

Volume-5

Nature and Consciousness

Ecological Wisdom of Ancient Bharat

Eternal Guidance : Youth Excellence



Fire

Air

Earth

Water



A Concise Book for IKS based Competitive Exams
(NET and UPSC)



Vidya Bharati Uchchha Shiksha Sansthan (VBUSS) is dedicated to providing quality education that emphasizes academic excellence, character development, and nation-building, all within a holistic, value-based framework deeply rooted in Bharatiya traditions. Guided by the inspiring motto "*Sa Vidya Ya Vimuktaye*" -meaning "Knowledge is that which liberates" -VBUSS aims to prepare a generation of students who are not only academically competent but also socially responsible and spiritually aware. The organization emphasizes critical thinking, scientific aptitude, ethical living, and deep cultural understanding as core components of higher education. VBUSS has made a significant impact across the country through a vast educational network. It supports numerous teacher training colleges, degree institutions, and vocational centres to enhance the quality and accessibility of higher education in the country.

In terms of achievements, VBUSS has made notable progress in the field of higher education. The institution has successfully established a network of colleges and universities across Bharat, offering academic guidance/assistance to diverse programs in fields like science, technology, arts, and social sciences. It has consistently delivered academic excellence through rigorous curricula and research initiatives, earning recognition for its contributions to education. Moreover, the organization (Vidya Bharati) has played an active role in promoting social inclusion by providing education to underprivileged communities, thereby bridging the gap in access to quality education. Its alumni have made significant contributions across various sectors, reinforcing the impact of Vidya Bharati's educational philosophy. Through its sustained efforts, VBUSS continues to shape the future of Bharat by producing skilled, knowledgeable, and ethical leaders. By integrating modern academic disciplines with ancient Bharatiya wisdom, VBUSS continues to play a vital role in shaping responsible, enlightened citizens committed to the nation's progress.

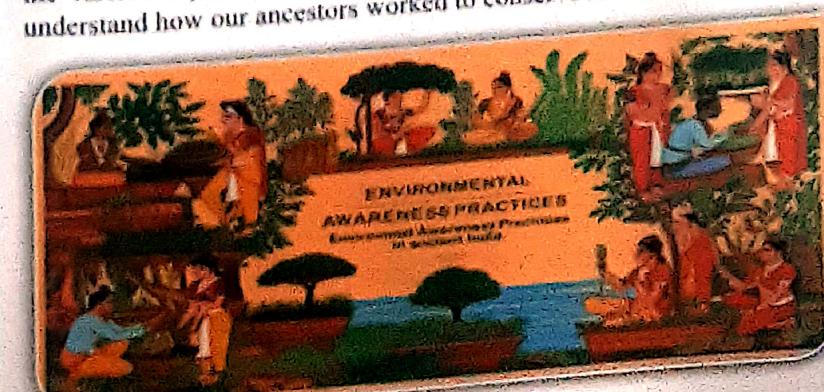
VBUSS stands at the forefront of a national movement to revive and re-integrate this ancient wisdom into contemporary education. This book is a humble contribution to that larger mission. It brings together key ideas, philosophies, and disciplines of the Bharatiya Knowledge System in a format that is both accessible and thought-provoking. We hope it serves as a gateway for learners, educators, and researchers to explore the depth and brilliance of Bharat's indigenous wisdom-and to find within it, not just information, but inspiration.

Nature and Consciousness: Ecological Wisdom of Ancient Bharat

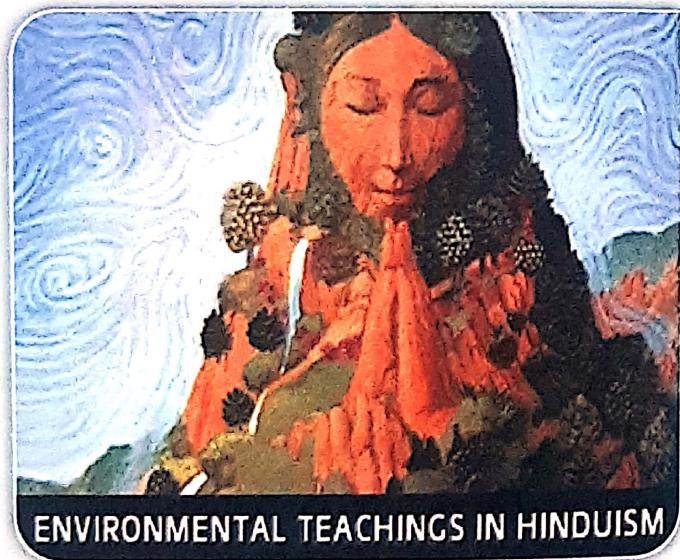
Introduction

One of the biggest concerns today is the conservation of the environment. Climate change, pollution, the extinction of plants and animals, and other environmental crises have posed a serious challenge to humanity. In Bhartiya society and culture, the environment has always been considered significant, and there have been numerous religious, cultural, and philosophical principles aimed at its conservation. Bhartiya approach to the environment and its preservation reflects not only respect for nature but also reinstates the connection between life and nature.

An ideal approach towards natural resources, a sense of balance, and harmony has been an integral part of ancient Bhartiya civilization. Bhartiya ancient texts, scriptures, and philosophies express deep reverence and respect for the environment and nature. In Bhartiya culture, nature was worshipped as divine, and it was considered a person's duty to preserve natural resources and use them wisely. In this book, we will explore the various aspects of environmental awareness in ancient Bharat and understand how our ancestors worked to conserve the environment.



1. The Ideal use of Natural Resources



(Source: <https://vedictribe.com/dharma/hinduism/environmental-teachings-in-hinduism/>)

In ancient Bharat, awareness and understanding of the environment can be seen in their lifestyle, religious beliefs, and social practices. Bhartiya society has always respected the natural resources around them, such as water, air, earth, and plants. The idea that preserving nature is essential for the well-being of humanity is clearly reflected in the Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, and epics.

11. The Vedic Concept of Environment

According to the Bhartiya Vedic perspective, the creation of the universe is believed to be based on two fundamental forces - the **divine (positive)** and the **demonic (negative)**. These two opposing tendencies are clearly mentioned in the *Bhagavad Gita* (Chapter 16, Verse 6). To protect life and creation from the harmful influence of negative forces, a protective shield is considered essential - and this protective shield is what we call the **environment**. In Sanskrit, the environment is defined as:

परितः आत्रियते येन तत् पर्यावरणम्
Which means - that which envelopes or surrounds us from all sides.

The Vedas use various terms to describe the environment, such as *paridhi* (boundary), *aavaran* (covering), *paribhoo* (encompassing),

parivrit (surrounded), and *ulba* (enclosing). These words reflect the depth and antiquity of environmental consciousness in Bhartiya thought. One of the earliest hymns of the Rigveda (10.129.1) speaks to this ancient awareness:

नासंदासीनो सदासीत् तदानीं नासीद्रजो नो व्योमा परो यत्।
किमावरीवः कुहु कस्यु शर्मनन्त्यः किमासीद्रहनं गभीरम्।
ऋग्वेद (10.129.1)

*"There was neither existence nor non-existence then.
There was no realm of air, no sky beyond it.
What covered it all? Where? In whose shelter?
Was there water, deep and unfathomable?"*



The Nasadiya Sukta, often referred to as the "Hymn of Creation," seeks to explore these very mysteries. It is the 129th hymn of the 10th Mandala of the *Rigveda*. This hymn is deeply connected with cosmology - the study of the origin and structure of the universe.

The universe is an open expanse — limitless, boundless, and infinite. It has no edges, no end. Its length, breadth, height, and depth stretch beyond imagination. But this gives rise to a profound question: *How did this universe come into being, and why?*

The Nasadiya Sukta consists of seven mantras, each reflecting the ancient sages' thoughtful inquiry into the creation of existence itself. Rather than giving definite answers, these verses invite us to reflect, wonder, and embrace the mystery of how everything began.

This verse shows that even in the earliest stages of spiritual and philosophical inquiry, ancient Bhartiya thinkers were contemplating the origins of the universe and the forces that surround and sustain life - in essence, what we understand today as the **environment**. The *Rigveda* beautifully paints a picture of the time before creation - a moment when there was no day or night, no sky, no physical existence - only a formless, eternal Supreme Being. It was through the will and deep meditation of this singular divine force that the process of creation began.

The *Upanishads* describe this cosmic sequence in detail: first came space (ākāsh), then air (vāyu), followed by fire (agni). From fire emerged water (jal), and from water, the Earth (prithvi) took form. The Earth gave rise to plants and food, and eventually, from that, all living beings came into existence.

This entire chain of creation forms the very foundation of what we understand as the **environment** - a delicate web that connects every level

of existence and maintains the balance of life. The **Vedas**, which are the oldest spiritual texts of Bhartiya culture, reflect a deep sense of reverence and respect for nature. In the *Rigveda*, there is a verse that says:

आपो हि शुद्ध्यन्ति वस्त्रं, तं नमो भगवते रुद्राय, महादेवाय, अत्यंतं शुद्धां भूमि शरणं व्रजा

"Water purifies clothes, we bow to the divine Rudra, the Great God, and seek refuge in the purest Earth."

This verse highlights the sacred purity of water, Earth, and the sky, and reminds us that these elements are closely connected to the divine. It emphasizes that it is humanity's responsibility to keep these elements clean and pure, as the balance and survival of life depend on their sanctity.

2. Conservation of Natural Resources and Human Responsibility

Ancient Bhartiya society believed that it was duty of humans to live in harmony with nature and the environment. They saw this as a form of "Dharma," a principle that taught the importance of maintaining balance in all aspects of life. From this perspective, environmental conservation was not seen as an external task, but as an inherent part of life. For instance:

2.1 Tree Conservation

Since ancient times, trees have been highly revered in Bharat. They were considered an integral part of life and were worshipped as deities. Along with lush trees, the significance of plants and herbs was also emphasized in ancient scriptures. These texts not only acknowledged the physical importance of trees but also their spiritual and cultural significance, which were closely tied to the well-being of both humans and the environment.



In the Upanishads, it is said that trees purify the Earth, and without them, life would have no existence. As one verse states:

“वृक्षस्य जीवनं प्रियतमा, येन प्राणिं प्रसन्नं करणीयं”

"Vrkṣasya jīvanam priyatamā, yena prāṇīni prasannam karaṇīyam."

This verse emphasizes the immense importance of trees in life, as they provide us with pure air, fruits, and medicinal herbs, all of which are essential for the well-being of living beings. Trees are seen not only as physical entities but also as life-giving forces that sustain and nourish the world.



2.2 The Importance of Rivers

In ancient Bharat, rivers are considered sacred and divine. Rivers like the Ganga, Yamuna, Sindhu, and Saraswati are worshipped as goddesses. The

protection of these rivers is seen as a religious duty of society. In the Vedas and Puranas, rivers are presented as life-givers, and it is believed that they are the source of purification and prosperity for the community. The Ganga, in particular, is regarded as exceptionally holy, and the necessity of keeping it clean is mentioned in ancient texts. The religious sites located on the banks of the Ganga serve as proof of the deep connection and respect that ancient Bharat had for the river. This reverence for the rivers shows how closely intertwined nature and spirituality are, and how important it is to maintain the sanctity of these natural resources.

2.3 Forest Conservation

Ancient Bhartiya society understood that forests are a vital part of the environment, providing not only essential resources for life but also maintaining the balance of biodiversity and ecosystems. Bhartiya scriptures emphasize the importance of conserving the creatures and trees living in forests.

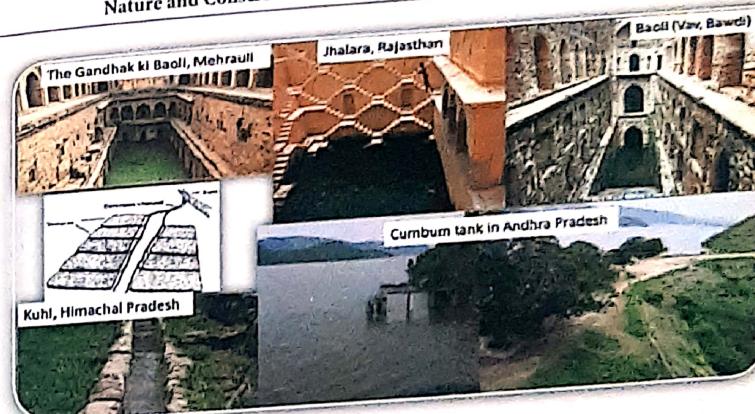
Through the stories of exile in the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, a message was conveyed that the rights of creatures residing in the forests should not be violated. Additionally, the *Manu Smriti* also highlights that excessive deforestation in any region leads to environmental crises.

3. Responsible Use of Natural Resources

In ancient Bharat, natural resources were not exploited excessively; instead, they were used wisely and in moderation. Resources like water, land, and plants were used thoughtfully and sustainably in practices like agriculture, water management, and the preparation of medicines. For instance:

3.1 Water Management

Ancient Bharat had an exceptional understanding of water management. During the Maurya period, the construction of reservoirs, ponds, and canals was carried out to store water, ensuring there would be no shortage during droughts. Similarly, remarkable examples of water management can also be found during the reign of the Krishna Raj and Chola empires. Water was considered the source of life, and it was deemed essential to keep it pure and safe in all circumstances. This deep respect for water reflects the ancient Bhartiya belief in preserving nature for the well-being of all living beings.



Some Examples of Water Management in Ancient Bharat

3.2 Roots of Traditional Medicine

In ancient Bhartiya medical practices like Ayurveda and Siddha medicine, the conservation of natural resources was also a key aspect. Medicinal plants, herbs, and botanicals were used responsibly. The production and use of these medicines were carried out in ways that ensured minimal negative impact on the environment. This thoughtful approach reflects a deep understanding of the delicate balance between human health and environmental well-being, and it laid the foundation for modern natural medicine practices.

4. Religious and Cultural Perspectives

In ancient Bharat, particularly in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, environmental conservation was highly valued. In these religions, nature was worshipped in the form of deities, and it was believed that respecting nature was a religious duty.

- In **Hinduism**, the environment is revered in the form of deities such as the Earth Goddess (Prithvi), Ganga, Yamuna, and the God of plants (Vanaspatidev), among others.
- In **Buddhism**, environmental conservation was also considered important, with Buddhist monks showing respect towards trees, plants, and wildlife.
- **Jainism** emphasized non-violence (Ahimsa) and the conservation of all living beings and plants, promoting the importance of protecting nature.

These religious perspectives highlight the deep connection between spirituality and nature, reinforcing the belief that safeguarding the environment is both a moral and spiritual responsibility.



In ancient Bharat, environmental awareness was a holistic and balanced approach, deeply connected not just to the physical aspects of life but also to spiritual and religious perspectives. The people here practiced the mindful use of natural resources, and their conservation was seen as part of their religious and cultural duties. In today's modern world, when environmental crises have deepened, it is important for us to draw inspiration from these ancient teachings and make changes in our lifestyle. We must follow the ancient principles of living in harmony with the environment, so that future generations can live in a clean and prosperous world.

5. The Concept of Panchatattva



(Source: <https://ishanadiguru.org/en/wisdom/article/five-elements-panchatattva>)

In ancient Bhartiya philosophy, the concept of the Panchatattva (Five Elements) holds a profound and significant place. The five elements-Earth (Prithvi), Water (Aap), Fire (Agni), Air (Vayu), and Ether (Akash)-are regarded as the fundamental building blocks of the universe. These elements not only physically constitute the creation of the cosmos but also carry deep spiritual and philosophical meanings in Bhartiya culture, religion, and the traditions of yoga.

श्विति, अप्, तेज, मारुत, व्योम - पंचतत्त्वात्मकं शरीरम्।

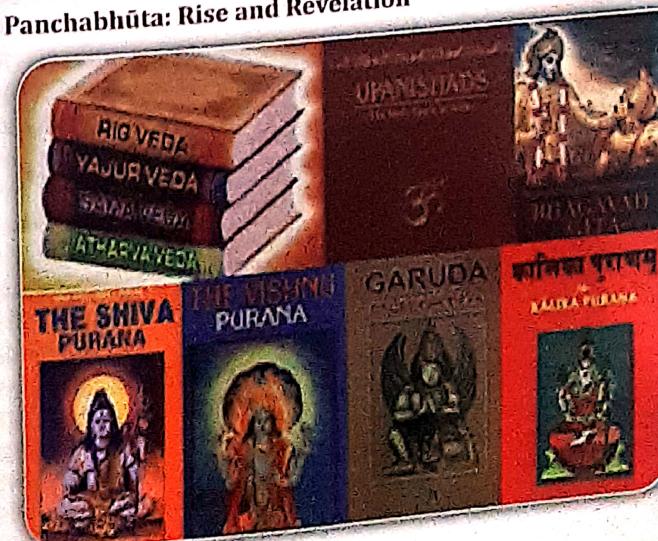
सङ्गत् दोपाः भवन्त्येव, योगेन पुनः शुद्धिमुपैति॥

The body is made of the five elements-earth, water, fire, air, and space. Due to imbalance, it becomes impure, but through Yoga, it regains purity.

In ancient Bharat, the concept of the Five Elements was not viewed merely as the physical components of the world. Instead, these elements were intricately connected to the soul, nature, and the supreme consciousness (Brahman). The harmony and balance of these five elements were seen as essential to the stability and existence of life. According to Bhartiya thought, the balance of these elements shapes the entire cycle of life. These elements pervade all levels of existence, from the human body to the vastness of the cosmos.

In this perspective, the Panchatattva reflects not only the material world but also the spiritual essence that binds all aspects of life together.

5.1 Panchabhūta: Rise and Revelation



The concept of **Panchatattva** is found in the oldest texts of Bhartiya philosophy, such as the Vedas, Upanishads, and Puranas. The Vedas provide a detailed explanation of the relationship between these elements and their principles of existence. Specifically, the **Rigveda** discusses Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and Ether, considering these elements essential for the creation of the universe.

Through the Vedas and Upanishads, it is understood that the interconnection of Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and Ether is vital for the operation of the cosmos and the origin of life. Each element is regarded as important in itself and, when combined with the others, maintains the balance of life and the universe. In Bhartiya philosophy, this is seen as a holistic approach, where each element is viewed as a living entity connected to the cosmic consciousness. This interdependence of the five elements underscores the unity and harmony of the universe.

5.2 Explanation of Panchatattva

5.2.1 Earth (Prthvī)

The first element in the Panchatattva is Earth, which serves as the physical and stable foundation of life. Earth is regarded as the life-giver and sustainer, symbolizing stability, firmness, and vitality. Being the basis for everything, it is essential for all living beings. In Bhartiya tradition, Earth is worshipped as a mother because it is the provider of life to all beings. From the Earth, we receive food, water, and shelter. The Earth element is also linked to the **Muladhara Chakra** (Root Chakra), which is essential for maintaining physical and mental balance. The Earth element represents the root and structure of our existence, and respecting it is considered crucial for the preservation and stability of life.

Earth: The Foundation of Life

The Earth is the fundamental basis of life. The existence of all living beings rests upon it. All creatures are born from the Earth and move about on it. It is the Earth that nourishes the entire creation, and hence, it is called "Prthivī, the Sustainer of the World" (Mundaka Upanishad 2/1/3). Its name 'Prthivī' comes from its ability to offer expansion and space to all beings. It is like the life-sustaining nectar for all creatures, and all beings are essentially a (2/5/1) - "The Earth is the nectar for all living beings, and all living beings are the nectar for the Earth."

In the **Atharvaveda** (12/1/15), it is stated:

त्वज्ञातास्त्वर्य चरन्ति मत्यास्त्वं विमिषि द्विपवस्त्वं चतुर्ष्पदः ।
तवेमे पृथिवि पञ्च मानवा येष्यो ज्योतिरमृतं मत्येष्य उद्यन्सूर्यो रश्मिमिरात्नोति ॥
(अथर्वा 12/1/15)

"Tvajātāstvarīyā caranti martyāstvam bibhārṣī dvipavas tvam catuspadaḥ ।
Tavemē prthivī pañca mānavā yebhyo jyotiramṛtam
matryebhyo Udyantsūryo raśmibhirātōṣfi ॥"

This verse expresses how Earth supports all forms of life-human beings, animals, and all creatures-and that the Sun, emerging from it, spreads its rays to sustain life. It emphasizes the Earth's essential role in providing nourishment, space, and sustenance to all living beings.

जनं विभ्रती बहुधा विर्वाचसं नानधिमीणं पृथिवी येथौक्सम् ।
सुहस्त्रं धारा द्रविणस्य मे दुहां ध्रुवेव धेनुरनपस्फुरन्ती ।
(अथर्वा 44-45/1/2)

Janam bibhraati bahudha virvaachasam naanaadhimeenam prithivee yethauksam
Sahastram dhaaraa dravinasya me vuham dhruveva dhenurarnapasphurantii.
(Atharvaveda 44-45/1/2)

This verse states that the Earth is a nurturing force that provides for every need, offering all kinds of comforts and conveniences. It is the birthplace of cultural diversity, embracing a vast array of plants, languages, and belief systems, bringing them together like a family. Beneath its surface, it holds precious gems, metals, and minerals, which add to its richness. The Earth doesn't just offer shelter to all life but also keeps it nourished and prosperous, providing the abundance of food and resources that sustain us all.

In the present day, the race for rapid industrial development has caused immense pain to our Mother Earth. The fertility of the soil is steadily diminishing, green cover is depleting, rivers are on the verge of drying up, and underground water sources are being depleted. The valuable minerals and gems stored in the Earth's womb are rapidly vanishing. Over it all, the pressure from concrete constructions is growing, and beautiful hills are being cut down to make way for flat land. Under the guise of so-called development, indiscriminate excavation and exploitation are not only leading to environmental crises but are also severely disrupting the ecological balance.

The Atharvaveda (12/1/35) also mentions that after mining, one must seek forgiveness from the Earth and restore what has been taken. The verse reads:

यत् ते भूमे विखर्नामि क्षिप्रं तदर्थि रोहतु।
मा ते मर्म विमृग्वरि मा ते हृदयमर्पितम् ॥

*Yat tai bhūme vikarnāmi kṣipraṇi tadarṣi rohatū,
Mā te marmavimṛgvari mā te hṛdayamarpitam.*

Meaning: O Earth! I hope that the mining I am carrying out will soon be replenished, and that no deep harm comes to you, nor your heart be wounded.

The most concerning issue is that alongside this, the destruction of vegetation and biodiversity-precious gifts from nature to the Earth-is also occurring. This situation is rapidly becoming a serious threat to the balance of the Earth. Therefore, protecting this unique planet has become absolutely necessary.

If we use the Earth's resources with reverence and wisdom, environmental crises can be avoided. Our ancient sages were well aware of this truth and demonstrated deep respect for the Earth. In our traditional routines, we are taught to seek forgiveness from the Earth before stepping on it in the morning. This sentiment is expressed in the words that worship the Earth as the consort of Vishnu, who adorns herself with the ocean's robes, embraces the mountains within her body, and nourishes all living beings. The individual acknowledges that they are about to place their feet upon her and seeks her forgiveness for doing so.

समुद्रवसने वेवि पर्वतस्तनमण्डिते।

विष्णुपत्नि नमस्तुभ्यं पावस्पर्श क्षमस्व मे ॥

*Samudravasane vewi parvatastanamandite,
Vishnupatni namastubhlyam pavaspash kshamasva me.*

The most effective way to protect the Earth is to let it remain in its natural state. We must establish harmony with nature, not try to forcefully mold it according to our desires. The rampant cutting of trees, altering the course of rivers, the construction of massive dams, excessive tourism and human activities in hilly areas-these all contribute to destabilizing the Earth. Additionally, the use of destructive weapons is akin to enraging the Earth. The consequences of this imbalance and exploitation are now being faced by the entire human race.

5.2.2 Jal (Water)

The second element is water, which is extremely important for life. Water is considered a symbol of purity, prosperity, and balance. In Bhartiya culture, water is regarded as divine, and rivers like the Ganga, Yamuna,

and Saraswati are worshipped as mothers. Water is the source of life, and no living being can exist without it.

या आपो दिव्या उत वा स्वर्वन्ति खनित्रिमा उत वा या: स्वयजाः।

समुद्रार्था या: शुचयः पावकास्ता आपो देवीहु मामवन्तु ॥

*Ya Apo Divya uta va strarvanti khanitrimma uta va yaah swayamjaah.
Samudrartha yaah shuchayah pavakaastaa aapo deveerhmaamavantu.*

(Rigveda 7/49/2)

Water is the first gross physical element that we can experience through both sight and touch. For this reason, it is also considered the primary creation of the creator, as stated in the phrase "Apo eva sasajivi". When the universe was in a state of dissolution, everything was submerged in water. At that time, the entire existence was submerged in an unknown, water-filled darkness, as described in Rigveda (10/129/3):

तर्म आसीत् तमसा गुह्यमयैऽप्रकेतं सलिलं सर्वमा इदं।

"Tarm acasit tamasa guhlyamarye'praketam salilam sarvama idam."

According to ancient beliefs, the origin of the Earth itself was from water. In the Rigveda, water is worshipped as a deity, and its glory is described in a very emotional way. Various forms of water are mentioned, such as **divine** (water from the sky), **strarvanti** (water flowing in rivers and streams), **khanitrima** (water extracted by humans from the Earth through wells), and **swayamja** (naturally occurring water sources like ponds and lakes). Additionally, the Vedas and Samhitas describe other types of water:

- **Dhavany:** Water obtained from desert areas.
- **Haimavat:** Water sourced from glaciers.
- **Swayamja:** Water from natural sources like ponds and lakes.
- **Vaishant:** Water from step-wells.
- **Madhushchutah:** Water from rivers.
- **Kulyah:** Water from canals.
- **Koopyah:** Water from wells.
- **Hoolagh:** Water from large lakes.
- **Strutyā:** Water from ponds.
- **Vanam:** Water present in plants.

(References: Yajurveda 16/37-38, Taittiriya Samhita 4.5.7.1-2/7.4.13)

Among all forms of water, the ocean holds the highest position, referred to as "**Samudra Jyesthah**" in the Rigveda (7/49/4), as it is the largest reservoir of water. The deity who presides over water is **Varun**, the god of water. It is said that water is the abode of **Soma** (the elixir of immortality).

The gods derive their power and energy from this water, and it is believed that the **Vaishvanara Agni** (the universal fire) resides within it.

यासु राजा वरुणो यासु सोयो विश्वेदुवा यासूर्ज मर्दन्ति
वैश्वनरो यास्वग्निः प्रविष्टस्ता आपो देवीरिह मामवन्तु ।

(ऋूप 7/49/4)

"Yasu raja Varuno yasu soyo vishwedeva yasurja mardanti.
Vaishvanaro yasvagni praviristasta apo deveerih mamavantu."

(Rigveda 7/49/4)

Water is considered the source of life. Life originated from water - early unicellular organisms first developed in shallow waters. The existence of life is impossible without water. Today, scientists are in search of water on different planets and moons, but so far, they have not been successful. It is Earth's unique feature that it has an abundant supply of water. Because of the presence of water, Earth is lush and green, and the reflection of the sky in water gives this planet its blue appearance when seen from space.

In Bhartiya tradition, water is not only considered a life-giving force but also a symbol of purity and sanctity. Water from rivers, in particular, holds a very special place, as stated in the **Uttararamacharita** (1/13): "The water of holy places is the only means of both external and internal purification." In our religious rituals, the use of water is mandatory - purification, sprinkling (shuddhikaran), and sipping water (achaman) all begin with the use of water. Any vow or worship ceremony is initiated with water held in the hands.

Water plays various roles in the worship of deities: for washing their feet, we offer **Padhya**; for washing their hands, we offer **Arghya**; for purifying the mouth, we offer **Achaman**; and for bathing, **Snaani** water is used. All of these processes reflect the purity and importance of water. Our ancestors showed us how to maintain the purity of water sources, and adopting those practices has become even more crucial today. The responsibility of keeping rivers, ponds, and wells clean lies with us. In ancient times, the tradition of throwing copper coins into rivers was not just a religious belief but also a scientific practice - copper is an effective water purifier.

The **Atharvaveda** (1/33/2) instructs that the king should ensure the appointment of officials to maintain the purity of water, and the public should only use water that has been boiled, purified by sunlight, or cleansed with metals such as gold. This principle is as relevant today as it was in ancient times.

यासु राजा वरुणो याति मध्ये सत्यानृते अंवपश्ययन् जनानामा
या अग्निं गर्भ दधिरे सुवर्णास्ता न आपः शं स्योना भवन्तु ॥

अथर्वा. 1/33/2

"Yasā rājā Varuno yāti madhye satyānṛte avapaśayan janānāmā.
Yā agnīn garbha dadhīre suvarṇāstā na āpah śam syonā bhavantu."

(Atharvaveda 1/33/2)

To preserve the life-giving resource of water, our ancient sages devised many effective measures. They constructed traditional water systems like ponds, wells, step-wells (bawdis), canals (āhar), and rainwater harvesting systems to store and conserve water for future use. Even in regions like **Rajasthan**, which experience low rainfall and have saline water, special systems were put in place to protect water sources and ensure their proper use. Many traditional festivals were also intended to socially and culturally encourage the collection of water before the rainy season.

If we look at the current situation, around 97.5% of the total water available on Earth is saltwater from the oceans, which is not directly usable. Of the remaining 2.5% of freshwater, approximately 68.6% is locked in glaciers and ice caps, while 30% exists as groundwater. Only 1.2% of the water flows in rivers, lakes, springs, etc., and is directly available for human use. If we ignore this limited freshwater and continue to pollute it, the water crisis could take a severe turn in the near future.

Unfortunately, this precious water resource is now in crisis due to **human-induced pollution**. Waste from industries, urban sewage, household chemicals, and agricultural fertilizers and pesticides are severely contaminating water sources. This is disrupting the water cycle and making natural purification of water increasingly difficult.

Moreover, **excessive and uncontrolled extraction** of groundwater is also leading to severe consequences. On one hand, it is causing numerous diseases and ecological imbalances, and on the other hand, it is leading to a severe shortage of drinking water. In coastal areas, the intrusion of seawater into groundwater is making agricultural land saline and infertile, which could become a major environmental disaster in the future.

To overcome this deepening crisis, we must return to our **ancient culture and traditional water conservation systems**, where water was not just seen as a resource but as a sacred element that needed to be preserved. In ancient times, water was treated with great reverence, and systems like **step-wells, rainwater harvesting, and sustainable water management** practices were put in place to ensure its conservation. Reconnecting with

these practices can help mitigate the water crisis and ensure that this essential resource is available for future generations.

5.2.3 Agni (Fire)

The third element is Agni (fire), which holds immense significance in Bhartiya culture. Fire is considered a symbol of knowledge, power, and energy. It represents life's energy, inner strength, and light. In Bhartiya tradition, fire is associated with the powers of the Gods and plays a central role in religious rituals, particularly in Yajnas (sacrificial offerings) and Havans (fire rituals). In the Vedic tradition, fire holds the highest respect—not only as the deity of Yajna (sacrificial rites) but also as a participant in the roles of the priest, the performer, and the sponsor of the ritual.

The Rigveda begins with the invocation to Agni:

अग्निर्मिले पुरोहितं यज्ञस्य देवमृत्यिजम् । होतारं रत्नधातमम् ॥
agnirmile purohitam yajñasya devamṛtyijam | hotāraṁ ratnadhātamam.

(Rigveda 1/1/1)

Fire is considered a form of light—"jyotirmaya agni" (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 1/5/11). The radiance of the Sun, Moon, and stars is a reflection of this very fire. That is why fire is called the **soul of creation**—"agnih vai prāṇah" (Jabala Upanishad 4). The essence of Bhartiya culture is rooted in this fiery energy. Fire exists in all forms across the Earth-Vaishwanara Agni on Earth, Nachiketa Agni in Heaven, Jathar Agni (digestive fire) in the body, Dāvagni in the forest, and Bādvgagni in the oceans.

When we eat food, it is considered an offering to Agni—"agnaye 'gnau juhōtī" (Maitrayani Upanishad 6/26). Fire is also present in water in a subtle form—"sa evāgnīḥ salile satriviṣṭah" (Shvetashvatara Upanishad 6/15). The lightning in clouds is also considered a form of fire—"agnau vidyuti vibhāti" (Maitra. 6/24).

In the **Gṛhastha Ashrama** (householder stage), fire is the central element in the **Panch Mahā Yajnas** (five great sacrifices), and in Vedic rituals, offerings are made through fire to reach the Gods. The Vedic sages regarded fire as the mouth of the gods—"agnir vai devānām mukhām". As described in the Rigveda (1/1/4), fire carries the Yajna offering in all directions to the gods:

अग्ने यं यज्ञमध्यारं विष्वतः परिभूरसिा स इदेषु गच्छति।
"Agne yam yajnamadhyanām viśvataḥ paribhūrasi | sa id devyūn gacchati."

Thus, fire is not only a physical element but also an omnipresent and worshiped force in our spiritual and cultural life.

न तत्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्रतारकं नेमा विद्युतो भान्ति कुर्तोऽयमग्निः ।

तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वं तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विमाति ॥

Na tatra sūryo bhāti na candrātarakam ne mā vidyuto bhānti kuto 'yamagnih |

Tameva bhāntam anubhāti sarvaiḥ tasya bhāsā sarvam idam vibhāti.

Shvetashvatara 6/14)

Fire has a particular form-electricity, which has become an essential and ubiquitous element in modern life. However, the use of electricity is not a modern discovery-ancient Bhartiya texts, like the **Agastya Samhita**, mention several forms of electricity, such as **Tadit**, **Sodamini**, **Vidyut**, **Shatakumbi**, **Hṛidini**, and **Ashani**. The methods used to generate electricity back then were entirely environmentally sustainable. Energy was derived from sources like biological power, chemical energy, solar power, water energy, and wind energy, all of which worked without harming nature.

In contemporary times, the increasing dependence on sources like **coal**, large dams, and **nuclear fuels** has caused numerous environmental crises. Excessive mining of coal is leading to soil erosion and pollution, while dams have disrupted the natural flow of rivers, threatening their existence. The potential dangers of nuclear energy and past accidents highlight its destructive power.

In this scenario, it has become necessary to adapt our ancient knowledge into modern forms. The growing interest in **solar energy** today is truly a return to Bhartiya tradition. What we now call "alternative energy sources" are in fact renewable and natural sources of energy. In contrast, the primary sources of energy today—such as coal and nuclear fuels—are referred to in Bhartiya scriptures as **Puriṣ Agni**, meaning the waste of the Earth, which should remain buried within the earth. Therefore, it is essential to reconsider what truly constitutes **primary** and **alternative** energy sources. If we do not change our approach to clean and sustainable energy, solutions to pollution and environmental crises will remain elusive. A rethinking and redefinition of energy policy is urgently needed today.

5.2.4 Air (Vayu)

The fourth element is Air (Vayu), which plays a vital role in the functioning of life. Air is considered a symbol of movement, purity, and freedom. It enters our body in the form of breath and keeps life

active. Air is an integral part of the environment and is also known as *prāṇavāyu* (life force). It is due to air that life exists on earth. Through air, our breaths circulate, and it continuously flows in and out of our bodies. The presence of the atmosphere is the reason earth can sustain life. It consists of a balanced mixture of gases, and any imbalance in these gases could lead to disastrous consequences for creation. Ancient Bhartiya sages, recognizing the importance of this element, regarded air as a divine form. In the Rigveda, air is praised under the names *Vayu*, *Vāta*, and *Marut*. The Upanishads describe its vastness, comparing it to Brahman (the ultimate reality).

The verse from the Katha Upanishad (2/2/10) states:

"Just as the air, entering the world, takes on many forms, in the same way, the one soul dwells in the bodies of all beings, taking on various forms and shapes."

वायुव्यंको भूवनं प्रविष्टो रुपं रुपं प्रतिरूपो वभूवा।

एकलतथा सभूतन्तरात्मा रुपं रुपं प्रतिरूपो वहिश्च ॥

(ऋग्वेदः 2/2/10)

Vāyuh prāṇah (Munḍaka Upanishad 2/1/4) means that air is the life force itself. It is even considered as the "foot" of the Supreme Lord, symbolizing His omnipresence- *Vāyuh pādah*.

Air is the foundational basis of life. In the Rigveda, after the creation of consumable elements, the emergence of air-based life forms is mentioned:

तस्माद्युजात् सधुहृतः सम्भृतं पृष्ठदत्यम्।
पुष्टस्तोऽवृक्षं वायुव्यानानायान् ग्राम्याशु यो॥

(Rigveda 10/90/8)

Air-borne creatures such as insects, birds, and others are numerous and play an essential role. The practice of air, or breath, is the practice of life itself, and through it, the *Vātarashana* (a group of ascetics) lived for long periods without food. Bhartiya philosophers also described different types of air. The philosophical texts mention *pancavāyū*—*Prāṇa*, *Apāna*, *Samāna*, *Udāna*, and *Vyāna*.

हृति प्राणो गुदेष्पानः समानो नामिसेषाः॥
उदानः कर्पटदेशस्थो व्यानः सर्वग्रसिः॥

In the body, *Prāṇa* resides in the heart, *Apāna* in the lower abdomen, *Samāna* in the navel region, *Udāna* in the throat, and *Vyāna* pervades the entire body.

Apart from these five primary winds-*Prāṇa*, *Apāna*, *Samāna*, *Udāna*, and *Vyāna*-other winds like *Naga*, *Kūrma*, *Krikkala*, *Devadatta*, and *Dhananjaya* are also mentioned. These winds control specific functions within the body and collectively maintain physical balance. Any imbalance in these winds can affect the entire bodily system. Therefore, maintaining the purity and balance of air is essential for life stability and health.

In today's world, we are distorting nature's natural balance through artificial industrialization and urbanization. Human activities like large factories, chemical emissions, and ozone layer depletion have put the Earth's environmental balance in jeopardy. As a result, atmospheric toxicity is on the rise, and the availability of oxygen is steadily decreasing, while the concentration of carbon dioxide and other toxic gases has reached dangerous levels. Scientists have warned that if these trends continue, life on Earth may become difficult within a few generations.

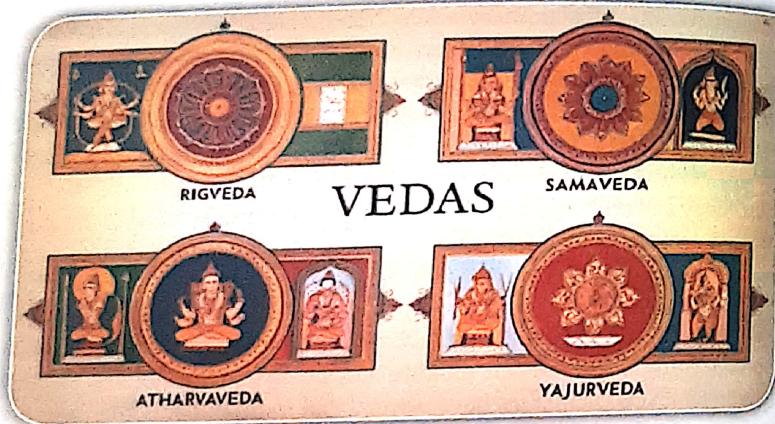
The only way to avert this dire situation is to take immediate action for environmental conservation and adopt ancient Bhartiya practices that were based on a harmonious relationship with nature. Effective measures to control air pollution include stopping the rampant cutting of forests, widespread afforestation, developing greenery on rooftops in urban areas, and regularly conducting *yajñas* (rituals).

Ancient sages taught the way to maintain balance between nature and living beings through *yajña*. *Yajña* is not just a fire offering; it is any action performed with a sense of mutual welfare. In the Bhagavad Gita (3/10), it is mentioned that the creator of the universe also created *yajña* along with the world:

सहयजा: प्रजा: सृष्टा पुरोत्तम यजापतिः।
अतेन प्रसविष्यत्वम् एष वोत्सिव्यकाम्युक्तः॥

"In the beginning, the Creator (Bṛagūpata) created beings together with sacrifice (Yajña) and said, 'By this shall you prosper; let this be the fulfiller of all your desires (like the wish-fulfilling cow).'"

Through *yajña*, the universe continues to receive energy and remains dynamic. The *Yajurveda* (23/62) describes it as the foundation of the cosmic cycle: *"This yajña is the basis of the world."* The effect of *yajña* is not limited to purifying the atmosphere alone; it also helps in reducing land, water, and noise pollution. Moreover, it serves as a means for mental and spiritual purification, calming inner impurities and paving the way for spiritual development.



In the **Rigveda** (2/14/3), there is a significant reference that describes how Indra, when covered by the Soma nectar, symbolizes that the Earth's upper layer should resemble thick clouds, without any cracks or holes. It is through the protection of this layer that life-sustaining elements like plants, medicines, and food are generated on Earth. If this protective shield is compromised, destructive elements can become active, putting life in danger. From a modern scientific perspective, this description underscores the importance of the ozone layer. The ozone layer functions to block harmful ultraviolet rays from the sun. However, due to technological development, the emission of toxic gases such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), carbon monoxide, hydrofluorocarbons, and nitrous oxide has caused holes to form in this layer. As a result of these gaps, cosmic radiation is entering Earth's atmosphere, leading to the rapid spread of many deadly and new diseases—such as the Zika virus, Ebola, Nipah virus, bird flu, swine flu, dengue, and chikungunya.

In this context, the message of the Vedas becomes even more relevant, emphasizing the need for the conservation and expansion of forests, as they are the lungs of the Earth. Not only do forests purify the air, but they also regulate temperature and maintain the atmosphere in a life-supporting balance. The Atharvaveda (12/1/11) clearly states,

अरण्यं ते पृथिवी स्योनमस्तु
"Aranyam te prithivī syonamastu"

Meaning, may the forests be beneficial to the Earth. This highlights the importance of forests, as without them, it is impossible to keep the atmosphere pure and balanced.

In ancient Bhartiya literature, there are references to natural disasters such as storms and hurricanes, but there is no mention of artificial air pollution—this is not surprising, as our ancestors worshipped nature as divine. For them, nature was to be preserved, not exploited.

A beautiful depiction of the concept of pure air is presented by the great poet Kālidāsa in his *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, in Act 4, when Śākuntalā is about to depart for her in-laws' home. As a blessing, it is wished that her path be adorned with the greenery of lakes, the shade of trees, the fragrance of lotus flowers, and the cool breeze—depicting an ideal environment where nature supports life in its purest form.

रम्यान्तरः कमलिनी हरितैः सरोभिः छायादुमेर्नियमितार्कमरीचितापः।
भूयात् कुशेशायरजोमृदुरेणुरस्याः शान्तानुकूलपवनश्च शिवश्च पन्थाः॥
(अभिज्ञानशाकुन्तलम् 4/11)

This scene is not only the most beautiful imagination of natural balance, but it also illustrates that a pure and balanced atmosphere provides the best environment for life. The wish for Śākuntalā's path to be adorned with the greenery of lakes, the shade of trees, the fragrance of lotus flowers, and the cool breeze symbolizes an ideal, harmonious ecosystem—one where nature and its elements work together to nurture life. It underscores the profound understanding that the purity of air, the balance of nature, and a serene environment are essential for the well-being and sustenance of all living beings.

5.2.5 Ether (Ākāśa)

The fifth and final element in the pañcātattva (five elements) is Ākāśa, also known as space or ether. Ākāśa is considered a symbol of the cosmic void, boundless space, and infinity. This element represents the expansion of life, continuity, and cosmic energy. It is the medium in which all other elements are contained, and through it, every activity of life is connected. Ākāśa is the means through which we attain mental and spiritual clarity. It is the first environmental element that originates from the Supreme Being (Brahman), and it is the vastest covering of the entire creation. Not only is it the foundation of the structure of the universe, but it also provides the necessary space for creation and transmission. For this reason, Ākāśa holds immense significance in Bhartiya philosophies and texts. The *Amarakosha* even mentions five synonyms for Ākāśa (*Amarakosha* 1/2/167-172).

In the Upanishads, Ākāśa is described as an expression of Brahman. It is within this space that the sun, moon, and other celestial bodies reside. Its omnipresence makes it the greatest of elements. The most distinctive

feature of Ākāśa is that sound originates within it, flows through it, and is perceived through it. Thus, it is said: "Śabdaguṇakam Ākāśam" - meaning sound is the quality of Ākāśa.

When we speak or listen, this action is made possible through the medium of Ākāśa. Sound waves are received by our ears, and this can only happen when there is harmony between the Ākāśa and our auditory faculties. According to modern science, the normal human hearing range is between 20 and 30 decibels. Sounds above this level are considered noise pollution, which is harmful not only to our ears but also to our overall mental and physical health. In today's industrial age, excessive noise from factories, transportation, construction, and DJs has made human life stressful. Its effects can be seen in increased blood pressure, insomnia, hearing loss, headaches, and mental fatigue. Additionally, radiation from electronic devices such as mobile phones, televisions, and computers, along with radioactive pollution caused by nuclear tests, are further disturbing the balance of Ākāśa.

Bhartiya wisdom emphasized the artistic and creative use of sound rather than its misuse. Here, sound is associated with purity and gentleness, giving birth to svaravijñāna (science of sound), music, and r̥cās (ऋचार्य) (Vedic hymns). The sages structured creative sounds in such a way that they could harmonize the environment according to the season, time, and mood. This approach not only provides relief from noise pollution but also benefits mental and spiritual health. The Vedas describe various meters, such as Gāyatrī, Triṣṭubh, Jagatī, and Anuṣṭup, which not only direct the power of speech but also balance the directions and calm the faults of life.

The mantra from the Yajurveda (23/33):

गायत्री त्रिष्टुव्जगत्यनुष्टुप्पा सहा वृहत्युष्णिहर्षा कुकुप्सुचीर्भिः शम्यतु त्वा॥
(यजुर्वेद 23/33)

*Gāyatrī Trīṣṭubhjagatyānuṣṭuppā saha.
Brhatyūṣṇiharhā kukupsuśrībhīḥ śamyatūvā*

This mantra highlights the balancing power of sound, capable of bringing stability and peace to the entire creation.

Based on the concepts of *Bhartiya svaravijñâna* and music, contemporary medical experts have discovered sound therapy and found it effective in treating chronic diseases.

Ākāśa, the largest part of the universe, contains everything from the smallest atomic particles to the largest celestial bodies. All these particles and bodies form countless galaxies that dance rhythmically, creating a vast

ecosystem. These celestial elements are interrelated, support one another, and complement each other. Every particle of the creation resonates with the music of the universe, whose movement is a kind of dance, and the sound produced from this dance is its song. This is the gentle form of the cosmic dance of *Natarāja*, known as *Lāsyā*, which maintains the harmony of *Ākāśa*. This dance of *Lāsyā* helps in preserving *Ākāśa* because excessive sound intensity, in the form of *Tāṇḍava*, could lead to the cosmic destruction (Mahāpralaya). The experience of *Natarāja*'s *Lāsyā* and dance was also mentioned by the physicist **Fritjof Capra** in the preface of his famous book *The Tao of Physics* (First Edition, 1975).

This vast, harmonious cosmic dance reminds us of the interconnection between all elements of the universe and the need to preserve the balance of *Ākāśa* to maintain peace, stability, and life itself.

5.3 The Balance of the Five Elements (Panchatatva) and Its Impact on Life

In Bhartiya philosophy, it is believed that the balance of the five elements (*panchatatva*) is crucial for life. When these elements are in harmony, life remains peaceful, balanced, and healthy. However, if any one of these elements becomes imbalanced, it can lead to physical, mental, and spiritual issues.

The Body and the Five Elements (Panchatatva)



In traditional Bhartiya healing practices like *Ayurveda* and *Yoga*, there is a deep connection between the five elements and the human body. In *Ayurveda*, the body is associated with three doshas (*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*), which arise from the imbalance of the *panchatatva*.

- **Vata Dosha** is linked to the element of *Vayu* (Air),
- **Pitta Dosha** is connected to the element of *Agni* (Fire),
- **Kapha Dosha** is associated with the elements of *Prithvi* (Earth) and *Jal* (Water).

Ayurveda recommends the proper use of the *panchatatva* to maintain the balance of these three doshas, which is essential for overall health and well-being.

5.4 Mental Balance

The balance of the five elements also plays a crucial role in mental peace and stability. When these elements are in harmony within a person, it leads to inner peace, mindfulness, and mental clarity. Through *Yoga*, these five elements are balanced as well. Specifically, practices like *Pranayama* (breathing exercises), *Dhyana* (meditation), and *Asanas* (physical postures) help to bring these elements into balance, promoting overall mental well-being.



In ancient Bharat, the concept of the five elements (*panchatatva*) wasn't just a physical theory—it was a way to understand the deeper spiritual and mental dimensions of life. A harmonious balance of these elements was believed to be the key to a life filled with peace, prosperity, and vitality.

Respecting and maintaining this balance isn't only important for our physical well-being—it's just as essential for our mental clarity and spiritual growth. The wisdom of the five elements is one of the timeless treasures of Bhartiya philosophy, offering guidance and purpose not only in the past but in our lives today as well.

By recognizing the importance of these elements, we are reminded to live in harmony—with ourselves and with nature. Bringing balance into our daily lives and honoring the environment isn't just wise; it's necessary for a sustainable and meaningful existence.

6. The Importance of Medicinal Plants in Ancient Bharat

Ancient Bharat has a rich and time-honored tradition of medicine and healing. Bhartiya systems of medicine—especially *Ayurveda*—were deeply rooted in natural remedies and the use of medicinal plants. According to Ayurveda, maintaining a person's physical constitution, mental state, and spiritual balance involved the use of natural therapies derived from plants and herbs.

One of the most enchanting features of Earth's environment, as understood in ancient Bhartiya thought, lies in its abundance of healing herbs and vegetation. Bhartiya sages recognized that these plants carry the essence of life and vital energy. The Sanskrit phrase “*Oṣāḥ dhārayantī oṣadhyāḥ*” means: “*Those that nourish and sustain life are called medicines.*”

Plants that complete their lifecycle after bearing fruits or flowers were considered **medicinal herbs (oṣadhi)**, while those that do not flower were simply categorized as **vegetation (vanaspati)**. This distinction is clearly explained in the *Amarakosha*, a classical Sanskrit thesaurus:

वानस्पत्यः फलैः पुष्पातैर पुष्पाद्वनस्पतिः।

ओषध्यः फलपाकान्ताः स्युः।

Vānaspatyāḥ phalaiḥ puṣpātair puṣpādvanaspatiḥ.
Oṣadhyāḥ phalapākāntāḥ syuḥ.

Which translates to:

“*Vanaspati* are those that bear flowers and fruits, while *oṣadhi* (medicinal herbs) are those that perish after bearing fruit.”

In the *Atharvaveda*, medicinal plants are classified into five main categories: **Soma**, **Dabhra**, **Bhanga**, **Yava**, and **Sahasa**. These were not only used for healing physical ailments, but also as tools for purification—both from sin and from environmental pollution.

In ancient Bhartiya scriptures, medicinal plants and trees were not merely seen as part of the environment—they were revered as sacred and powerful sources of healing and spiritual purity.

The *Atharvaveda* beautifully classifies and honors five principal categories of herbs, highlighting their divine significance:

पञ्चे राज्यानि वीरुधां सोमं श्रेष्ठानि वृूमः।

वृूमो भङ्गो यवः सहस्ते नौ मुञ्चन्वंहसः।

(अथर्व 11/6/15)

"Pañce rājyāni vīrudhāni somāni śreṣṭhāni brūmāḥ ।
Varbho bhaṅgo yavaḥ sahusta nau muñcantvānihasaḥ ।
(Atharva Veda 11.6.15)

Translation:

"We speak of the five royal herbs-Soma being the foremost. May Varbha, Bhanga, Yava, and Sahasa liberate us from all sin and suffering."

This verse suggests that these plants were not only medicinal but also purifiers of both body and soul.

In the *Yajurveda*, trees and herbs are personified as forms of Rudra, the fierce yet healing deity. In the 16th chapter, during a hymn of praise, Rudra is referred to as the **Lord of Trees** (*Vṛkṣapati*) and **Lord of Herbs** (*Auṣadhipati*):

वृक्षेभ्यो हरिकेशोऽप्यः पशूनाम्पतये नमः।
आ॒षधीनाम्पतये नमः।

(Yज्. 16/17-19)

"Vṛkṣebhyo harikeśebhyah paśūnām pataye namaḥ ।
Auṣadhinām pataye namaḥ ।"

(Yajurveda 16/17-19)

Translation:

"Salutations to the green-haired trees and to the Lord of all creatures.
Salutations to the Lord of herbs."

This shows the divine status that nature held in Vedic traditions-plants and trees were not just resources, they were deities in their own right, deserving of respect and care.

Further reinforcing this reverence, the *Skanda Purana* notes that those who plant and nurture sacred trees like Peepal, Neem, Banyan (Vat), Tamarind, Bael (Bilva), Amla, and Mango are protected from disease and distress. The reason is both spiritual and ecological: these trees have an exceptional ability to absorb pollutants and release fresh oxygen, purifying the air and making the environment healthier.

In essence, ancient Bhartiya wisdom recognized plants and trees not only as a part of nature but as essential to the survival and spiritual upliftment of humanity. Their preservation was seen as both a duty and a sacred act.

6.1 Ayurveda and Medicinal Plants

Ayurveda, the ancient Bhartiya system of medicine, placed immense importance on the use of medicinal plants. The goal of Ayurveda wasn't limited to curing diseases-it aimed at maintaining a balance between the body, mind, and spirit. Medicinal plants were classified based on their therapeutic properties, and each plant had a specific role in restoring health

and balance. Ayurvedic formulations often combined herbs with minerals and other natural substances to create powerful, holistic remedies.

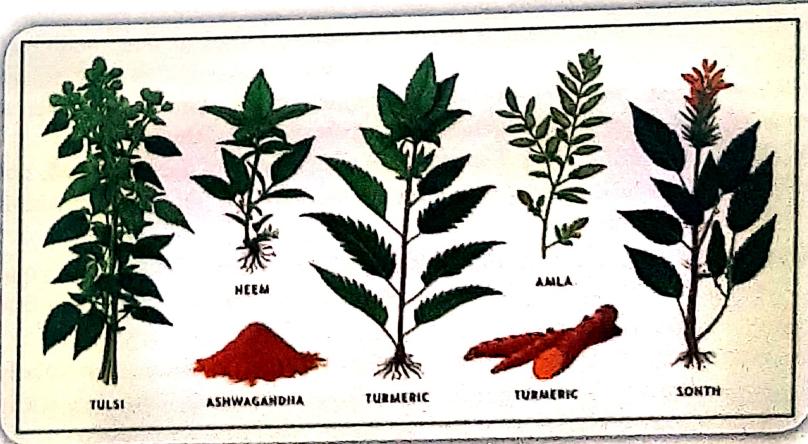
6.2 References to Medicinal Plants in Ayurvedic Texts

Ancient Bhartiya texts contain detailed references to a wide variety of medicinal plants. Classical Ayurvedic scriptures like the *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya* offer deep insights into the properties, uses, and benefits of these plants. Collectively, these texts mention hundreds of herbs used to treat a wide range of ailments-from digestive issues and infections to chronic diseases and mental imbalances.

6.3 Description of Key Medicinal Plants

Ancient Bhartiya medicine highlighted several plants for their exceptional healing properties. Here are a few notable examples:

- 1. Tulsi (Ocimum sanctum):** Known as the "Queen of Herbs," Tulsi holds both spiritual and medicinal significance in Bhartiya culture. Revered in homes and temples, Tulsi leaves are widely used to treat conditions such as fever, cold, cough, and asthma. Rich in antioxidants, antibacterial, and anti-inflammatory compounds, Tulsi strengthens the immune system and helps the body fight infections naturally.
- 2. Neem (Azadirachta indica):** Neem is considered one of the most powerful healing trees in Bhartiya traditional medicine. Its leaves, bark, and oil are used to treat skin conditions, fevers, and various infections. Neem's strong antibacterial and antifungal properties make it especially effective in detoxifying the blood, improving digestion, and supporting healthy blood pressure levels.



3. **Amla (Phyllanthus emblica):** Amla, also known as the "Bhartiya Gooseberry," is a highly beneficial medicinal plant in Traditional medicine. It is an excellent source of Vitamin C and is widely used to support digestion, strengthen the immune system, and treat skin issues. Amla juice is also known for its benefits in strengthening hair and improving eyesight.
4. **Ashwagandha (Withania somnifera):** *Ashwagandha*, often referred to as "Bhartiya Ginseng," is considered a powerful herb in Ayurveda. It helps increase the body's energy, reduce stress, and maintain mental calm. This herb is commonly used to treat stress, anxiety, and depression. It boosts the body's resilience and strength, enabling better overall functioning.
5. **Haldi (Curcuma longa):** *Haldi* (Turmeric) is an essential part of Bhartiya kitchens and is also regarded as an important medicinal herb in Ayurveda. It contains *curcumin*, a compound that has powerful antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and antibacterial properties. *Haldi* is used in the treatment of injuries, inflammation, skin disorders, and digestive issues.
6. **Sonth (Zingiber officinale):** *Sonth* refers to dried ginger, another significant medicinal plant used for digestive issues, cold and cough, and pain relief. It helps improve blood circulation, alleviate gastric problems, and regulate body temperature.

6.4 Religious and Cultural Importance of Medicinal Plants

In Bharat, medicinal plants have been of immense religious and cultural significance as well. Ancient Bhartiya culture believed that medicinal plants not only offer physical healing but also provide mental and spiritual peace. Some of the ways in which these plants were revered include:

- **Tulsi:** The Tulsi plant was traditionally planted in the courtyard, not only for its health benefits but also as a symbol of purity and devotion to Lord Vishnu.
- **Neem:** Neem is considered sacred, and its use extended beyond medicine to signify purity and sanctity. It was customary to place neem branches in homes.
- **Amla:** Amla is associated with religious significance, particularly connected to the Sun God, especially in the Treta Yuga (an era in Hindu mythology).

6.5 Conservation of Medicinal Plants

The conservation of medicinal plants was an essential practice in ancient Bharat. Ayurvedic practitioners and herb specialists continuously studied these plants and preserved their usage methods. Moreover, the seeds and cuttings of various plants were transported from one location to another to prevent them from being lost or destroyed.

Conclusion

In ancient Bharat, the perspective on environmental conservation and holistic well-being was deeply embedded in its religious, philosophical, and cultural traditions. The respect for nature, as reflected in the Vedas, Upanishads, and Puranas, demonstrates a profound understanding of ecological balance and sustainability. The five elements-earth, water, fire, air, and ether-were considered the fundamental forces that govern both the universe and human life. The balance of these elements was seen as essential for health, spiritual growth, and environmental harmony.

The principles of sustainable living, forest and river conservation, and responsible use of natural resources held a significant place in ancient Bhartiya civilization. Practices such as rainwater harvesting, organic farming, and afforestation were implemented to maintain ecological balance. Medicinal plants like *Tulsi*, *Neem*, and *Amla* were not only revered for their healing properties but also held spiritual importance. Ayurveda's holistic approach to health emphasized harmony between humanity and nature, promoting well-being through natural remedies.

Suggestive Readings

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