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## **Indian Philosophy and Environmental Ethics**

**Gudasala Ravikanth**

Ashoka Trust For Research In Ecology And The Environment,  
PO, Royal Enclave, Srirampura, Jakkur, Bengaluru, Karnataka 560064, India.

Email: [gravikanth@gmail.com](mailto:gravikanth@gmail.com)<sup>1\*</sup>

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### **ABSTRACT**

The history of the human relationship with nature is based on the idea of mastery or domination. Till recently the effects of human activity upon nature were regarded as morally neutral. In recent years, humans have now realized that their interventions in nature have caused massive damage to the harmony of the ecosystem. This knowledge subsequently led humans to explore the ways through which further damage to the ecosystems can be prevented. The promotion of environmental ethics was taken into consideration, to help protect future generations from ecological threats and calamities. Environmental ethics is an important perspective because it helps in subscribing to moral values and duties that man must have towards nature. However, religion is often considered the most widely used system to make ethical decisions and conduct moral reasoning. Most world religions are eco-friendly and share a common ethic based on harmony with nature. Due to the above, this study attempts to scrutinize the contribution of the two oldest living religions within the Indian philosophical tradition to environmental ethics. The literature on both Hinduism and Jainism and the environment is vast and growing quickly. However, much of these pieces of literature fail to define key terms and make essential assumptions explicit. Consequently, in this work, I clarified central concepts (*Anekāntavāda*, *dharma*, *satyāgraha*, and *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*) within both religions and show how they foster environmental awareness. This paper gives an insight into the importance of the environment in Indian's oldest religions - Hinduism and Jainism.

**Keywords:** Religion; Hinduism; Jainism; Environmental ethics.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Indian philosophical approach towards the man and nature relationship is always interdependent (Ottuh 2020). This relationship of interdependence is being continuously established with nature through culture, religion, value system, philosophy and ultimately with the life of the Indian people. But it has been realized that the sense of interdependence that exists between man and nature has been disturbed in the recent time. The continuous process of industrialization has left polluted rivers, contaminated soil, and depleted wildlife and exhausted natural resources (Mendie & Eyo 2016; Offiong 2016a; Offiong 2016b). As a result nature was thoroughly exploited and the idea of interdependence between man and nature became a far cry. People thus gradually realized that we must renew our contact with nature which would lead to a state of interdependence between man and nature. People also find that science and technology became the greatest hindrance in creating a harmonious relationship between man and nature.

The scientific revolution man himself brought this revolution to make his life comfortable became the source of his own destruction (Basse 2020). He forgot to keep balance with nature and in the process he adopted the attitude of dominance over nature. But the Indian philosophical traditions always maintain the man-nature relationship from the very beginning of civilization. We find that the attitude towards nature was respectful. Nature is the sustaining source of life on earth. In Vedic period we see that people valued the role of trees, plants and forests in their life. In *Rg-veda* it is mentioned that nature has potentialities of controlling the climate, increasing fertility and improvement of human life (Baindur 2015). Therefore, the disruption in one part of the ecosystem leads to the disturbances in other parts of nature. The harmony among each and every part leads to the overall environmental equilibrium.

According to the Indian Philosophical tradition every element, non-living object and living being in the universe is created by the same Supreme Being i.e., *Brahman*. Therefore, man has no special domination over nature (Sharma 2019). Indian philosophy, thoughts, values and ethics always have reverence for all that which exists in nature. From this the concept of *Vāsudhaiva Kutumbakam* has evolved. It means all that is alive from plants to human species belongs to a single family. Everything has originated from a common source i.e., *Brahman* and therefore they are interdependent. Except *Chārvākas* all other schools of Indian philosophy accept the existence of *Brahman* (Pruthi 2004). *Brahman* reveals Himself in two ways, such as, unconscious matter or *jada* and conscious life *jiva*. Therefore, according to the Indian philosophical traditions, all that which exists in the universe including both organic and inorganic are consisted of five elements such as air, water, fire (heat/energy), earth, and space. Everything comes from the different combinations of these five elements and everything returns to them ultimately.

The idealist, realist and materialist philosophers in ancient India recognized the existence of objective reality independent of man's consciousness. *Vedic*, Upanishadic and the orthodox philosophical systems like

*Vedānta* acknowledged life as a great reality. The value of life contains a close affinity with the sacred and mysterious power which underlies the material world. The individual self and the material world are the reflections of the Divine. The materialist like *Chārvāka* and realist like *Nyāya-vaiśeṣika* and *Sāṅkhya-Yoga* are of the view that each and everything in nature is the result of the combination of some gross elements such as air, water, fire, earth, and ether (the last one is not acceptable to *Chārvākas*). In Indian philosophical view there is no sharp distinction between human and nature, because human is in nature and nature contains humans. But at the same time they both are the parts of the same reality i.e., *Brahman*. For Indian philosophers everything in the world functions according to the supreme divine will. In view of the above presentation we will now give a brief account of the man-nature relationship as held in different Indian philosophical systems. In this respect we will particularly emphasize on the Buddhist and Jain accounts of this relationship.

### **JAINISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS**

Jainism in Indian philosophical tradition is the philosophy of ecological harmony. It formed a vital part of the ancient Indian life. The Jain perspective towards nature includes the reverence for all kinds of life forms and preservation of the natural environment. Jainism does not acknowledge a first cause as the creator of the universe. It says that the universe has no beginning and no end (Mitra 2019). But still it suggests an environmental ethics for a harmonious relation with nature because the global ecological crisis cannot be solved completely until a spiritual relationship is established between human beings and nature. Jainism has a code of conduct that establishes a harmonious relationship with nature. Jainism since does not believe in the creator of the universe or the universe as the reflection of the creator, it talks about a hierarchy of lives. The concept of the hierarchy of life in Jainism has a very important concept in Jain concept of ecology (Rankin 2018). We see it as follows.

In the Indian philosophical traditions the individual person was regarded as a reflection of the world itself. An individual sees himself as a part of the greater whole not as an isolated unit. So the Indian theory of cosmology considered the human being within the world. As Jainism does not believe in any creator it develops its theory of cosmology without a creator. Jainism believes in the eternality of each life force not being created by any creator (Shah & Rankin 2017). Therefore each life force is ultimately responsible for its own destiny. Jainism attempts to have a comprehensive worldview where there is an integrated relationship between human being and nature. The place of human being is within the universe. Human beings and all other different species of life are all parts of a beginningless round of birth, death and rebirth. Jain ecology is based on spirituality and equality (Rankin 2018). Each kind of life form i.e., plants and animals have inherent worth and therefore each must be respected (Basse & Eyo 2020). Jainism speaks about a different philosophy of man and nature relationship.

It accepts that every soul is autonomous and independent irrespective of whether it is the soul of a man or of a mono-sensed insect. It also believes in the presence of soul in both animate and inanimate things. Soul is present not only in animate beings such as human beings, animals, and insects but also in inanimate things such as water, air, fire and earth. The entire world is possessed of life including plants, trees, birds, animals and water (Jain 2011).

In Jainism there is a hierarchy of life according to the number of senses a particular being possesses. Life articles (*ji a*) in earth, water, fire, air, microorganisms, and plants have only the sense of touch. They experience the world through the sense of touch. Worms have the sense of taste and touch. All crawling bugs can feed, taste and smell (Chapple 2010). All flying insects have abilities to taste, smell, see and feel. All higher level animals are fish, such as, all kinds of mammals feel, taste, smell, see, hear, and think (Akpan et al., 2020). The Jain theory of evolution is based on a grading of the physical bodies having souls and according to the degree of sensory perception. At the lowest level, the form of physical body has the sense of touch, i.e., trees and vegetations have the sense of touch. Therefore, they are able to experience pleasure and pain and they have souls. The highest grade of animals and human beings only possess rationality and intuition (*mānas*). They are the highest evolved form of life and therefore they have greater moral responsibility of their relationship with the rest of the universe.

Jainism views all kinds of life in a different perspective. The structure of cosmos that it exhibits is very different from any other schools of Indian thought. They perceive a living cosmos and this living cosmos is the basis of an ecologically sensitive response for a better relationship between human and nature. Jainism asserts that the apparently inert and unconscious world is actually full of consciousness. They say that all living beings starting from a drop of water to animals and humans possess one thing in common, that is, the capacity for tactile experience. They signify the concept of “living world” in Jaina philosophy. Because for them the world is a combination of subjects not a collection of objects. The concept of life in Jainism is very different from the common definition of the concept “life”. The Jaina concept of life is not compatible with the common conception of life as available in our society the common definition of “life” is, to quote:

That property of plants and animals which makes it possible for them to take in food, get energy from it, grow and adopt themselves to their surroundings, and reproduce their kind: It is the quality that distinguishes a living animal or plant from inorganic matter or a dead organism (Tucker & Grim 2001, p. 208).

The Jain definition of “life” goes beyond the common definition of life, i.e., all parts of nature including the five elements of nature contains touch, breath, life and bodily strength. The Jaina world view cannot be separated from the notion that the world contains feelings. The whole nature that is surrounding us can feel our presence, because Jainism says that everything has sensation. The entities such as water and air etc. feel us through the sense of touch. At the same time human beings have been given the special responsibility to cultivate his awareness and ethical behaviour.

He should acknowledge that we live in a universe that is full of living, breathing and conscious beings who are interdependent on each other. The Jaina system talks about an interdependent living cosmos in all aspects of worldly existence. It is a non-anthropocentric theory which gives emphasis to all elemental, vegetative and animal forms. Therefore, in this kind of conception of life, human beings have ethical responsibility for environmental protection and harmony. Jainism has certain code of conduct for human beings that can be practiced in order to maintain environmental protection and harmony. In the words of *Mahāvira: One who neglects or disregards the existence of earth, air, fire, water and vegetation disregards his own existence which is entwined with them* (Beverluis 1995, 79).

Like modern science of ecology, Jainism recognizes the mutual interdependence among all entities. It believes in the fundamental natural phenomenon of mutual dependence. Jainism speaks regarding *parasparopagraho jivanam*, it means all life is bound together by mutual support and interdependence. It says all entities living and non-living of nature belong to and are bound in one physical and metaphysical relationship that we see through the doctrine of *anekāntavāda*.

### **THE DOCTRINE OF MANIFOLD ASPECTS OR ANEKĀNTAVĀDA**

The concept of universal interdependence is based on the doctrine of manifold aspects or *anekāntavāda*. According to the doctrine of *anekāntavāda*, the world is ever changing and multifaceted. It has many different viewpoints that are dependent on time, place and nature (Iferov & Titlin 2016). It is also dependent on the state of the viewer and the viewed. *Anekāntavāda* leads to the doctrine of *syādvāda* or relativity. According to the doctrine of *syādvāda* the truth is relative and it is different to different viewpoints (Kumar 2020). It means what is true from one point of view is open to be questioned from another point of view. The absolute truth cannot be grasped from a particular view point because of all the different viewpoints that make up the universe.

On the basis of the doctrines of *anekāntavāda* and *syādvāda* Jainism does not believe in the anthropocentric concept of the universe. It does not say that human being is independent of nature and it is only meant for human beings. The nature as such is consisted of many independent living and non-living entities. Nature is the whole that is the constituent of many beings. As the doctrine of *anekāntavāda* says, reality is manifold and all aspects constitute the reality. Nature is the reality that has many constituents. Each constituent is real and necessary for the maintenance of nature. Therefore, Jainism takes into account the viewpoints of other species and nature as such along with human beings. The discipline of non-violence, the recognition of universal interdependence (*anekāntavāda*) and the logic of the doctrine of manifold aspects (*syādvāda*) help Jainism to avoid dogmatic, aggressive and harmful attitudes towards the nature. It encourages an individual to have equal behaviour towards both living and non-living beings. It encourages cultivating the attitude of “live and let live” (Kumar 2020).

It shows the mutual interdependence in nature. Equanimity helps to preserve the balance of the universe.

### **THE JAINA CODE OF CONDUCT**

- (a) The principle of *Ahimsa* or non-violence has been given much importance in Jaina ecological philosophy (Shah 2018). For them non-violence is the supreme religion, “*ahimsā paramo dharma*”. Jainism says that, there is nothing so small and subtle as the atom nor any element so vast as space. Similarly, there is no quality of soul more subtle than non-violence and no virtue of spirit greater than reverence of life.

In Jainism non-violence is the first and primary vow. The five vows that come under non-violence are:

- (a) Non-violence in thought, word and deed.
  - (b) To seek and speak the truth.
  - (c) To behave honestly and never take anything by force or theft,
  - (d) To practice restraint and chastity in thought, word and deed and
  - (e) To practice non-acquisitiveness. Non-violence is the primary vow, and the other vows are the aspects of non-violence. These together form an integrated code of conduct of an individual. The above vows assert that the individual has responsibility towards one and all.
- (b) Kindness is another aspect of Jainism’s vow of non-violence which includes to refrain from all forms of cruelty towards animals and human beings. They condemn the practice of animal sacrifice to the gods as evil. They say it is also an act of violence, towards animals by keeping the animals in captivity, to whip, to injure, to overload them with luggage and deprive them of adequate food and drink.
- (c) Self-restraint and the avoidance of waste is another code of conduct of Jainism which prescribes to live a life of moderation and restraint. They say wants should be reduced and consumption should be within reasonable limits. The use of any resource beyond one’s needs leads to the misuse of any part of nature. Therefore Jainism also says that creating waste and pollution are acts of violence. They also said that the accumulation of possessions for the personal enjoyment should also be minimized. Non-violence should not only be visible in physical acts but also in the hearts and minds of human beings. There should not be thought for violent actions or it means violence should not enter our thoughts.
- (d) *Jiva-dayā* or compassion, empathy and charity are the higher form of the attitude of non-violence or *Ahimsa* (Fergusson et al., 2018). Non-violence is an aspect of *jiva-dayā*. *Ji-va-dayā* means caring for all living beings and sharing, protecting and serving all living beings.

The fundamental Jaina teaching and codes of conducts are deeply rooted for holistic environmental protection and harmony in nature. Hence the relationship between man and nature was friendly. Man also had deep respect towards nature. Jainism establishes a spiritual relationship between humanity and nature. Spirituality is essentially an individual endeavour. Therefore, individuals can only create collectivity discipline and practice. Each and every

basic reality of the universe is integral. By the doctrine of *anekāntavāda* and *syādvāda* Jainism recognized the parts of reality with the whole by means of the relativistic approach. So we can say Jainism establishes an eco-spiritual relationship between human being and nature. The basic tenets of Jainism that establishes such kind of relationship are:

- a. injure no creatures,
- b. do not command any creatures
- c. do not own any creatures, and
- d. do not employ any animal as the servant.

Jaina ecology is based on spirituality and equality. According to them all life forms plant, and animal have inherent worth and therefore all should be respected. The entire world is one because of the interconnectedness of different aspects of the world. Jainism accepts that every soul whether the soul of a man or the soul of a mono-sensed insect is autonomous and independent. They also believe in the presence of soul in inanimate things such as water, air, fire and earth. These are called “*Sthāvara jīva*” or immobile soul. The philosophy of Jainism inspires people behave sensitively not only with living beings but with the material things also. It does not allow anyone to exploit the non-living beings. It tries to shape our attitude towards nature by prescribing non-violent approaches to our everyday behaviour. Jainas practice all these principles even today and these principles are even prescribed for the protection of nature. The Jaina philosophy seeks to create a society founded on love and concern for all creatures. It presents a world view that stresses the interconnectedness of life forms.

## **BUDDHISM AND ECOLOGY**

The life of Buddha himself was very closely associated with nature. His birth, enlightenment, and the first sermon are the four major events that are very closely associated with the natural surroundings of nature (Keown 2007). From various Buddhist texts and the teachings we find that Buddhism seeks to offer explanation of the natural state of things than conceived as a religion in the usual sense of the term. Great emphasis is laid on the understanding of the realities, such as objects and subjective minds. In Buddhism while trying to solve the problems of suffering Buddha has said that the basic cause of suffering is the desire of man (Darlington 2017). It is the nature of man that is responsible for the problems man faces in all spheres of his life. By extending this insight to ecological crisis, we can say that it is the nature of man or desire of man that is responsible for all environmental crises. Most of the various ecological problems that we face now-a-days are due to the lack of holistic approach. Man's uncontrolled and unlimited desire is the basic cause of suffering. The desire gives rise to greed and ego. These are responsible for an imbalanced relationship between human beings and nature. Earlier human being's needs were limited. He was eating whatever was available in nature. But gradually he started to produce food and learnt to store it. Therefore, gradually his need turned into wants. In this way he

began to exploit nature. The thought that that he is superior to nature came to his mind. He treated nature as a means for the satisfaction of his desire.

Buddhism accepts that man's uncontrolled and unlimited desire is the cause of ecological imbalance (Darlington 2017). At the same time Buddhism also provides a solution to this problem through proper knowledge. Buddhism gives us a world view that is influenced by scientific thought. The main reason for Buddhism to be influenced by scientific thought was that it did not presuppose the existence of God. According to Buddhism, human being is part of nature. We cannot make a sharp distinction between human being and nature. Everything in nature is transient and everything is subject to the same natural laws. Every thing in nature is interconnected by the law of causality. Change is inherent in nature. Therefore, they are interdependent. These principles promote a scientific thought that helps human beings while dealing with nature.

Though Buddhism says that change is inherent in nature, it also says that natural processes in nature are affected by human morality. The reason is human thinking determines the moral standards in the society. Human being and nature are bound together with a reciprocal causal relationship. The change in one necessarily brings change in the other sphere. If there is degeneration in morality in the society then both human beings and nature also degenerate. The result of greed, hatred and delusion produce pollution within human society and nature. On the other hand, if morality dominates our thinking then the quality of human life and nature improves. Generosity, compassion and wisdom produce a better balance among human beings themselves and between man and nature. Human being and nature are interdependent.

According to the Buddhist doctrine human beings must try to satisfy their real needs not their desires. The resources of the world are limited whereas the human beings' desires are not limited. Buddhism says that happiness should be found by restoring human desires rather than proliferating desires and the goal of enlightenment should be through renunciation and contemplation (Jardine 2016). The Buddhist world view is inherently eco-friendly. The nature is an infinitely interrelationship among all the members of nature. Each individual is the cause for the whole and at the same time it is caused by the whole. In Buddhism the individual is not separate from the whole because the individual is understood as existing within the ontology of interdependence.

## **THE CONCEPT OF *DHARMA* AND ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS**

The concept of *dharma* is one of the most important concepts in Indian philosophy. The word *dharma* is derived from the root *Dhri*. *Dhri* means to uphold, sustain and support. The word *Dhri* denotes "that which holds together the different aspects and qualities of a being or an object into a whole" (Dwivedi 1994, p. 7). In the commonsensical term the term *dharma* has been translated as a religious code. However, *dharma* is translated in several ways and accordingly it assumes different meanings. *Dharma* is thus translated as righteousness, as duty and as a system of morality. Except this the term



*dharma* also means the essential nature of any object. It is the essential nature of an object without which the existence of that object does not have any sense. It may be thus said that the true nature of a human being is to act in accordance with *dharma*. Similarly it is the true nature of a tiger to kill and eat another animal to satisfy its hunger and the true nature or *dharma* of water is to flow downwards.

As it is derived from the Sanskrit root *dhri*, it means to sustain, support and uphold. Therefore the term has many meanings. The meanings are:

- (a) It is the basic foundation of all moral pronouncements. Therefore, it signifies the truth.
- (b) It implies an individual's duty and responsibility towards other individuals, and other animate and inanimate beings.
- (c) It connotes right conduct.
- (d) It also symbolizes authority. Therefore, it implies the behavior that are permitted by the society.

The oldest sense of the word *dharma* in the Vedic period is *ṛta*. *Ṛta* stands for the cosmic order. The term explains the natural laws, cosmic order, rightness and the universal harmony in nature in which all things in the world have occupied a proper place and function. But there is a difference between the word *dharma* and *ṛta*. *Dharma* characterizes the personal actions that either disturbs or maintains the cosmic order. But *ṛta* is a cosmic and impersonal law of nature. So there is a relationship between these two concepts. Therefore, *dharma* is the system of activity that guides the world in such a way that *ṛta* is not violated.

### **Types of Dharma**

There are five types of *dharma* and these are as follows:

(a) *Sanātana dharma* means that which is not handed over by any particular person (Zavos 2001). It is not established by any particular group. Therefore, it means the *dharma* which is eternal and constant. In Indian philosophy the Vedas and Upanishads are eternal and whatever is prescribed in that is *sanātana dharma*. *Sanātana dharma* that the Vedas and the Upanishads prescribe are truthfulness, forgiveness, practice of charity, self-control, non-violence, sacrifice, renunciation, compassion for all living beings and aspiring for *mokṣā*.

(b) *Sāmānya dharma* is meant for the general public. It consists of the general duties prescribed for all general people (Puliappallil 2018). It is expected that these duties should be practiced by all irrespective of the caste. So *sāmānya dharma* is the combination of four Cardinal virtues. These are truth, self-control, non-violence and purity.

(c) *Sādhāraṇa dharma* is related to everyone. It says all people irrespective of age, social class should observe some common moral obligations (Hacker & Davis 2006). So telling the truth, living ethically, non-violence, forgiving, the practice of goodwill, and exercising patience all the time are some of the responsibilities that come under the *sādhāraṇa dharma*. So these rules are

*sādhārana* or applicable to everyone. *Sāmānya* or common to everyone and *sanātana* or eternal in scope.

(d) *Mānava* or global *dharma* is that human beings have certain duties towards humanity and the world. *Mānava dharma* or global dharma prescribes an individual to consider the entire universe as his extended family. It extends from individual human beings to all living beings in this universe as the members of one family (Framarin 2021). From this concept of global Dharma the concept of human rights, animal rights and the rights for other living beings have emerged. Hence this concept is called *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. *Vasudeva* means the member of the one extended family. The extended family includes all human beings, animals, and all other living beings. An individual develops the attitude of respect for all other living beings only by considering the entire universe as an extended part of our family.

Since according to the concept of global dharma all beings are the members of one extended family then, human beings as the members of the extended family should not endanger the lives of others willfully. The essence of global dharma is compassion for all living beings and cultivation of non-violence and contentness (Gupta 1988).

(e) *Varnāshrama dharma and svadharma* are the duties according to an individual's profession towards the society and similarly there are certain duties according to the stage of an individual's life (Veeravalli 2014). Therefore, *varnāshrama dharma* is the duties determined by an individual's social class i.e., *varna*. For example, a soldier protects the people of his society from enemies and a priest ensures the health of the society by securing the good will of the God through rituals. At the same time the gurus educate the people. It is also the *svadharma* or one's own obligations to prefer their duties that are given to them to perform. An individual's *svadharma* and *varnāshrama dharma together* constitute the global dharma. Global dharma is the sum total of a person's obligation that unifies an individual with natural and social world (Bode 2013). These different kinds of dharma support one another. Therefore, a person's imperfect performance of his responsibilities brings negative impact in the society and the world ultimately. Dharma comes from an individual's true nature. A person cannot refrain from performing it. Hence, the role of the concept dharma is very important in the concern for nature. It helps a person to control his greed and passion from harming and exploiting nature and natural phenomena.

## **THE CONCEPT OF KARMA**

The term *karma* comes from the root *kri* (Bhikkhu & Cheng 2004). It means "to do". So Karma means action. But in its broader sense it also applies to the effects of an action. The law of karma is that, each action that is performed willfully has its consequences. It is also possible that the effect is not seen immediately. Every action creates its own reaction. A good action gives rise to good effect and a bad action gives rise to bad effect. The law of Karma says that every action performed creates its own chain of reactions and events (Bhikkhu & Cheng 2004). Some of the reactions are immediately

visible and some are visible after some time. Accordingly the present day ecocrisis is the result of the actions of past and present people. The concept of Karma says that there is interrelatedness between the action and the result of that action. Although we do not face reaction of our action, there is a possibility that someone else is going to face from that same action. In the context of ecocrisis the concept of *karma* is important as a guiding force to protect the individual.

### **THE ETHICS OF INTERCONNECTEDNESS**

The concept of *dharma* provides a vision and a method for a better world. It gives us a goal, model and structure to transform our attitudes towards an environmental consciousness. The manifestation of dharma presupposes the law of Karma. The concept of dharma and karma are the two fundamental ethical concepts. These two concepts can be considered as prerequisites for an environmentally conscious world. Dharma and karma are two imperatives in Indian ethics (Peetush 2018). According to the Indian philosophical perspective when an individual identifies himself with the nature then he/she perceives himself as one among all other entities. So he/she naturally tries to treat all other beings with the ethical principles with which he relates his self - interest. This leads man to manage the natural resources properly and, he tries to establish ecological relationship sensitively. This gives rise to a balanced economic-ecological relationship. The ultimate achievement is that the human being establishes a partnership with nature to protect the complex life-system of nature. The self-realization conception of ethics says that in nature we should not disturb or kill any life abruptly. It affects the further growth of all individually and collectively. This ethics is the necessary condition against dominant attitudes among individuals and the society.

The concepts of dharma and karma entail both the ecological and self-realization ethics. These two concepts are very much useful for environmental protection. It helps to change our view of nature from the attitude of dominance to the attitude of co-existence and interdependence (Peetush 2018). The principles upon which dharma is based are truth, moral obligation and duty. These principles can be used to mobilize people to change their attitude towards nature by being respectful towards nature. The development of the society should be based on the sustainability. Now we see how the concept of dharma is related with sustainable development.

### **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE CONCEPT OF DHARMA**

First we need to know the concept of sustainable development that meets the needs of the present without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Betiang *et al.*, 2018; Eba 2020). According to the Brundtland Commission Report it consists of two concepts (Davis & dos Santos 2018). These are (a) the concept of needs and especially the essential needs of the world's poor. The priority should be given to the essential needs of the poor. (b) The second concept is the limitations that are brought by technology and social organizations on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.

Through this we get progressive economy and society so that the living conditions of the world improve.

We can establish a link between *dharma* and sustainable development. *Dharma* can make the consciousness of sustainability possible. The concept of *dharma* can be used as a common strategy for the implementation of sustainable development for a better environmental management. The *mānava dharma* or global dharma and *sāmānyā dharma* are useful in perceiving a common future for society because the *sāmānyā dharma* is meant for the general public (Johannes 1985). According to *mānava Dharma* a person has certain duties towards other human beings and the world as a whole. Both the types of dharma are helpful in perceiving a common future for the society. *Varnāshrama dharma* and *svadharmā* are useful to the people to act both individually and as a group towards the achievement of a common future (Johannes 1985). Ultimately the development strategy for a sustainable development is the attitude of respect for nature and accordingly the satisfaction of human needs can be achieved. Thus sustainable development should meet the basic need of all and it should also be able to extend all the opportunities to each and every individual and it is expressed in the concept of *sarvodaya* in Indian Philosophy.

### **SARVODAYA AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

The concept of *sarvodaya* means awakening of one and all. It means the development, progress and welfare of all. It is the concept that aims at achieving the highest level of self realization where an individual sees himself or herself manifested in all others. This is explained in the following verse:

Let all living-beings be happy and at peace, let all beings be free from afflictions. If one realizes this and perceives it in all living beings, there would not be any suffering in this world (Dwivedi 1994, p. 22).

It describes that the individuals have duty towards themselves as well as towards others. They have duties beyond their immediate families i.e., to the whole universe. We can use this concept for environmental protection because it is based on the spiritual awakening of an individual. The goals *sarvodaya* sets for economic development have a spiritual base. The economic development not only includes production for profit but it also considers the conservation of material resources and the use of natural resources wisely. Hence the production patterns based on greed and envy are avoided. The over consumption of resources is also avoided due to that reason. If the development procedure is based on *dharma* and *sarvodaya* then the sustainable development is less materialistic but more equitable in its impact for all beings. It focuses on the “total-wellbeing” that includes moral, cultural and economic development of people.

### **SATYAGRAHA AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

The concept of *satyāgraha* is another means by which we can have an impact on the environmental policy process. *Satyāgrah* literally means persistence and endurance for truth (Herman 1976). It excludes the use of violence because human beings are incapable of knowing the absolute truth,

therefore, they are not allowed to punish. Punishment is violence. The word *satyāgraha* is first coined by Mahatma Gandhi. This is a technique to achieve freedom by non-violent resistance. It embodies five basic elements. These are, purity of (a) motive, (b) means to be used, (c) suitability of place, (d) time, and (e) the mental status of the agent. *Satyāgraha* means the truth force and all the above five basic elements ought to be followed by those who want to use this technique (Herman 1976). Gandhi says that the pursuit of truth does not entail inflicting violence on one's opponent. But at the same time he says to convince the adversary of their error by patience and sympathy. In his words:

For what appears to be the truth to one may appear to be error to the others. And patience means self-suffering. So the doctrine comes to mean vindication of the truth not by the infliction of suffering on the opponent but on one's self (Environmental Ethics: Our Dharma to the Environment, O.P Dwivedi, 1994, p. 22).

*Satyāgraha* is a force that can be used by any individual on any community. It represents the struggle of the people in opposing unjust laws. We can see a relation between *Dharma* and *satyāgraha*. Truth and the perfection of man are the basis of *dharma* and *satyāgraha* and these two are necessary for the proper development of society. *satyāgraha* is a means by which certain precepts that are associated with the concept of *Dharma* are manifested for the betterment of the individual and society. The two concepts, *satyāgraha* and *sarvodaya* together express *Dharma*. Through this the protection of the environment can occur. *satyāgraha* for conservation can be used as a force against governments and business. It is a means by which the common people can bring change on the environmental policies. Due to global ecological crisis now-a-days there are many environmental groups which are coming up in favor of a better environment. These groups can use the concept of *satyāgraha* for conservation. Through this also they can disrupt the policies that support the environmental degradation. The benefit of such kind of activity is two fold. Firstly, with such activity the environmental groups can fight in courts with the producers and manufacturing associations. While doing this they also promote and monitor the environmental issues. This act of *satyāgraha* broadens the scope of environmental education by producing the necessary information to the people. More and more people are involved in the environmental policy process. Secondly the acts of *satyāgraha* for conservation produce crisis. This crisis demands governmental and public attention and intervention because it affects the economic growth and production.

In the movements like *Chipko*, people acted in a certain way and this we can call *Forest Satyāgraha*. Broadly we can say *Satyāgraha for the environment*. The movement was used against the government forces for better environmental protection. The *Chipko* movement started in March 1973 in a place called *Gopeshwar* of *Chamoli* district of Utter Pradesh (Shiva & Bandyopadhyay 2019). The people of that village mostly women and children formed a human chain and hugged the trees to keep them from being cut.

The trees were supposed to be cut for a near by factory that was producing sports equipments. The same kind of action was taken in another village when forest contractors wanted to cut trees and they have license from the Government Department of Forests. People protested against cutting trees by hugging trees and such actions forced the contractors to leave. The *Chipko* movement is based on the ecological, economic and religious beliefs. Vilagers knew by that time that the industrial and commercial demands have destroyed their forests. They were dependent on the forests for their livelihood. If there is no forest how are they going to sustain their livelihood? So they tried to save their forests by *Ahimsā* or non-violence. Therefore, people once survived due to a value system that maintained the resources, because they believed in the presence of God in trees and forests. By protecting the trees they are the protectors of forests and at the same time the values inherent in *dharma* are also protected. This is the practical impact of *Satyāgraha* for the environmental protection. In such cases the government is forced to act in such a manner that leads to make a balance between the workers and the protestors. The government has to see that the natural resources are used rationally and the economic developmental activity should respect the local socio-cultural pattern. Therefore, the non-violent resistance should be used to check the environmental policy process. Governments would be forced to formulate the economic policies of sustainable development in the following manner.

- (a) The concept of *Dharma* and *Satyāgraha* has contribution to the environmental protection programs. These two concepts can be used to stop environmental degradation. The concept of *Satyāgraha* also helps us in educating people concerning the ecocrisis. It also forces the governments to think again on the policies. All environmental problems have now become so big that it is impossible to solve these problems only by society and governments (Ajour & Erim 2010; Ajour & Odey 2018; Ekuri *et al.*, 2018). Ultimately the attitude of people towards nature should be changed from exploiting attitude to the attitude of respect for nature. Therefore the spiritual basis we get from the concept of *dharma* should be used while dealing with nature.
- (b) The concept of *Dharma* is the basis of Indian culture, religion and philosophy. The role of *Dharma* in all spheres of life in India is very important. It is because according to Indian Philosophy it is essential to discipline our inner thoughts before changing the exploitative tendencies of people. The concept of *dharma* can only do this. It leads to get mastery over all our negative characteristics such as greed, exploitation, abuse, mistreatment and defilement of nature. It prescribes the domain of *dharma* to extend towards other living and non-living beings in the world.
- (c) We should try to separate the concept of *dharma* from any particular religion. The separation is necessary because without this we cannot make it a universal concept to be used in changing the attitude of human beings towards nature. The separation of the concept from being only affiliated to Hinduism is necessary because without

separation people from other culture and religion would not accept this as a means to achieve better environment. It will help us to work towards the protection and conservation of natural resources. The concept of *dharma* should be used as a mechanism to achieve the attitude of respect for nature. Irrespective of the religion it should be thought that there is a cosmic order that should be maintained.

The concepts of *Dharma*, *Karma*, *Sarvodaya* and *Satyāgraha* can give us a framework for the actions to be taken for a better environment. These can help us in the preparation of policies of sustainable development. These concepts if highlighted globally can provide the values that are necessary for a better environmentally conscious society. It does not permit the economic growth on the basis of greed, poverty, inequality and environmental degradation.

## CONCLUSION

Indian Philosophical perspective believed in the concept of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. It means all that is alive belongs to one single family including plants to human beings. Everything originates from *Brahman* and goes back to *Brahman*. All schools of Indian Philosophy believed in the interdependence relationship between human being and nature. Therefore the value of life has a close affinity with the sacred and mysterious power that underlies both the subjective and objective world. In Indian Philosophy it is accepted that each and everything including living and non-living are the result of the combination of same gross elements. Hence there is no sharp distinction between human and nature.

We get many verses in *Vedas* and *Upanishads* discussing the importance of eco-ethics and the ethics of conservation of resources. In Jainism we see a hierarchy of living and non-living entities and they are depending on each other at the same time. This dependence among themselves constructs a whole i.e., nature. Buddhism has concepts, such as, dependent origination and the middle path for environmental conservation. Both Jainism and Buddhism have provided a code of conduct for people to practice so that a better balance is maintained. In that code non-violence is the common and very important concept. Through this a sacred relationship is maintained with nature. Except this, the classical concepts like *Dharma*, *Karma*, and two other contemporary concepts such as *Sarvodaya* and *Satyagraha* can be seen as very eco-friendly concepts. These concepts are helpful in maintaining an interconnected and interdependent relationship with nature.

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