

**RELIGION : A SAVIOUR FOR ENVIRONMENT WITH PARTICULAR  
EMPHASIS ON HINDUISM**

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## **RELIGION: A SAVIOUR FOR ENVIRONMENT WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON HINDUISM**

### **Abstract**

The concern for environmental issues is among the most topical issues in academic, business and political debates in both the developed and the developing countries. This paper examines some of the beliefs and practices underlying traditional Hindu religions' attitude towards nature and its strategic extension as a tool for Environmental conservation. The paper also looks at the evolving concern of the spiritually satiated individual towards environmental conservation exhibited globally. Environmental protection and development are often projected as two regimes that cannot operate without conflict. Rapid development is desirable only if it sustains good environment, and reduces economic disparities. Apart from being an essential prerequisite for maximizing growth rate, strategic planning is required for a balance between development and environmental conservation.

The human mind made a fateful decision during the course of the Scientific Revolution; that of ignoring the perennial wisdom of the world's spiritual traditions. Scientific research and development seemed to bring to the world technological superiority over nature. Lacking in the austere self discipline of knowledge and impelled by greed, man has tried to become a presiding deity of modern civilization. His emphasis has been on rights over obligations, particularly in the context of natural environment, leading to discernable dysfunctions in the form of environmental degradation which raises serious questions regarding the long term viability of modern society.

Ecological experts have lamented the decline of "nature worship" and have spoken wistfully of the need to import "Eastern Concepts of respect for the quality of all life forms." Even some of the most secularized nations are calling for a rediscovery of the sacredness of nature. For educationalists and human resource policy makers, religion centered education may be the answer for bringing about environmental behavioural change and for CEOs, a proactive stance to integrate environmental concerns into the framework of their business strategies.

Religion blended with '*vasudev kutumbakam*' (*the world is one family*) can be a powerful tool for this planet. Part of the challenge of modern religions and the modern strategist is to reclaim their connection with the earth.

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### **Religion : A cure for Environmental degradation with particular emphasis on Hinduism**

Environmental protection and development are often projected as two regimes that cannot operate without conflict. These conflicts can not be effaced without a life changing decision. Do the humans of the world want to be contributors to its destruction or review their strategies to break the link between development and destruction? Every crop comes with weeds. The solution is not to halt cultivation but to remove weeds as fast

as they grow. The remedy for the ills of development is not to give it up but to find innovative ways of mitigating its evils. Strategy is something that helps you adapt to changing circumstances. An effective and reliable strategy is the means to ask what if and what now. A sustainable society is one that functions and lives in harmony with earth systems such that future generations will be able to function with equal or greater ease and the quality of life will in no way be diminished.

Strategies, partly proactive and partly reactive, consists of the organizations moves and approaches that decision makers employ to attract and please customers, compete successfully, grow the business, conduct operations and achieve targeted objectives in order to evolve a win situation for all stakeholders by optimally managing the available resources . This modern concept considers the benefit of not only the shareholders, but all stakeholders. If the organization starts to behave like a parasite and take advantage of its own constituents in order to move ahead, it will lead itself towards annihilation.

Let us now consider this planet Earth as the organization. Why should one not formulate a strategy for win win situation for this entity? Organizations have been practicing Corporate Social Responsibility. Through this, they nurture beautiful relationships with society. Whatever the nature of the relationship, the fundamental aspect is, you have a need to be fulfilled. For a commercial organization this need is growth and profit but for the earth ...?

*Only when the last tree has died and the last river been poisoned and the last fish been caught will we realize we cannot eat money. ( Cree Indian proverb)*

*Even the frog does not drink up the pond in which he lives.(Native American proverb)*

Rapid development is desirable only if it sustains good environment, and reduces economic disparities.

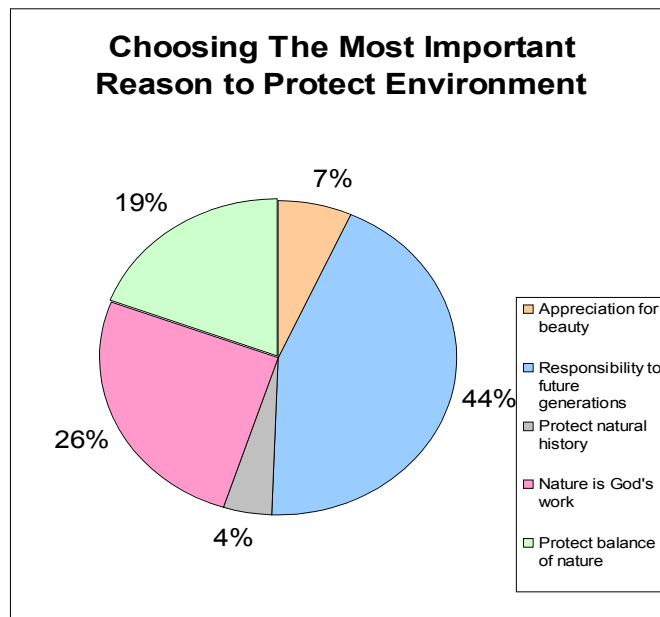
The human mind made a fateful decision during the course of the Scientific Revolution; that of ignoring the perennial wisdom of the world's spiritual traditions. Scientific research and development seemed to bring to the world technological superiority over nature. This satisfied the appetite of the spiritually undernourished scientist for control and the ability to manipulate the physical environment. Lacking in the austere self discipline of knowledge and impelled by greed, man has tried to become a presiding deity of modern civilization. His emphasis has been on rights over obligations, particularly in the context of natural environment, leading to discernable dysfunctions in the form of environmental degradation which raises serious questions regarding the long term viability of modern society.

What strategy can we formulate to protect this planet earth and keep it intact for future generations? Changing circumstances and ongoing efforts make crafting a strategy for the planet earth a work in progress and not a one time event. Honesty, integrity, keeping one's word, respecting the rights of others are traits that a good individual is supposed to believe in and to display. Religion can serve as a moral compass in guiding the actions and behaviors of all individuals and organizations in this world. The need is for crafting a strategy that will help individuals imbibe in their lives the perennial wisdom of the world's spiritual traditions. In the words of Marshall McLuhan, "*There are not passengers*

*on Spaceship Earth. We are all crew.*” Responsible men who want themselves to be regarded as exemplary corporate citizens must not only see that their companies operate ethically but also display a social conscience in decisions that affect all stakeholders, the environment, the communities in which they operate and society at large.

In the words of Swami Vivekananda, *“Religion is the idea which is raising the brute unto man and man unto God.”* Religion refers to both the personal practices related to faith as well as to the larger shared system of belief. Practicing the tenets of religions of the world, we can save this blue planet from annihilation. If we look at society from a historical perspective, we realize that protection and preservation of the environment has been integral to the cultural and religious ethos of most human communities. Ancient Hindus, Greeks, Native Americans and other religions around the world have venerated nature. Many saints say that love for one another (human brotherhood), love for all creation (biotic and abiotic) and love for oneself is religion. Religion is also a formal system of belief in God. Religious traditions teach us that the Earth is sacred, the fact that traditionally helps to exert control over how people interact with the natural world. Religions around the world have worshipped all forms of nature believing that it emanated the spirit of God and respect the fact that all things coexist in intricate and regulated harmony, which is also the basic postulate of Science and Reason.

The use of Religion as a tool for environment conservation is justified because firstly most lasting social change is anchored in a deep moral imperative. Secondly values based rationales for protecting biodiversity are widely held and persuasive. Thirdly religion humanizes and personalizes choices about environment and more importantly, understanding ethics backed by individuals’ religions will help us make better decisions on complex issues.



**Source :** *Beldon, Russonello & Stewart, Americans & Biodiversity, New Perspectives 2002 (A good 26% have cited in the above survey that they will protect the environment due to religion based morality.)*

### **Buddhist Contribution**

Buddhist teachings require every person to consider right livelihood and the impact that would have on society and the environment. ( Noble eight fold path)

According to Cakkavattisihanvda Sutta , the ideal king is expected to protect not only his subjects but also quadrupeds , birds and the environment. King Ashoka's Fifth Pillar Edict stating that he infact placed various wild animals under protection, is one of the earliest recorded instances of a specific policy of conservation.

### **Christianity and Environment Conservation**

It has been found to be said that the Christian thought has been a supporter of using the Earths' resources for the benefit of mankind without giving any thought to its conservation. However I have quoted below instances that are quite the contrary.

According to the entire Judeo-Christian tradition, the Earth belongs to God.

*The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. ( Ps 24.1)*

The Bible is permeated with a careful concern for preserving the "land" and the "earth" as an allotted heritage. Christians must treat nature as having value in itself, and must be careful to exercise dominion without being destructive. The Bible contains numerous examples of the care with which Christians are expected to treat the environment. Deuteronomy 25:4 and 22:6 indicate the proper care for domestic animals and a respect for wildlife. In Isaiah 5:8-10 the Lord judges those who have misused the land. Job 38:25-28 and Psalm 104:27-30 speak of God's nurture and care for his creation.

Pope Benedict XVI has more recently added 'Polluting the environment' in the modified list of sins. "While sin used to concern mostly the individual, today it has mainly a social resonance," Monsignor Gianfranco Girotti told L'Osservatore Romano, Vatican City's local paper.

### **Islam's view**

*The Earth is green and beautiful, and Allah has appointed you his stewards over it. The whole earth has been created a place of worship pure and clean. Whoever plants a tree and diligently looks after it until it matures and bears fruit is rewarded. If a Muslim plants a tree or sows a field and humans and beasts and birds eat from it , all of it is counted as charity on his part.(Hadith)*

In the Qur'an, Muslims are instructed to look after the environment and not to damage it. Devote thyself single-mindedly to the Faith, and thus follow the nature designed by Allah, the nature to which he has fashioned mankind. There is no altering the creation of Allah. (Surah 30 : 30)

*Allah is he who raised the Heavens without any pillars that ye can see. It is He who setup the Earth, and set thereon mountains standing firm, and flowing rivers. All this is God's creation and Muslims should therefore seek to protect and preserve environment. Moreover by doing so they protect God's creatures. ( Quran 2-4 and Quran 17:4)*

### **Hinduism and the Environment -Evidences from Religious Scriptures**

For this very ancient religion, environment protection is not a novel idea. Hinduism declared in its dictum that " *The Earth is our mother and we are all her children* "

*( Atharva Veda Bhumi Sukta )*

What amazes in India “ *this blessed land, the foundation, the backbone, the life centre is religion and religion alone. Let others talk of politics, of the glory of acquisition of immense wealth poured in by trade, of the power and spread of commercialism of the glorious fountain of physical liberty but these the Hindu mind does not understand. Touch him on spirituality, on religion, on God, on the soul, on the Infinite, on spiritual freedom, and we will find that the lowest peasant in India is better informed on these subjects than many a so called philosopher in other land. We have yet something to teach to the world. The *raison d’ etre*, that this nation has lived on, inspite of hundreds of years of persecution, inspite of nearly a thousand years of foreign rule and foreign oppression, this nation still lives, it still holds onto God, to the treasure house of religion and spirituality.*” (Swami Vivekananda Complete works Vol .III)  
*The Hindu man drinks religiously, sleeps religiously, walks religiously, robes religiously, The mission of the race is religion and because that has not been touched the race lives on.*” ( Complete works Swami Vivekananda Vol. VIII )

Hinduism is a way of living according to one’s understanding of principles of Vedas and Upnishads. Veda is revealed knowledge. Just as the knowledge of gravity was revealed to Newton, similarly many Rishi’s or Seers were awakened to certain transcendental Eternal Truths which became the very *essence* of Hinduism. Hinduism demonstrates an ecological awareness and great respect for the natural world.

Ancient Hindus felt the Supreme Being’s presence in everything around them. Since these divine forces sustained all living creatures and organic things on this earth, to please God, they felt they must live in harmony with His creation including earth, rivers, forests, sun and air.

Efficiency of human effort comes with utilization of resources at one’s disposal. This efficiency plays its role in improvement and modernization of one’s skills and actions to suit the appropriate environment. Every human is a manager within himself and to its surroundings. The way he behaves and understands these elements of interaction depends wholly on his awareness level. It is in this direction that a strategy need be crafted and executed. The tenets of Hinduism raise this level of awareness which transcends the existing boundaries of thinking. The melodious madrigals of Sanskrit literature have scientific cum religious description of nature (synonym for environment) and indigenous systems of its restoration and stabilization. The carbon cycle, the water cycle, the food chains are some stabilizing tools put in practice by nature.

In the Gita, the Lord says, *Maya tat’midam sarva jagdavyaktamurtinamatsthani’ sarvabhutani na chaham te’shvavasthitah.* ( Be Me, unmanifest in form this whole world is pervaded; all beings are in Me, I am not in them.)

Any part of the environment, if annihilated is against Parmatman with no hope for resurrection. The Hindu traditions older than the Himalayas guide us in grappling with man made catastrophes in the toxic realities of our present ecological crisis.

The Vedas traditionally believed to have been written around 3000 B.C. ( as accepted by German scholar Max Muller) and considered sacred in Hinduism contain one thousand and twenty-eight hymns dedicated to thirty-three different Gods out of which most often

addressed Gods are nature Gods . Surya (Sun God), Indra (Rain God and King of Heavens), Agni (Fire God).

Ano Bhadrah: Kritwo Yantoo Vishwathana ( Prayer in devotion to nature for the upliftment of mankind.)

*“Do not cut trees because they remove pollution.” (Rig Veda 6:48:17)*

*“Do not disturb the sky and do not pollute the atmosphere.” (Yajur Veda 5:43)*

*“We invoke all supporting Earth on which trees, lords of forests, stand ever firm.”*

*( Atharva Veda 12:1:27 )*

*“Don’t destroy forest with Tigers and don’t make forest devoid of tigers. Forests can’t be saved without tigers and tigers can’t live without forests because forests protect tigers and tigers protect forests.” (Virat Parrva 5.45-46)*

*“It brings great sin if fire is not offered purifying material( havan); if trees are cut down on auspicious days , if human waste , spit and cough etc. are dropped in water.” ( Shanti Parva)*

*“Uttamah purushstvanyah parmatmetyudavhatah*

*Yo loktrayamavishya vibhatyaryavyayameshewarah.*

(The Supreme Being is surely another called parmatman as the Imperishable Ishwara pervades and supports the three worlds.)

*“Yo devohagnau yohapsu yo vishvam bhuvana,mavivesha*

*Yo oshadhishu yo vanaspatisu tasmai devaya namonamah”*

(The deity who is in fire, who is in water , who is pervading the universe, who is in medicinal herbs and trees, that deity I salute again and again.)

Hindus practice a sacred ecology ascribing merit to forestry, irrigation and horticulture. Even Charaka, the atheist philosopher of ancient India, who totally rejected Vedas, the Hindu scriptures, considered the principles of Vayu (air) Bhumi (earth), Jala (water), Agni (fire) as important factors in regulating the lives of humans, animals and plants. This Hindu worldview of ancient Vedic times became formalized into the Samkhya system of philosophy that promoted ecology-care in Hindu attitude.

The Hindu beliefs spawned many rituals that are still followed by traditional Hindus in India. For example, before the foundation of a building is dug, a priest is invited to perform the Bhoomi Pooja in order to worship and appease mother earth and seek forgiveness for violating her. Certain plants, trees and rivers were considered sacred, and worshipped in festivals. In a traditional Hindu family, to insult or abuse nature is considered a sacrilegious act. A Hindu mother would severely scold her child for acts like ripping the limb of a plant or urinating or spitting on a tree or in any water body.

### **Nature, the Foster Mother**

Several great ancient epochs of Hinduism, the Vedic sages and Lord Buddha were indeed borne by the forest as their foster mother. The Lord Buddha too sprinkled his advice in the midst of groves. The palace was not spacious enough for him. It was the forest which had clasped him to its breast. The heartland of the Hindu civilization coexisted with nature. The trees and plants, rivers and lakes had abundant scope to co-exist with man.

Unlike the present times where humans who by the force of circumstance , get confined in the forest, become wild like the tiger or foolish like the deer, the Hindu saints

prospered in the forests (tapovan) where the solitude did not overwhelm the intellect of man. Instead it gifted him with power that drenched future civilizations and continues to do so till today. A lively exchange prevailed between them and the forest in all aspects of daily work, leisure and needs. In this way they could understand their own life by connecting it with the greater life all round. They accepted air, light, food and water with reverence and devotion.

### **Individual, Corporate, Social and Political Contribution towards Environment Protection ; an aesthetic and moral priority.**

Some of the earliest scientific studies of environmental damage were carried out in the eighteenth century by French or British colonial administrators who often were trained scientists and who considered responsible environmental stewardship as an **aesthetic and moral priority**. The fact reaffirms my belief that environment conservation has a definite driving force in religion backed morality. British plant physiologist Stephan Hales, for instance, suggested that conserving green plants preserved rainfall. His ideas were put into practice in 1764 on the Caribbean island of Tobago, where about 20 percent of the land was marked as “reserved in wood for rains.”

Pierre Poivre, an early French governor of Mauritius, ordered in 1769 that one quarter of the island was to be preserved in forests, particularly on steep mountain slopes and along waterways. Mauritius remains a model for balancing nature and human needs.

*Man and Nature* by George Perkins Marsh published in 1864 inspired President Theodore Roosevelt and his chief conservation advisor, Gifford Pinchot. Together with naturalists and activists such as John Muir, William Brewster and George Bird Grinnell, Roosevelt and Pinchot established the framework of the national forest, park and wildlife refuge system. John Muir, amateur geologist and popular author argued that **nature deserves to exist for its own sake, regardless of its usefulness to us**.

Swami Vivekananda’s relevance to this subject is immense. Young in years but eternal in wisdom, he said, ‘Man-making is my mission.’ Not merely book learning but combining India’s idealism with Western efficiency. Nothing Swamiji preached is outdated. Vivekananda hoped that India would set an example of how science and religion could meet, science taking care of man’s physical needs and religion of his moral and spiritual needs in an effort to reach a balance. “I look upon religion as the innermost core of education.” No society could survive unless its human element was good and strong. The west’s dynamism, power of organization and its achievements in science and technology impressed him. But he also noticed its preoccupation with sensory–pleasure and indifference about moral development. He wanted a happy balance between development, material prosperity and moral advancement.

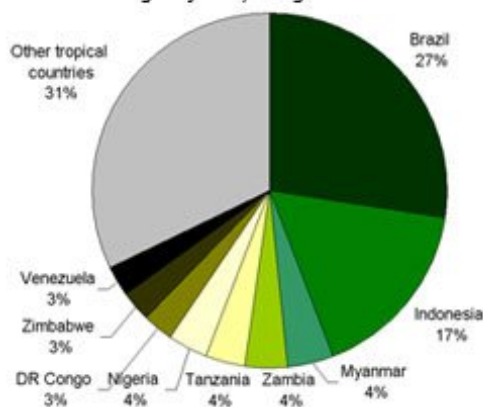
*Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson published in 1962 is also a turning point in the history of awakening towards environment conservation. Environmentalism has now become well established in the public agenda since the first World Environment Day on 5<sup>th</sup> June established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1972 to raise environmental awareness and to encourage action to protect the environment.

### **Current Environmental Concerns**

In a study published by the World Resources Institute, the United Nations, and the World Bank in September 2000, more than 175 scientists assessed the health of Global

ecosystems. They found that half the world's wetlands were lost in the last 100 years while logging and land conversion have shrunk the world's forests by as much as half. Nearly three quarters of the world's major marine fish stocks are over fished or are being harvested beyond a sustainable rate and soil degradation has affected two-thirds of the world's agricultural lands in the last fifty years. The principal cause of biodiversity loss is the fragmentation, degradation and destruction of ecosystems and habitats through conversion of land to economically productive uses, especially agriculture, forestry, mineral and fossil fuel extraction and urban development.(Karkkainen B.) On the other hand the religious sacredness of such Himalayan locales as Badrinath and Kedarnath ( Utrakhand) have created a reverential attitude towards the environment and such forest glens have remained intact. ( Subramaniam C.D.) The *Renuka* lake near Paunta (Himanchal Pradesh) or the *Triveni* near Mandalgarh ( Rajasthan ) find fish in abundance. The FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) estimated that between 2000-2005, 8.4 million hectares of forest were destroyed every year. This was a raise of 8.5 percent from the 1990's.

**Share of tropical deforestation, 2000-2005**  
 mongabay.com, using FAO data



Tropical deforestation

Deforestation can be avoided aided by religious belief. Cutting down forests accounts for one fifth of the emissions, more than those from all transportation. By protecting our forests, we can reduce carbon emissions in the atmosphere. This is more significant for countries like India which have a large percent of the world's freshwater resources, forests and valuable biodiversity. (Total Forest Cover\* **678,333 20.64 (20.64%) Total Geographic Area 3,287,263 100.00** \* Including 4,461 km<sup>2</sup> under mangroves (0.14% of country's geographic area) Source : Forest Survey of India report 2003.

A survey conducted by global consultancy firm McKinsey, 48% of executives (of which 36% were CEO's) from across the world said environmental concerns particularly climate change was the single biggest concern that would affect shareholder value over the next five years. (PTI Nov.14, 2007) Auditing and public reporting of ethical

performance by 'The Body Shop' improves efficiency and enhances morale and maintains legitimacy in an increasingly stakeholder driven economy.' (David Wheeler) Kevin Rudd's victory in Australia reflects a positive change that the individual voters in the developed world have become conscious of the Environment. Environment was an important electoral issue during 2007 Australian elections. Rudd has a budget to protect the Great Barrier Reef, one of the greatest natural wonders of our times. In England, Tony Blair spoke about environmental issues passionately. French politicians debated controlling their greenhouse emissions. Sarkozy was open to creating fiscal disincentives for products with a large carbon footprint. We have an emerging trend of the activist voter who is trying to force their government to act.

If companies want to be globally competitive, then I propose a concept of **Environmental responsibility of Business**. Few companies will voluntarily adopt Environmental Responsibility codes because in their perception, these will add to their costs. Governments do enjoy the power of coercion. Only the government can force people to do things through its political, military and police power and limit organizations by legal restraints imposed on them to keep away from abusing all natural resources. . But this limits organisations' approach to firefighting rather than incorporating the environmental concern in the corporate strategy.

A very significant judgment was delivered by the Supreme Court of India on April 24, 1999. The court ordered a ban on registration of private, non-commercial vehicles without Euro-II emission norms in the National Capital region (NCR) from April 1, 2000 to check vehicular pollution. (Times Of India, April 30, 1999). Counsels for Mercedes and Toyota, TELCO and Maruti Udyog Ltd. pledged compliance.

On the other hand a number of business innovators have tried to develop green businesses, which produce environmentally and socially sound products. Environmentally conscious or green companies such as Body Shop, Patagonia, Aveda, Johnson & Johnson, Bharti Airtel have evolved as responsible entities.

Kirloskar Copeland Ltd.'s ( KCL) commitment to protect the environment has given impetus to be the pioneer in developing innovative ecofriendly technology for the air-conditioning and refrigeration industry. To be ahead in the green race is part of its business strategy, since it manufactures compressors and condensing units for air-conditioning and refrigeration, catering to 21 industry segments. Montreal Protocol declared phasing out of CFC gases, KCL is the first manufacturer to introduce ecofriendly R134a gas compressor in 1994. KCL invested heavily in changing its manufacturing processes and setting up a testing facility as well.. Since this was way ahead of its time, KCL undertook a massive, 80 city, 10,000 Customer Contact Programme . More recently it has launched ecofriendly R 404A gas compressors. In its pursuit of environment friendly practices, KCL also offers natural fluids as a refrigerant. With CFC gases to be phased out completely by 2010, this ISO 14000 certified company is well positioned to offer a basket of solutions for a greener earth.

Maruti Udyog Ltd. has launched an alternate fuel technology vehicle that is environment friendly. In March 2006, Maruti launched the LPG version of one of its most popular models Wagon R which is three times more cost efficient as compared to the petrol variant and environment friendly.

Atlas Copco has taken the lead by launching innovative environment friendly technology and cleanliness drive within factory premises backed by a commitment for a greener tomorrow. Atlas Copco's Variable Speed Drive compressor slashes energy consumption by upto 35% by matching the speed of the drive motor to the actual power need. High volumes of low grade waste heat are being intensively recovered by Atlas Copco commonly called Energy recovery System. Atlas Copco uses only environment friendly gases ( R134a/ R404a) for their products like dryers that do not deplete the ozone layer. It has extended the concept of OSD which is a product that removes oil from the waste water discharged into rivers. Companies will have to partner with the government to solve this problem of the society.

I strongly believe that a major contributor that is feeding the drive for these innovations is the Spiritual Quotient of the promoters far removed from the instinct to 'only take and not give.' As the Arabs say, *"The nature of rain is the same but it makes thorns grow in the marshes and flowers in the gardens."* What was once considered fashionable 'being green' and seen to be esoteric, not possible to be replicated in large assembly line operations has now emerged as a practice with ramifications for every sector of the economy from manufacturing to lifestyle , and everything in between.

#### Project Aravalli

Aravalli, meaning wall of stone , starts from the south-eastern part of Gujarat traversing through Rajasthan, it extends to Harayana and border of Delhi. A project was launched in each of the states to restore and regenerate the ecosystem. The project authorities encouraged the local Hindu women to start nurseries to raise saplings . About 10.5 million saplings were raised by 207 women owned nurseries and over Rs.55 lakhs were paid by the project as cost of saplings. Plantations were done on community land by local people in all the five districts under the Aravalli project. The villagers were motivated to keep larger animals that could be stall fed to restrict grazing by goat and sheep on the land under plantation. Open areas between the tree saplings were used to grow grasses and legumes to provide for fodder which the villagers were free to harvest as per their requirements. Within two years the practice led to greater harvest of bio-mass and better protection of soil against erosion. At first count in 1993 grasses and legumes had been sown on about 20,000 hectares in five districts of Harayana yielding fodder exceeding 30,000 tonnes. The Aravalli Project was launched in Harayana in the year 1990 and within a period of nine years the Aravalli region regained its lost ecosystem and glory.

ACHIEVEMENT OF ARAVALLI AFORESTATION PROJECT IN HARYANA	
CULTIVATION OF OPEN AREAS BETWEEN SAPLINGS	20,000 hectares
REFORESTATION OF BARREN HILLS and REHABILITATION OF DEGRADED FORESTS	38,050 hectares
DISTRIBUTION OF PLANT SAPLINGS	10.5 million
FODDER, FUELWOOD GENERATION	30,000 tonnes
ADDITIONAL EMPLOYMENT GENERATION	12.98 million mandays
SOURCE : LOCAL INSTITUTIONS AND REHABILITATION OF COMMON LANDS IN THE ARAVALLI HILLS, HARYANA BY D.D. SHARMA	

Such public activity among interested groups represents “perhaps the most visible example of a consensus based multi-stakeholder approach to resource management. (Freeman)

#### The Bishnois

The region chosen for the Aravalli Project is the homeland of the Bishnoi Community. They are Bishnois originally hailing from Thar, Rajasthan and are scattered in the states of Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh. They are followers of Jambheshwar or Jamboji, a saint and seer who lived between 1452 to 1537 CE. Along with devotion to God, and compassion to fellow animals, protection of nature figured in his teachings, which led to symbiosis with nature. Water-management received priority. There are no idols for Bishnois. Instead they nurture and love trees. Bishnoi settlements are like oasis in Thar, the desert area of Rajasthan with green-belts, birds, bucks and *chinkaras* which roam about fearlessly. Traditionally rainwater was collected carefully in underground wells. Bishnois are an exemplary community in environment protection not only in India, but for the whole of environment-destroying mankind.

Chipko Movement : Chipko ( literally to hug trees) a remarkable display of courage and determination, had women wrapping their arms around trees to protect them. They prevented logging on 12,000 km<sup>2</sup> of sensitive watersheds in the Alakananda Basin. Today the Chipko Andolan has grown to more than 4000 groups working to save India’s forests.

#### **Conceptual Connections with Strategic Management and Some New Possibilities**

The ultimate responsibility for and commitment to an environmental policy belongs to the highest level of management. Strategy has a moral component that is often realized by strategists but is found to be difficult to operationalise. Unfortunately, legislation is usually introduced retrospectively as a result of public pressure or in the wake of some disaster which has aroused public concern. It is this reliance on legislative regulation

which has, in effect, created a hiatus for organizations where they can be seen to be “doing the right thing” Roome defines strategic management as a planned and programmed adjustment of the structures, systems and activities of a business in response to perceived and anticipated changes in the business environment and takes into account the organization’s capacity to change. He further states that the purpose of these strategies is to ensure that the organization develops along a route which allows effective and efficient realization of its goals, but at the same time remains flexible enough to meet challenges and opportunities as they arise. Now since we are strategizing for the blue planet, we ( governments, CEOs, spiritual heads and individuals need to formulate strategies to combat the gigantic problems that are heading towards an environmental disaster. Firms need to take a proactive stance and seek to integrate environmental management systems into the framework of their business strategies by having a vision that encapsulates the strategic intent of environment conservation. The Mukesh Ambani owned Jamnagar Refinery is surrounded by a green belt that not only minimizes the effects of pollution but also produces choicest mangoes that are exported.

Employees contribute to the central vision of the environmental ethics and codes of practice by which they and the company operate. They also contribute to the translation of that ethic into practice and are responsible for its achievement.

Organizations which are at the initial stage of assessing environmental issues and impacts can begin by establishing procedures and policies that at least comply with legislation and regulatory codes of practice. As experience and knowledge are acquired, realistic and achievable goals and objectives which go beyond compliance can be introduced. Maintaining standards is no longer an unaffordable luxury and establishing a programme for the systematic handling of business values can be highly successful. Organizations which practice TQM have seen that a belief across the whole organization that quality is an important value in all decisions and actions can be very profitable. By integrating Environmental Management into its systems the company accepts corporate responsibility for its environmental effects and it needs to allocate responsibility through the management structure and Corporate Strategy. While quality assurance has an immediate impact on the customer, the benefits of sound environmental practice have a delayed, but much more enduring effect. As a result of this time-lag, organizations have tended to regard their pursuit of environmental excellence as being secondary to stakeholder demands. However several business tycoons have very clear views on Environmental Conservation which is reflected in the Vision & Mission Statements of their organizations. Kumar Mangalam Birla Chairman BK-KM Birla Group of Companies says, “We don’t want to lose focus of the woods for the trees. If we are so involved in business, we can sometimes lose the whole perspective.”

In response to a question on whether environment friendly initiatives are looked at from a business or a Corporate Social responsibility angle, Group General Manager and country head HSBC India, the bank that has worked on projects ranging from Olive Ridley turtles and supporting botanical gardens to undertaking water harvesting with NGOs says, “Both. The company that uses its resources efficiently is going to prosper in the long run. More than often it will be profitable too. The two agendas have a common end.”

Organisations and Management systems cannot be seen as disconnected sets of disciplines and techniques clustered around various functions and activities with bolted on environment management. The benefits of synergy must be availed by developing a comprehensive corporate environmental programme along with systematic handling of values and behaviour throughout the complete strategic management process. Companies could begin by expanding on their mission statements in order to create an evolving work philosophy which embraces environmentalism. At the same time the initiatives should be institutionalized and not just CEO-led.

In agriculture, cash crops should be promoted that require less water. Drip irrigation technology should be promoted that conserves water. For example, this technology is being currently used in Mandalgarh region of Rajasthan and good quality oranges are being produced. Infact why not import sugar at reasonable prices rather than cultivate sugarcane that requires large amount of water?

**It is people and their core values, set within an organizational dimension, on which any programme for change must focus.** This is where the subject of my paper has the most significant contribution to make. The very recent announcement by [Pope Benedict XVI adding 'Polluting the environment' in the modified list of sins](#) is a welcome vision. Other religious leaders of stature can make a significant contribution by opining on specific environmental conservation concerns.

Consumers are also recognizing that they are as responsible as managers for ensuring not only that products are safe but also that they are produced in an environmentally benign manner. They can exercise this responsibility by means of boycotts, government lobbying and pressure group activities. Their concern will become more vocal as they become more informed about the long-term effects of pollution practices and policies. Companies can no longer adopt a superficial approach to "green" issues but will have to integrate environmental standards and criteria into their commercially oriented management strategies. In order to do this they must incorporate new value systems into their organizations, educate their personnel and develop total environmental management systems which are implementable on a commercial basis.

## **Conclusion**

An ever increasing environmental turbulence has enveloped the environment encompassing the entire world. This turbulence is so all pervasive touching and deeply affecting all aspects of human life. What we fail to see is that this world is not a thing of mere use. That is why we scorn its resources. By this scorn, we deprive only ourselves. What we could have obtained in amplitude, we get in dribblets. What would have filled our hearts, now merely fills our stomachs.

Things coexist in intricate and regulated harmony, which is the basic postulate of Science and Reason. It is this harmony that we have to play on. Few entities have the resources and capabilities to pursue their strategies regarding environment. No country, rich or poor, has enough motivation to confront global problems alone, because only a part of the benefits accrue to countries taking action, while others have a free ride. How best can any country act to mitigate environmental threats? Unfortunately, no self optimizing rule has yet been discovered to guide individuals. Individual behaviour is excluded from any kind

of regulation.(Mark A Cohen) Treating individual behaviour, inspired by religion can lead to the development of viable and innovative regulatory instruments that have the prospect of achieving ‘environmental protection’ at a relatively lower cost. Religious scholars and opinion leaders can identify and propagate information that is most likely to induce changes in environmental behaviour and can help contribute to the world at large. This will create self directed individual action followed by group directed action.(Warren Blank). “[Realigning environmental conservation with a spiritually satisfying path produces a glimpse of an unfathomable process.](#)” (Holmes O.) Religion blended with ‘*vasudev kutumbakam*’ can be a powerful tool for this planet. Here it is a question of life or death , of survival or extinction. Part of the challenge of modern religions is to reclaim their connection to the earth.

All development should be aimed at creating a world of abundance where no one is lacking in basic needs and, together with this, high priority must be given to the efficient and economical distribution of the benefits of technological development.

All scientists and decision makers must have a solid grounding in ethics, ecology and public safety. Strategic vision for making educated men of virtue is the key to create a sustainable ecosystem. We can progress without being destructive if we decide to use religion as a personal path to God guiding us in our quest for advancement. The crucial issue is adding value to the systems and the lesson will have to be learnt fast. Many countries, societies and private enterprises have grown in the past without a formal strategic vision regarding environment conservation. The merit in organized thinking must be recognized. Business models should include strategic sustainable practices. Industry leaders should be self regulating. Public education in environmental science must be made a part of curriculum for all branches of study and lastly governments should craft and implement reasonable legislation to deal with all deviations.

Societal benefits for protecting the environment motivated by religion far outweigh the costs of doing so. We can take along policy makers who are driven by their economic agenda and also politicians with their own political interest. If we trigger off this awakening, it will be the most worthwhile strategy that will hold the future for mankind. Together the religions of the world can help mitigate all environmental threats.

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