

Protection of Environment As Depicted In the *Śuklayajurveda*

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Protection of environment is a worldwide phenomenon. It is a basic right of all living beings on earth to live in a healthy environment. The creations on earth has a close relationship with the environment for the fulfillment of their various needs. At present right to have a healthy environment is considered to be so significant that nowadays it has been included in the third generation of human rights.

The word environment includes land, air and water and the interrelationship which exists among and between water, air and land and other living creatures.¹ It is mainly because of the man's action that the environment is polluted causing unfavourable alteration to the surroundings.

India is also afflicted with the problem of environmental deterioration. Concern for environmental protection in India is seen since the time of the Vedas. In early period, the relation between man and nature was very cordial. Each and every element of nature had got special importance in those days. The *Yajurveda* is a text which is utilized as manual for the performance of the Vedic rituals. However, the White or *Śuklayajurveda* by its various messages declares about the importance of the elements of nature like, trees, animals, earth, water and air and significance of the protection of them also.

Trees are considered as the Lord of the forest. It is the duty of all to preserve the trees. Much importance has been given in the White or *Śuklayajurveda* for the protection of the trees.

It is very significant that this Veda has compared the trees with a mother² Trees are considered to be the protector of diseases. It is expected that they should enter into every limb of the patient and destroy his disease.³ As the trees are so beneficial so it is rightly stated there that one should not harm the trees. Prohibition of destroying the trees is shown in this way.....*ośadhyaste mūlam mā himsīsam.*³ Again *mā ośadhirhimsiḥ.*⁴ However, humble prayer is done to them so that the person who cut the trees for the purpose of treatment of diseases should not have to face any kind of misfortune.⁵ Long life is asked for the person who cut the trees for removal of diseases, for the sick person and also for that tree itself.

Dīrghāyusta ośadhe khanitā yasmai ca tvā khanāmyaham.

*Atho tvam dīrghāyurbhūtvā śatavalva vi rohatāt.*⁶

All round growth of the trees is very much expected in different mantras.⁷

A great deal of respect is shown towards the trees in this Veda. *Namo vrkṣebhyaḥ harikesebhyaḥ*⁸ Even homage is paid to each and every part of them also.

*Mūlebhyaḥ svāhā. Śākhābhyaḥ svāhā. Vanaspatibhyaḥ svāhā. Puṣpebhyaḥ svāhā. Phalebhyaḥ svāhā*⁹ etc.

Earth which is another important element of nature is regarded as the protector of the creatures.¹⁰ A great number of mantras are there expecting plenty of crops from the earth.¹¹ So any kind of harm towards the earth is prohibited.

*prthivī dr hn prthivīm mā himsīḥ*¹²

it is stated that if it is polluted it feels pain. *Mā dyāvā prthivī abhisociḥ*¹³

Animals are another essential element of nature. So, *Śuklayajurveda* declares for the protection of them in different places. Happiness is expected for the animals like goats, cows etc¹⁴ It is also stated that one can attain an animal by protecting animals. *paśubhiḥ paśunāpnoti*¹⁵. Harm towards them is prohibited¹⁶, rather God is prayed for the welfare of them *paśunme tarpayatu*¹⁷

For the protection of human beings it is necessary to have pure air. It is hoped that the wind should blow sweet.¹⁸ Earlier sacrifice was done which is very much beneficial for the purification of air. The importance of sacrifice can be known from the mantras of *Śuklayajurveda*. It is said to be the main cause of the creations.¹⁹ it is the cause of rain and it satisfies the earth by showering rain. One can attain long life, strength, power of eyesight etc. through *yajña*.

*āyuryajñena kalpatām, prāṇo yajñena kalpatām*²⁰

The importance of water is found in different places of *Śuklayajurveda*. The water is said to be the purifier of sins. *Āpaḥ śuddhantu maināsaḥ*²¹ It provides happiness²², and pleasure²³ It is also necessary for the fulfillment of desires and it is also the cause of welfare.²⁴ It is also stated to be like a mother²⁵ So, no harm is allowed to it.²⁶

Water is having the power of healing. Many diseases can be removed by water. So, in Śuklayajurveda it is found that water should be the medicine of all.²⁷ The feeling of respect is expressed towards water in this way - *arṇāvāya svāha, samudrāya svāhā etc*²⁸

In the present time these principles of the Śuklayajurveda regarding protection of environment bear much significance. They have relevance even today. For the purification of air people should be made aware about the significance of *yajñas* and some arrangements for performing sacrifice can be made, as it makes the environment pure, peaceful and removes diseases.

Apart from this for the protection of different elements of nature like trees, animals and water etc. there is no dearth of legal provisions. But law is itself not sufficient. So, such messages can be conveyed to the common mass through the electronic media, print media etc. and in this way people can be made aware about the importance of trees, animals and water etc. and also about the evil effect of not protecting them properly. Moreover, even the religious aspect can play a significant role that those elements are fit to be worshipped and not to be destroyed, as it is necessary for all to show homage to those which are essential to protect our lives.

Protection of different elements of nature is very essential for the living beings on earth. If nature is not protected then creatures on earth have to face great danger. It is seen that Śuklayajurveda had taken much concern about the protection of environment though at that time, the condition of the earth was not so much dangerous like today. Urbanization, industrialization, population explosion are some of the factors of today's environmental deterioration which were completely absent in earlier times. Yet so much concern for the protection of nature can be well observed in those days. So, now it is the time to make people aware about their responsibilities. So, apart from the legal measures such teachings should also be made available for all people so that they can realize how the ancient people respected the protectors of their lives and what is the effect of harming them. Thus the messages of Śuklayajurveda carry great significance even today and their relevance is increasing day by day.

The paper comes to the conclusion with this mantra of Śuklayajurveda which declares the message of environmental harmony.

*Dauḥ śāntirantarikṣaṃ śāntiḥ pṛthivī śāntirāpaḥ śāntirośadhayaḥ śāntiḥ. Vanaspatayaḥ śāntirviśve devaḥ śāntirbrahma śāntiḥ sarvaṃ śāntiḥ śāntireva śāntiḥ sa ma śāntiredhi*²⁹

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- [5]. *ma vo risat khanita yasmai cāhaṃ khanāmi vaḥ ibid., XII..95*
- [6]. *ibid., XII..100*
- [7]. *ibid., XI.48, XXII.22*
- [8]. *ibid., XVI.17*
- [9]. *ibid., XXII.28*
- [10]. *ibid., II.9*
- [11]. *suśasya kṛṣikṛdhiḥ ibid., IV.6*
- [12]. *ibid., XIII.18*
- [13]. *ibid, XI.45*
- [14]. *upahuta iha gāva upahuta ajavayaḥ ibid., III.43*
- [15]. *ibid., XIX.20*
- [16]. *ibid., XIII.48-49*
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- [18]. *madhu vātā ṛtāyate ibid., XIII.27*
- [19]. *ibid., XXIII.62*
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- [21]. *ibid., XX.20*
- [22]. *ibid., XI.50*
- [23]. *ibid., 36.14*
- [24]. *ibid. ,36.12*
- [25]. *ibid., IV.2*
- [26]. *mā āpo mausashirhimsīḥ, ibid., VI.22*
- [27]. *ibid ,36.12*
- [28]. *ibid ,XXII.25*
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