apo hridayam” (*Atharv Veda. 3.13.7*).

It further states that man is considered the offspring of water:

“apasputra so” (*Atharv Veda. 1.5.2*).

Nearly all the *Puranas* lay emphasis on purity of water, because polluted waters can cause several diseases. Water pollution is the biggest problem today and causes of 80% of diseases in human beings, one of the greatest cause of cancer is contaminated water. Major water resources have become dumping grounds for human waste, chemical and radioactive waste. People have been warned not to pollute the water. The *Markandeyapurana* admonishes thus:

“Napsu mutram purisham ya nishthiyam na samacharet.”
(*Markandeyapurana 31.25*).

The Manu Smriti, that highlights the codes laid down by Manu, mentions that man should not put such affluent like excretion, spittle, blood, or toxins and contaminate the rivers. *The Manu Smriti* provides

for stringent punishment and even execution of anyone who defiles or contaminates water or water resources.

*“Tadag bhedakam hanyavapsu suddhvedhanva
Yadyapi pratisankuryat apaystutam saham.”* (Manu Smriti. 9.279).

Even Kautilya, the famous political philosopher, often equated with Machiavelli in his treatise on economics the ‘*Arthshastra*’ mentions stringent punishment for someone who pollutes or contaminates water. He mentions:

*“Punyasthanau daksthan davegrah raj parigrheshu
Panotara vishtha dandaha mutreshvardh dandaha.”*(*Arthshastra*.2.36).

‘If a citizen spoils or destroys a fresh water pond, whose water is fit for consumption by humans and animals both, then the king must execute him and if he offers to rebuild the pond the same way it was, he should be levied with a punishment of a thousand’ *pann*’ (currency) and then only be spared.”

The plant world has also been given much importance in the *Puranas* as plants were considered as the primary producer in the biosphere, which directly or indirectly provided food to all terrestrial and aquatic animals, including human being and the plants thus played a significant role in shaping the biosphere. Plants are found to act as intermediaries between the biotic and the abiotic components of the environment.

Even trees in our mythology were supposed to be the givers of ‘*Prana*’ or life nurturing and were considered sacred. In the *Kurmpurana* it is said that felling of fruit bearing trees and uprooting trees which are in their full bloom called upon the sinner to repent of such deeds; felling of trees was considered a sin tantamount to ‘*bramhatya*’ (Murder of the sacred Brahma).The Mahabharata quotes that those who plant trees should look after them as they do their own sons.

*“Tasya putra bhavantyeete padapa naatra sanshyah
Putravat paripalayashch putraste dharmatah smrita.”*

(*Mahabharata. Anushashan Parv. 58.3, 58.27*).

In the same epic we find *Maharishi Bhrigu* in a dialogue with *Rishi Bhardwaj* wherein he says that ‘When a tree is felled it sprouts new life and it is aware of both pleasure and pain. Therefore I see that

even trees are living beings. They are not inanimate.” (*Mahabharat. Shanti Parv.184.17*).

Description of the gardens of Varanasi in the *Matsyapurana* points towards the life cycle and interdependence of living beings. It is stated that gardens abound in trees, creepers and bushes of various types. These remain the habitat of animals, insects, birds etc. The ‘*gulmas*’ (Creepers and shrubs) lying on the ground offer safety to the deer when chased by wild animals. Tall trees and sprouting grasses serve as grazing fields. Bees find shelter in flowers while dense forests provide habitats to lions. Tender plants serve as food for elephants. (*Matsyapurana. 180. 24-44*). This description epitomizes man-nature relationship in perfect harmony and mandates the preservation of earthly resources as well the realization of the fundamental fact that environment is for all and not for human kind alone.

Thomas Berry in his essay ‘*The World of Wonder*’ in Lee Llewellyn Vaughan ‘s *Spiritual Ecology: The Cry of the Earth*, mentions that ancient cultures like India, China, Greece, Egypt and Rome had sacred rituals and sacred centres that bound humans to the universe. He writes:

“There were other rituals whereby human communities validated themselves by seasonal acknowledgment of the various powers of giving ceremony, where the sun, the Earth, the winds, the waters, the trees, and the animals each in turn received expressions of personal gratitude for those gifts that made life possible.” (Vaughan, 2013: 10).

The *Puranas* also contain references to people’s total dependence on plant based food materials for their sustenance. (*Brahmavaivarpurana.4.21.99*). *The Agnipurana* (281.20) recommends a selection of plant based food material for preservation of human health. *The Matsyapurana* reflects upon the hallowed importance of food material. The word ‘*anna*’ is used in this *Purana* to mean rice meals in general. Food is considered to be the ‘*Brahma*’ himself, who appears in concrete form to sustain the life process. (*Matsyapurana. 83.42-43*) The study of various *Puranas* reveals that plant world played a significant role in moulding human society in its cultural, social, agricultural, economical, religious and aesthetic development since the dawn of civilization. References are found of trees and plants, vegetables, pulses, grasses etc. that were included in the diet

chart of all the sections of society in ancient India. Plants also supplied material for clothing. (*Matsyapurana* 154.308) house-building and construction, (*Matsyapurana*.262.20) cosmetics ornaments and toiletries (*Agnipurana*.266.13). The *Puranas* also contain a detailed description of medicinal plants and their uses for curing different ailments. *The Agnipurana, the Matsyapurana and the Bramhavaivartapurana* describe a wide variety of the kingdom of flora and their medicinal properties for curing ailments of all types. In the *Agnipurana* (141.2-5) mention is made of thirty- six plants as *hartitaki, nimba, aksa, bala* etc. which were used in different combinations for treatment of different diseases.

In the *Bramhavaivartapurana* earth has been depicted as Mother Earth who protects and nourishes human kind. Everything is sustained by her:

*“Pradhanaha shasyarupa cha prakrateshcha va vasundhara
Adharbhumam sarvesham, sarv shasyaprasutika.”*

(*Bramhavaivarta Purana*.1. 61-68).

Taking the anagogic trope further, we find the following in the *Skandapurana*:

*“Saroopjivoyarupa sarvsamapatti dayini
Yatha vina jagat sarvam niradharam characharam.”*

(*Skandapurana*.9.29).

“Earth represents all living organisms, she is the provider of all riches, and without her the world would become rudderless.” (My translation).

In the *Vamanapurana* it is quoted thus:

*“Prithvi sagandha sarsastathah sparshashcha vayurjwalan sateja
Nabhah sashabadam mahta sadeiv yachhantu sarve mum suprabhat.”*

(*Vamanapurana*. 14.26).

“Praying to Mother earth the Rishi eulogizes her as fragrant and beautiful with pure water and wind as well as glorious with radiance; her skies resonate with melodious sound; I bow to her in the morning and may she bless me with her benevolence.”

(My translation).

Though the ancient seers had firmly established the interconnectedness between the man and his ecology, yet they were

aware that basic human nature was full of greed and avarice and they also knew man's proclivity to control and dominate nature and exploit its resources. So, in order to discipline human behavior, certain ethical behaviors towards ecology were marked. The deification of Mother Nature by the Vedic Aryans was a drive towards conservation of the environment as well as sustainable development. The trees were considered to grant riches, blessings happiness and peace. (*Agnipurana.194.5*). It is interesting to note that before collecting wood from the forests for construction purposes one had to propitiate the deities and perform pujas and offer sacrifices to the trees. (*Matsyapurana. 257.2*) Trana, Vriksha, Lataa and Gulma were considered to be the offspring of the sage Kashyap and Ira. (*Matsyapurana.6.46*). Such belief of 'one family, one universe' led people to develop a special bonding with each and every species of flora and it fostered an inseparable bond between the people and the natural environment. In the *Vishnudhamattarapurana* the elements of environment are included in the category of 'Lok Devtas' especially the *Vanaspatis* (*Vegetation*) that are described as deities to be worshipped. *Vishnudhamattarapurana. 3.222-228*) In the *Vishnupurana* mention is made of worshipping the seasons, mountains, and rivers, *Vanaspatis* in form of religious vows or rituals throughout the year as beneficial (Ishta) gods. (*Vishnupurana. 5.1.101*).

Importance has been given to tree plantation, respectful usage of rivers etc. In the *Puranas*, planting tree was considered as important as raising a child. It has said in the *Matsyapurana* that planting a tree takes one to heaven. (*Matsyapurana. 154.512*) A tree is more important than tens and thousands of sons, as it provides protection, shade, fruits, flowers and the vital elements for life. In the *Agnipurana* (227.21, 62) it is mentioned that a man who causes any damages to the trees, who makes injury even to a small piece of grass is punished heavily. In the *Shivapurana* (5.13-18) it is stated that felling trees without a valid cause is a religious offence. A man who commits such sinful an act is destined to go to 'Asipatravana' a region in hell. In the *Matsyapurana* (227.92-95) it is found that felling of trees without reasons or burning down of any forest was totally banned. In this connection the *Matsyapurana* narrates a story of *Kartyaviryarujna*, who destroyed a whole forest including the hermitage of sage *Aapava*. In his rage, the sage cursed him that he would meet the same fate. The

message is clear. Anyone committing such a scale of destruction of nature or causing deforestation, uprooting trees, destroying greenery etc. is heavily punished or levied penalty for such acts. (*Matsyapurana*. 44.2-14).

It is interesting to note that animals essential for the preservation of ecological balance have been depicted as the vehicles of different gods and goddesses in Indic scriptures. As animals and birds do a great service to mankind by providing milk, transportation and clearing the debris created by man, they should be protected:

“Goshvostadgadarbhshwanah, sarika grahgodhika
Chataka bhas kurmadhaha, kathita gramvasinah.”

(*Agnipurana*. 231.9, 11, 12, 13).

The importance of rivers and mountains was established in the Puranas. Every river is considered to be sacred and has been termed as ‘mother.’ In the *Harivanshapurana* Lord *Krishna* calls upon the peasants to worship the Mount *Govardhana*, not the God *Indra*, (King of the Gods in Hindu mythology) as the mountain was the mainstay of their agricultural life. The teachings of queen *Madalasa* in the *Markandeyapurana* that all elements and entities on this earth are sacred and are to be respected, reflect the ecological consciousness. (*Markandeyapurana*. 19.66-75).

Above all the concept of Earth as one’s mother in the *Atharv-veda*’s ‘*Bhumi Suktam*’ never allowed its exploitation.

“*Mata Bhumihi, putro aham Prithivyaha.*” (*Atharv-veda* 12.1.12).

“The earth is my Mother and I her son.”

Environmental ethics mandates that man is not the conqueror or master of ‘Mother Nature’ but an integral part of the biotic community and is therefore responsible for the welfare and protection of not only the natural environment but the entire biotic community. John Muir questions the very notion that nature created plants and animals for the happiness on man alone. Ramchandra Guha quotes Muir, “Why should man value himself as more than a small part of one great unit of creation? And what creature of all that the Lord has taken the pains to make is not essential to the completeness of that unit- the cosmos? The universe would be incomplete without man; but it would also be incomplete without the

smallest trans-microscopic creature that dwells beyond our conceitful eyes and knowledge.” (Guha, 2000: 52).

Thus, in order to save our environment and to deal with our problems in the present day world, a more sweeping and insightful body of knowledge, scientific as well as social is required. This can be fulfilled by a systematic and deep rooted study of the *Puranas*. As Lawrence Buell in his iconic work *The Environmental Imagination- Thoreau, Nature Writing and the Formation of American Culture* states: “The rhetoric of nature’s personhood speaks merely to the nominal level; what counts is the underlying ethical orientation implied by the troping. “Mere projection or personification,” as environmental ethicist John Tallmadge writes, signifies far less than the commitment to perceiving the nonhuman world not “as an object, but..... as a presence. “ (Buell, 1995: 217).

Naess’ Deep Ecology becomes germane here because it calls for a change from anthropocentric consciousness to ‘cosmological consciousness’. As Heywood mentions: “At the heart of this is an inter-subjective model of selfhood that allows for no distinction between the self and the ‘other’, thereby collapsing the distinction between humankind and nature.” (Heywood, 2015: 275).

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