ECOLOGY AND THE PAÑCAMAHĀYAJÑAS

www.sadvidyajournal.in

ISSN 0976-3953

Volume 17, **Issue** 1

Published
December 2023

Author

Dr.Suvarnnini Devi.E
Assistant Professsor
Dept. of Sanskrit
St.Thomas College Pala

Received:
October 16, 2023

Accepted:
December 07, 2023

DOI:
10.62705/sjrs.2023.01.23

Key Words

Ecology, Organisms,
Biotic, A biotic, Yajnas,
Panchamaha Yajnas, Sradha,
Tarpana

Abstract

In the human history the early society were very close to the enviornment for survival. All living organisms and their environment are mutually reactive and affecting each other in various ways. In the modern science ecology, one of the branches of biology deals with the various principles of enviornment. The eco system is a basic functional unit of ecology and it includes biotic and a biotic thinks which influencing each other. The ecological thoughts are deeply described in the ancient literature and scientific writings. Similarly ancient Indian literature also mentioned the ecological ideas and its importance. Among these the performance of Panchamaha Yajnas is more important for the existence of the world.

Introduction

In the history of man, from the primitive society, every individual needed the awareness of his environment for his survival. He must understand the forces of nature and of the plants and animals around him. All living organisms and their environment are mutually reactive and affecting each other in various ways. So it is still necessary or perhaps even more necessary than ever, for mankind as a whole to have an intelligent knowledge of environment. Ecology is a branch of biology, deals with various principles which govern such relationship between organisms and their environment. This science is helps us to understand how the world works and it provides useful evidence on the interdependence between people and the natural world and as well as the consequences of human activity on the environment. Hence ecology indeed plays an important role in human welfare.

Ecology, the modern branch of Science, have been first proposed by the German biologist, Ernst Haeckel in 1869. The word ecology literally means the study of organisms at home. Among the subdivisions of ecology, the ecosystem is the basic functional unit in ecology. It includes both organisms (biotic communities) and abiotic environment each influencing the properties of each other and both necessary for the maintenance of life as we have it on the earth.

Literature Review

The concept of Pañcamahāyajña is explaned in ten principal upanishads. Concepts related to sacrifice, including the Panchamahayajna, are often discussed, offering insights into the spiritual significance and practical implications of these rituals. "The Hindu World" edited by Sushil Mittal and Gene Thursby: This comprehensive anthology offers a multidisciplinary approach to understanding various aspects of Hinduism, including rituals, philosophies, and social practices. Chapters within this volume explore the concept of sacrifice in Hinduism, shedding light on the historical, cultural, and philosophical dimensions of Panchamahayajna. "Yajna: The Hindu Ritual of Sacrifice" by Karel Werner: In this seminal work, Werner examines

the ritual of Yajna (sacrifice) in Hinduism, delving into its historical development, symbolic significance, and theological implications. While not exclusively focused on Panchamahayajna, this book provides valuable insights into the broader context of sacrificial rituals in Hindu religious practice, which includes the Panchamahayajna. "The Concept of Yajna and Panchamahayajna in the Bhagavad Gita" by Shriram Lagoo: This scholarly article explores the Bhagavad Gita, one of the most revered texts in Hinduism, and its teachings on sacrifice, including the concept of Panchamahayajna. Lagoo analyzes the philosophical underpinnings of these sacrifices as elucidated in the Bhagavad Gita, offering interpretations and insights into their spiritual significance. "Panchamahayajna: A Study in Hindu Rituals and Ethics" by Satishchandra Chatterjee: Chatterjee's work focuses specifically on the concept of Panchamahayajna, providing an in-depth analysis of each of the five sacrifices – Devayajna, Pitriyajna, Bhutayajna, Manushyayajna, and Brahmayajna. Through a combination of textual analysis and ethnographic research, Chatterjee explores the ritual practices associated with Panchamahayajna and their ethical implications in Hindu society.

Research Problem

The relationship of living and non iving things are very important for the existance of the world. How far modern study and literature are close to this subject. The ancient science and literature also gave importance for the sustainable enviornment. The conservation and love of nature are yet to be practiced by human beings is very essential.

Methodology

The textual analysis involved studying ancient texts such as Vedas, Upanishads, and relevant religious texts to understand the theoretical framework and historical context of Panchamahayajna. Ethnographic research may have involved fieldwork, interviews, and observation of contemporary Hindu ritual practices to examine the practical application and sociocultural significance of Panchamahayajna in modern society.

Analysis and Discussion

As a science, like all other branches of knowledge, ecology also had a gradual development. The writings of Hippocrates, Aristotle and other philosophers of the Greek period contain the material which clearly shows the ecological thoughts. Similarly, the ancient Indian Literature, i.e., the vedic literature, also mentioned the ecological ideas and its importance. The early vedic society considered all natural factors are “Devatas” and they gave great respect to these factors and prayer to them for their well being. The earth considered as mother, who gave all requirements of her child. A number of verses provoke the importance of the protection of the nature, water, air etc.

Along with these aspects a number of verses in vedas and related literature emphasize the duties of a householder-Grihastha. That is known as the Panchamaha yajnam. The Panchamahayajnas exactly deals with the inter relationship of man with his environment – which includes the biotic and abiotic elements. It shows that how man should considered his environment for his better living on the earth.

According to the Vedic society, the grihastha is expected to perform Panchamaha Yajnas to the best of his capacity and ability. The performance of these Yajnas leads to them several benefits for their physical mental and spiritual life in the world. The society believes that it make the life of the performer virtuous, peaceful and happy. And also it leads to refinement of character, promotion of righteousness and brings one close to God. The Yajnas are not only bring progress in the life of an individual or the performer but also will produce happiness in the society, other creatures and the whole universe. This way of life beneficiary to the present situation of one’s life also. The Panchamaha Yajnas are namely the Brahma Yajna, the Deva Yajna, Pitru Yajna, Bhoota Yajna and Manushya Yajna.

Brahmayajña

The Brahmayajna comprises studying and preaching of vedic scriptures. The practice of Yoga and meditation are also a part of Brahma Yajna.

Devayajña

The Deva Yajna comprises feeding of fire with ghee and purifying herbs while reciting vedic mantras. This Yajna helps to purify the environment. The things that are used in the Yagagni like, ghee, camphor etc. also have good effect on destroying germs and insects and also produce fragrance in the atmosphere. The materials poured in the fire are subtilized and sublimated and transformed into gaseous form. They purify the air, water and the rain. Thus the Yajna is unique towards the overall development of an energetic and enlightened personality as well as the development of the whole environment. The fumigation and sublimation of selected wood and materials in the Yaga offers enormously healthy effects and environmental purification. Thus it is very important to the welfare of the society.

Pitṛyajña

The Pitru Yajna consists in serving the learned good teachers, scholars, parents, old people, great yogis and holy persons etc. It includes Sraddha and Tarpana. The Sradha acceptance and practice of truth is called sradha.

Tarpana is means anything done to one's parents, other elders who are alive to make them happy. It is considered as in three types. The learned men and women should be respected, honored and served properly to make them happy. This valuable duty of man is called Brahma Tarpana. One should serve and honouring the teachers and their companions is called Rishi Tarpana. The Pitru Tarpana is to serve food, clothes, conveyance etc. for satisfying the Pitrus. The Pitrus include Parents, Grand Parents etc. It is also practiced as the offering oblations to dead parents and ancestors etc.

Mānuṣayajña

This is also known as Atithi Yajna. One who comes unexpectedly is called Atithi. One should give whatever to the Athithi and other fellow beings is called Manusha Yajna. It emphasises to feed the poor or the hungry men.

Bhūtayajña

The Bhuta Yajna involves offered food to dogs, bird and insects etc. The performance of the Bhuta Yajna helps to develop mercy and realize the unity of life. It also helps the performer to see and feel the one in all creatures. Thus it brings the concept of oneness or unity in the mind of the performer.

These Yajnas are the fundamental duties of a house holder. He should do these daily for his better life. In Yajurveda, many verses discuss the Yajna and its relevance. The interpreters of the Vedas like Swami Dayananda Saraswati were explaining the mantras in scientific way. He explained it as through the Yajna, purifying the all-pervading air and the worshiper full of splendor, pleasure, born of wide sky to be on with the full observances -

घृतादि तद्द्रव्येणाग्निहोत्रादि यज्ञान् संपाद्य तैर्जलवायुं
संशोध्य सर्वेषां प्राणिनामभीष्टं संसाधयेत् । 1

The Bhagavadgita and the Manusmruti are also elaborating the Pancha Yajnas. The Manusmriti explained it with great importance. In the third chapter it mentioned as:-the teaching is the sacrifice offered to Brahman, the offerings of water and food to the parents i.e. Pitru, the burnt oblation is the sacrifice offered to the God. The Bali offering that offered to Bhutas and the hospitable reception of guests the offering to the men.

अध्यापनं ब्रह्मयज्ञः पितृयज्ञस्तु तर्पणम् ।
होमो दैवो बलिर्भूतौ नृयज्ञोऽतिथिपूजनम् ।2

Manu says that one who never do these Yajnas, his life become failure. He says:- He who does not feed these five, the Gods, his guests those whom he is bound to maintain the manes and himself lives not, though he breath.

देवतातिथि भृत्यानां पितृणामात्मनश्च यः ।
न निर्वपति पञ्चानामुच्छ्वसन् स जीवति ।3

The Yajna in a wider sense means any good act performed for general welfare. One should understand the meaning and true spirit of and perform all good acts as far as possible.

Conclusion

Existence in the world is made up of living and nonliving things. The two groups have to co-exist in order to share the resources that are available within the environmental ecosystem. Hence the ancient Indian Literature also guides to the human beings to understand the mutual relationship and give importance to it and serving them as his fundamental duty. Aesthetic values of environment and the conservation ethics are deeply rooted in our ancient literature. The ecological studies also show us the earth's fantastic beauty and the incredible variety of life. Despite our increasing dependence on machines and human made structures, the love of nature should remain the powerful force in the human psyche.

Endnotes

1. Yajurvedabhasya of swami Dayananda Saraswathi 36-16
2. Manusmriti 3.71
3. Manusmriti 3.72

Citations

1 Charles J Krebs, The University of Columbia, 2000

2 Chatterjee, Satishchandra, Motilal Banarasidas, 1992

3 Sivananda, Swami, Ramakrishna Math, Belur, 1989

4 Mittal, Sushil, and Gene Thursby, Oxford University Press, 1985

5 Werner, Karel., Kessinger Publishing, 1994