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Environmental perception in ancient Indian Hindu texts and tradition

Dr. Abinash Sengupta

In ancient times people were much nearer to nature and natural resources and valued it for the benefit of all living beings and also they had some socio-religious ways of conserving and safeguard it. Through many ancient texts, traditional practices and mythological stories, we can understand the awareness of our past people about the nature and ecosystem. Reading and understanding of these texts are much valuable to create awareness about the nature in our present society. The actual degradation of environment and ecosystem started with the advent of civilization, when forests were removed for making houses, grow crops, graze animals and settle the growing population in increasing cities and towns. As environment was one of the utmost vital factors for the emergence of civilization, correspondingly it became a key factor for its decay. (1)

A detailed analysis of the evolution of religion in the Indian sub-continent reveals that the religions in India are deeply connected with the nature. Ancient Indian literature speaks of a divine relationship between material and spiritual concepts. It will be discussed here how consciousness about environment and ecosystem can be found in various Hindu literatures of ancient India. Ancient Indian literatures deals with various environmental issues such as environmental protection, conservation and appropriate management. People of ancient India accepted nature as a dominant force, so they worshiped trees, mountains, animals, rivers etc. In Hindu theology, these were given special respect. (2) Apart from this, many Buddhist and Jain