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Environment: Sanskrit literature and Bhartṛhari's Śatakṛtrayam: A discussion

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Abstract

Nature is crashing today due to the perversion of men and men made machines. Mega fauna has lost their natural power of development along with the destruction of nature. Awareness of the environment can be seen in Sanskrit literature. In ancient times, the people and nature of India lived as one. In the Vedic literature, the worship of natural energy is reflected in the mantras of the Vedic sages. Sukta no 90 of the first mandala of Ṛgveda speaks of protecting the environment. In the Sāma songs of Sāmaveda also mentions the natural environment, the Atharvaveda also describes the natural environment. Most of the poems and plays in the demotic Sanskrit literature have a deep connection with the awareness of the natural environment. In the poems and plays of Bhāsa, Kālidāsa, Bhavabhūti, Bhāravi and other poets, the environment and its importance can be seen. Like other poets, the poet Bhartṛhari was also quite aware of the environment, in Śatakṛtrayam kāvya we get the mention of environment. He urged everyone to go to the forest. He said "Hello my dear my friend, go to the forest, live by fresh fruit, wear new valkala. Bhartṛhari describes the beautiful nature- the vidyādhara are situated on the rocks of Himalaya which are cooled by cold water of Ganges.

Key words: Sanskrit literature and Bhartṛhari's Śatakṛtrayam

Introduction

Nature is crashing today due to the perversion of men and men made machines. Mega fauna has lost their natural power of development along with the destruction of nature. As a result one side developed the quality of life style of men through the technological excellence and we have also learned about the devastating impact of technology on the environment on the one hand, rapid industrialization and other hand the unrelenting and arrogant desire to dominate nature, lead us to the point where the existence of the world is in crisis. At what stage does environmental pollution reach and how can the development of industrial pollution be protected against environmental pollution? These questions are of great importance to developing countries such as the continent of Asia, because a large portion of the population of these countries is the poor class and they lack environmental awareness.

God's creation today is slowly breaking down in the hands of human beings. But this is a substantial contribution to the human body. In Mahābhārata mentioned that- "na mānuṣāt śreṣṭhataram kiñcit". In the long past, these people sincerely payed for the good of all the immovable and movable of the world- "dyauh śāntih, antarīkṣam śāntih, pṛthivī śāntih, āpah śāntih, oṣadhayab, śāntih, banaspatayah śāntih, sarvam śāntih, śāntireva śāntih, sā mā śāntiredhi."

From the Vedic period to the present time, the close connection between men, animals and plants, it shows a coexistence of nature with all beings. While cutting the branches of the Bell tree for the worship of Durgā, the priest felt how painful it was for the tree to cut the branches. So, the priest is purposefully saying to the tree, "do not grieve, because with your branches will be worshiped to the goddess Durgā."

"bilbavṛka mahābhāga sadā tvam śāṅkarapriyaḥ |
gṛhītvā tava śākhām ca devīpūjām karomyaham ||
śākhācchododbhavam dukkham na ca kāryam tvayā probho |
gṛhītvā tava śākhām ca pūjyā durgeti ca smṛtiḥ ||"

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(Nirṇayasindhu)

If we deeply analysed, we can know that religions relationship with the environment is very closely linked. Most people follow the principles of religion, so religion plays an important role in preserving the environment. Many environmentalists, they blamed western Christianity for its lack of environmental protection. In the Bible, where the creation of the world is described, it is said that God created men to dominate the earth. This thinking has taught people to look at the environment as a consumer and consumer goods. The religious rituals that were considered as sacred to the nature were common among the Primitive human groups. These rituals were rejected as superstitions and the greatness of Christianity was established. There is a debate about how much Christianity can be blamed for environment problems. Environment problems have become a major problem for people for people today. Greek philosophers were never worried about the environment and the relationship between human and environment.

Even though we are better creatures of God, we are using the environment as our own happiness. The environment is treating with us. We see that the environment doing crackpot with extreme temperatures in summer, very cold in winter, no rain in the rain and so on. Water pollution, air pollution, land pollution has taken the form of extremes. People's lives have been troublesome, yet we are not aware. We talk about protecting the environment on Facebook, WhatsApp, Tweeter but not actually planting a tree. We do not discontinue the use of plastic, even though there are plastic piles all around today, the line is very important-

“dao fire se aranya, lao e nagara, lao yata lauha, loṣṭra kṣṣṭha o prastara he navasavyatā”

(Sabhyatāra prati caitāli)

Now, we are discussing how worried the people of ancient India were thinking about the environment. However, it is true that the people of India have been aware about environment since ancient times. We know that Indian civilization is born in nature, the forest and nature are created a relationship with us human and nature also considered being a great family. We can find the environmental thought of ancient India from the Vedic literature and classical Sanskrit literature.

Vedic literature

Veda (Ṛgveda) is the oldest book in the world. It is the first book which processes on the environment. The sages of the Vedas were so environmentally conscious that the elements of the environment were worshiped as Gods in the Mantras of the Vedas N.J. Lockyer has declared- “The Vedas in fact, it is the oldest book in which we can study the first beginnings of our language and of everything which is embodied in all the languages under the sun.” The Vedic prayers divine intervention to bliss and protect the environment. To protect environment the Ṛgveda says-

“madhu vātāḥa ritāyate madhu kṣaranti sindhavaḥ mādviḥ naḥ santauṣadhi madhu naktamutusāsu madhumatpārthiva rajah madhu kṣorastu suryah mādhirgābo bhavantu naḥ”

(Ṛgveda, 1/90/6-7-8)

In the Vedic views, we can be seeing the adequate awareness about the greatness and usefulness nature. In the Vedic age, they tried to establish a give and take relationship with nature. The peoples in Vedic times also regarded nature, and the

environment in a holistic manner and reserved each of its constitutes by carefully preserving them - “do not harm the environment, do not harm the water and the flora, earth is my mother, I am her son, may the waters remain fresh, do not harm the waters.”

In Atharvaveda, it was prohibited to cut Vaṭavṛkṣa because gods live in this tree and no disease where this tree is situated.

“asvatthu devasadanastritiyaśamityo divi tatranamṛitayasyo śakhan deva kushthamavanwat”

(Atharvaveda 5/4/3)

So, the sages, peoples of Vedic time, they were very awareness about environment and other materials. It is clear that the Vedic vision to live in harmony with environment was not merely physical but war far wider and much comprehensive. The Vedic sages realized that the pure water, air etc. are the roots of to good health and happiness and hence they considered all these as gods.

The environment and its awareness also found in Upaniṣadas like Vedas. The pancamahābhūta theory established in the Upaniṣadas, the five basic elements or Pancamahābhūta viz. i) earth or land, ii) water, iii) light or lustre, iv) air, and v) ether etc. The nature has maintained a status of balance between and among these constituents or elements and living creatures. All Upaniṣadas indicated the awareness on environment through the pancabhūta and described that everything originated from pancabhūta and disappears in it. Purāṇas are the main books on environment, the name of the eighteenth Purāṇas viz. Gaḍura purāṇa, Matsya purana, Kūrma purāṇa, Varāhapurāṇa, Vāyupurāṇa, Agnipurāṇa are indicated the importance of flora, fauna and other objects to save the human being and the earth. Narasiṃha purāṇa mentioned the sameness between Nara (men) and Siṃha (animals).

Classical Sanskrit literature

Environment importantly discussion in classical Sanskrit text. We can know very close relation between men and forest or nature at the time of Ramayana and Mahābhārata. Rāma and Pāṇdavas they always got shelter in forests and Sītā who loved the animals of forest like a son. Rāma became god after spending 14 years in forest. We can see in Rāmāyaṇa that how different animals helped Rāma in rescuing Sītā. The Jaṭāyu bird tried to save Sītā from Rāvaṇa and Hunumāna's role in rescuing to Sītā is well known. The Mahābhārata mentions the importance of conserving natural resources, we the sory of tree of Kāśī state. Gītā is a book of philosophical explanations but we also see the environmental awareness. Lord Kṛṣṇa says to Arjuna that every objects of the earth are originated from lord, so, he is advised to us to save the flora, fauna and other objects. Kauṭilya's thoughts on nature and conservation of environmental resources are found in Arthaśāstra.

The poet Kālidāsa was a poet of environment, he described the environment in his all poetry. ‘Men are not fulfilled without environment’ it is his revelation and he has described the natural image very beautifully in Meghadūta kāvya. In another two poems of kālidāsa viz. Ṛtusamhāra and Kumārasambhava, how changes of the natural world are affect the human emotions, nature like itself, participates in human happiness, sorrow and joy. We also find the close relation with nature in Abhijñānaśakuntalam drama. Śakuntalā gave water daily on the trees as a son some trees was her sister. During the farewell for garial, each tree

provided materials for grooming to Śakuntalā and they also gave permission for going to Duṣmantas House-

“*seyam yāti śakuntala patigrham sarvairanujñāyatām*”
(Abhijñānaśakuntalam -9)

In the Manusmṛhitā we also find the awareness on environment, advice to men for not cutting the trees, because they also feel very pain-

“*antaḥsamjñā bhabantye sukhadukhasamanvitāḥ* ||”
(Manusmṛhitā -1.49)

Manu was very keen on conserving natural resources, and he gave the provision that the man who broke the dam of the common pond and pop up the water, he has to be drowned in water or killed in some other way.

In Uttarakāmarita, Bhababhūti was created a close relation between human and nature, men think to environment as friend and talking with them.

Environment in Śatakātrayam

Now we discuss on environment in śatakātrayam. We know the incident in the life of author. From the extreme circumstances of the poet's life, he composed the Nītiśataka, Śṛṅgāraśataka and Vairāgyaśataka. The picture of nature of Bhartṛhari is not only the picture of nature. The feelings and thoughts, he was identified with the help of nature are a major part of his style. He accepts nature and the natural environment in conscious form. On which emotions, thoughts and actions have a permanent effect. Bhartṛhari has embraced nature in his Mukṭaka poetry as an expression of Śambhava, and somewhere in the form of stimulation. In Nītiśatakam, Bhartrihari, the author of Śatakas who advised to the men with the examples of nature -

“*varam parvatadurgeṣu bhrāntam vanecaraiḥ saha |*
na mūrkhajanasamparkaḥ surendrabhaneṣvapi ||”
(Nītiśataka -14)

He advised that it is better to travelling in impassable mountain from the living with foolish in the house of Devarāja Indra. The men in that time, they had knowledge about environment they know which clouds suffuse. He mentioned that the verities of trees. The poet wants to spend the night meditating on Siva under the light of the moon in the broad forest.

In the Śṛṅgāra śataka, we also find the environmental awareness. When the poet described on women, he presented the nature very well. He arises a question to men are they waste the time for women or they meditate in nature? He wants to take one of these two, between forest and beautiful women. The author who described the six seasons very nicely in Śṛṅgāra śataka. The effect of nature on the human mind is very deeply and it is very close to the relation of nature with human beings. He mentioned the beautiful in summer season-

“*panimalabhrta bātāḥ sākḥā nabāṅkurakoṭayo*
madhuravidhurotkanṭhābhājah priyāḥ pikapakṣinām |
viralaviralasvedodgārā vadhūvadanendavaḥ prasarati
madhau dhātryām jāto na kasya guṇodayaḥ ||”
(Śṛṅgāra -83)

In the Vairāgyaśataka we know the Bhartṛhari spend his life in nature and forest. He was got peace living in forest and had

a different feeling. He urged everyone to go the forest. He told “Hello my dear my friend, go to forest, living by fresh fruit, wear new valkala, -

“*bhūśayyānavabalkalairakṛpaṇairuttiṣṭha yāvo vanam* |”
(Vairāgyaśataka -27).

Bhartṛhari described on the beautiful nature- the vidyādhara are situated on the rocks of Himalaya which are cooled by cold water of Ganges-

“*gāṅgātaraṅgahimaśīkaraśītalāni*
vidyādharaḍhyuṣitacāruśīlatalāni |”
(Vairāgya - 25)

The poet remembers the days spent in the forest. At that time, people lived on the basis of nature –

“*vayamiha parituṣṭā valkalaistvam dukūlaiḥ*”
(Vairāgyaśatakam - 54)

Bhartṛhari illustrate comparative figure on natural nature and artificial nature of city. Forests, rivers, land they are the friend of us -

“*falamalamaśānāya svādu pānāya toyam*
śayanamavaniprṣṭham valkale vāsasī ca |
navadhanamadhupānabhrāntasarvendriyāṅṇā
mavinayamanumanturim notsahe durjanānām ||”
(Vairāgyaśataka - 55)

Finally, the illustration on nature of Bhartṛhari is not equivalent with Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa and Kālidāsa's Meghaduta but he has own unique imagery on nature illustration. Vālmīki and Kālidāsa, they have presented the nature through their essay but Bhartrihari presented the nature through the Mukṭaka poetry.

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