

# ECOLOGICAL AWARENESS ENSHRINED IN THE ANCIENT WISDOM

Prof. K. V. Suresh, Dr. T.G. Sreekumar

Environment plays a very significant role in human civilization. It is a matter of great pride to the Indians that no other jurisprudence in the world over has expressed so much consciousness towards environment as that of the Vedic Indians. One can see that ancient people belonging to various cultures had shown much concern to the environment in which they breathe in. Vedic literature, among other things is a collection of thoughts and ideas that enable us to formulate a fairly clear image of ancient man, his culture and environment. It is our prime duty to unearth the cultural past of Indian treasures, and to unveil the hidden forgotten pristine concepts of environment, ecological, folkloristic, Vedic and Post Vedic sources and traditions. The volume comprises of articles highlighting Ecological awareness in relation with the Upanishads, the Epics and Puranas, the Classical Literature, the Non- Vedic Traditions, Contemporary Issues etc., in Sanskrit, Hindi, Malayalam and English media.



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**प्राक्कथनम्**

**डा. के. चन्द्रशेखरन् नायर्**

**\* प्रकृतिरक्षणं खलु प्राणरक्षणम् \***

मातृदेवो भव पितृदेवो भव आचार्यदेवो भव अतिथिदेवो भव इति उद्घोषणचतुष्टये सनातनसंस्कृतेः तत्त्वं निहितं वर्तते। मातृदेवादीन् प्रति भूतवर्तमानकालयोः अस्माकं महान् आदरः आसीद्, अस्ति च। भाविनि काले अपि तादृशः महान् आदरः अस्माकं मनसि भविष्यति च इत्येतत् निश्चप्रचम्। मातृदेवादिषु कीदृशः महान् आदरः अस्मासु पारम्परिकतया सुदृढो वर्तते, तावान् आदरः भूप्रकृतिसंरक्षणविषये अपि अवश्यं पालनीयः वर्तते। अर्थात् सनातनसंस्कृतेः मातृदेवो भव इत्याद्युक्तचतुर्विधोद्घोषणेन साकं प्रकृतिदेवो भव इत्यस्यापि सादरं योजना कर्तव्या। मातरं प्रति यादृशं स्नेहबहुमानादिकं अस्माकं हृदये वर्तते तादृशं स्नेहभक्तिबहुमानादिकं प्रकृतिं प्रत्यपि अवश्यं वोढव्यम्। तदा सा प्रकृतिः मातृवत् रक्षिता भविष्यति।

प्रकृतिसंरक्षणम् इत्येतत् कश्चन धर्मविशेषः। अतः धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः इतिवत् प्रकृतिः रक्षति रक्षितः वनं रक्षति रक्षितः वृक्षो रक्षति रक्षितः मेरुः रक्षति रक्षितः वापी रक्षति रक्षितः वायुः रक्षति रक्षितः मृतृ रक्षति रक्षितः बीजं रक्षति रक्षितः इत्यादीनामपि स्वीकारः अवश्यं कुर्यात्। रक्षणं धर्ममात्रम्। अत एव इतिहासे व्यासेनोक्तं - धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः इति।

प्रकृतिसंरक्षणस्य अनिवार्यतां प्रति अत्राद्भवन्ति भूतानि इति गीताश्लोकस्य आशयं व्याख्यातुं शक्यते। श्लोकस्तु यथा —

अत्राद्भवन्ति भूतानि पर्जन्यादन्नसम्भवः।

यज्ञाद्भवति पर्जन्यो यज्ञः कर्मसमुद्भवः।।

श्लोकेऽस्मिन् १. भूतानि २. अन्नम् ३. पर्जन्यः ४. यज्ञः ५. कर्म इति पञ्चकस्य गणना कृता वर्तते। अत्र कर्म यज्ञः पर्जन्यः अन्नं भूतानि इति भिन्नक्रमेणापि उक्तिः युक्ता। अत्र कर्म कीदृशं भवितुमर्हति इति चिन्तायां साधु कर्म बुद्धौ आयाति। अत एव कर्मानन्तरं यज्ञपदस्य प्रयोगः। अत्रत्यः यज्ञः पवित्रं पावनं च सत्कर्म एव भवितुमर्हति। यज्ञफलन्तु सर्वदा

(iv)

a wrong concept among the common folk that no trace of environmental studies are there in the ancient wisdom and these ideas are of very latest origin. Here through this Seminar the Department wishes to unveil the truth that even from the Vedic times onwards our ancient sages were fully vigilant of this idea and they had purposefully incorporated the measures for protecting the environment.

Ecology is always connected with the sustenance of human life. For a healthy living we should keep our environment clean and serene. This idea is not at all a closed chapter. It was always been there in our culture right from the origin of human race. We have to put a lot of effort for the usage of the resources of the earth. Especially Soil, Air and Water; these are the three major elements which are to be protected at any cost, for the generations are there to use the same. Hence utmost care must be given for the protection. Now-a days a lot of disasters are happening due to misuse or overuse or unreckoned use of resources. Hence it is hightime to think about the protection methods of earthly resources. The seminar on 'Ecological Awareness Enshrined in the Ancient Wisdom', present an earnest search in the early texts from the Vedas to the contemporary works is being made for tracing such methods.

**Dr. B. Chandrika**  
**Professor & HOD**

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the same time it encourages industries to produce more and more new harmful things, including the so-called 'thinking machines' of artificial intelligence which even may acquire one day the capacity to overtake human intelligence and enslave the whole humanity. Instead of approaching nature as an object for exploitation or making it a product of consumption or tool for greedy humans, science should rework its attitudes and parameters with obligation and compassion to the phenomena of life. Otherwise the future of human race is certainly doomed. It must understand that life is possible only in this blue planet and its end will be the end of life in this universe. The search for another habitable planet is not a solution or license for spoiling our live planet. As the advocates of the Gaia theory ask, where does it want to take us to go after killing this living blue planet? There is nowhere to go. Today's unscrupulous way of progress is certainly doomed, and it will be a good insurance of life for all if the scientific community follows this truth without delay and correct their course. If it does not do so, the whole humanity will, in the near future, without doubt, revolt against modern science and discard it. Perhaps, there lies the hope of the survival of life on this dear planet.

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## ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS FORMULATED BY MANU FOR SAFEGUARDING BIODIVERSITY

**Prof. B. Chandrika**

The supreme aim of human birth is nothing but the attainment of liberation or Godness. Even though the ways and methods there are certain changes happened but the supreme aim remains there itself unchanged. The basic tenets of this ideas are well- explained in the Śrutis. The second one is there as the methods of living. These methods should be changed periodically considering the then present social conditions. These methods are being explained in the Smrtis. Even then the basic principles like *Ahimsa*, *Satya*, *Dharma* and *Asteya*, these are the four pillars on which the whole life of the society is modulated. These life principles also need periodical changes in this practicality. All these are dealt with in the smrtis. Manusmṛti is the oldest among the smrtis which have ruled over centuries the life of Indian people.

Manusmṛti itself shows the history of that period. It was a period when the *Cāturvarṇya* system had flourished in its full-fledged form. At that period Brahmins enjoyed a glorious life. This paper tries to trace the environmental awareness of Manu. It is an astonishing fact that the ancient Indians promoted environmental awareness during 5000 BC, but the others noticed the importance only during 2000 AD. The beauty is that the environment was free from contamination. This shows that Ancient Indians promoted environmental protection in a futuristic outlook that they have shown such type of ethics, the value of which is ever relevant even under the present environmental scenario. Manus ethical laws are not declared as environmental laws, but they are incorporated in laws pertained different environmental aspects. Many of the laws shown in different chapters are at par with

the current environmental aspects. These laws were followed in the ancient Indian society and even nowadays these laws are being partially followed.

The whole environmental laws prescribed by Manu have been purposefully made for the enrichment of the complete well-being of the society. There are five major divisions Biological, Social, Psychological and philosophical aspects. These laws are formulated to overcome problems of pollution and contamination and for conservation. We can name these laws as environmental ones and these were formulated by the Ecologist, as we can call him in his work which comprises 12 Chapters includes 2684 verses. These laws are neither portrayed as environmental laws or ethical laws. The attempt made here is to compile the same from various chapters so as to describe these as Environmental laws. The aim of such a compilation is to open the eyes of the scientific world, that Indian ancient science was much enriched in the Vedic age and was conscious enough of the environmental aspects. They were not purposefully written in such an end in mind but in turn they have turned in such an end thus we can not even imagine that in such a remote period such a scientific forgetting happened and after a thorough thought they have foreseen the aftereffect of unreckoned act of misusing or badly using the resources of the earth, which is to be protected at any cost by the inhabitation for the use of next generation to come. Many of these laws proposed by the author are at par with the modern environmental aspects. They were strictly followed in the earlier society and many are even still followed in the present day social ethics. These ethical laws have come into force since the post-Vedic period and no definite date and at the same time, one can not fix the date of its origin. The other law givers of India (20 major and about 50 minor) have followed the foot prints of Manu.

A reader can classify the whole environmental laws formulated by the great sage Manu in various stressing ideas. One of

such classification is on the base that three-dimensional views on which one can classify the whole environmental treatment of Manu. They are Ethical, Offensive and Self restriction. This is one type of classification method. Ethical restriction contains certain advice not to commit an environmental sin and also contains certain codes of conduct. Offensive dictum contains certain antienvironmental activities being demonstrated as punishable and punishment is also prescribed. The third ie Self-restriction means a committee of environmental sin is asked to perform certain penance. The prime benefit for these types of penance is to prevent such crimes and to create self restraint and self-humiliation so as to make the doer guilty and thereby create a lesson to the onlookers that if anyone repeats that crime should be punished in such a way so that the onlookers may abstain from doing that act. Not only that they are introduced here to make them entry into the final goal of human existence ie the highest goal liberation the same can be attained only through certain penance.

Another type of classification method is that physical Environment, Biodiversity, Animal world Ecological responsibility, Plant Kingdom Ecological niche Conducive environment Pollution and Contamination. Physical environment means the five elements. These five elements are the basic factors of the Universe. By protecting these elements from contamination the basic of the universe can be protected. It is said in the first Chapter that (I/20, 75-78).<sup>1</sup>

Bio-Diversity means all the living and the non-living things ie Cara and Acara (I/41; V/29).<sup>2</sup> Animal world means all living beings such as Jarayuja, Andja .Svedja and Udbhija (I/42-45). The Plant Kingdom includes all.Vanaspati such as Medicinal .herbs, shrubs, creepers etc. (I/46-48).

Ecological niche means - names (systematic position) actions (role in the environment) and living conditions (habitat) of all created beings (I/21).<sup>3</sup> Conducive environment for human habitation refers to

the bio-geographical, political, cultural and social factors of a dwelling environment (II/17-24; IV/60, 61). Pollution refers to spoilage of the five gross elements by unethical activity (IV/48). Ecological responsibility refers to one's expression of obligation and moral duty for his source of knowledge (R̥shi Yajnya), for his ancestors from whom he has received the corporeal body and genetic setup (Pitr̥ Yajnya) to the environmental factors (Deva Yajnya), to the biodiversity (Bhoota Yajnya) and human beings of the society, a source of cooperation (Nrru Yajnya) (IV/21).<sup>4</sup>

Contamination refers to any action against the purity of the environment (V/137,146).<sup>5</sup>

An interesting and thought-provoking statement in the Manusmṛti that the knowledge, austerities, fire, holy food, earth, control of internal organs, water, smearing with cow dung, the wind, sacred rites, the sun and the time are the different cleaning agents, applicable as per situation against mental, physical, physiological and metaphysical impurity (V/105).<sup>6</sup> How the writer has correctly correlates these multi dimensional ideas beautifully joined as the measure as cleaning agents for these four kinds of impurities. Plants are declared as conscious. Conservation of plants refers to non-spoilage of any plant, plant part or plant product for no good purpose (I/49; XI/64, 65, 143, 145, 146). Non-Violence in feeling and action, kindness for biodiversity and rendering of ethical protection for them.

Another kind of environmental law proposed by Manu is the prevention of Pollution. There are two main pollutions. At this context, Manu has given a detailed exposition of these two types of pollutions. The impure substance is not to be thrown to fire - (smoke raised thereof, may act poisonous) (IV/53).<sup>7</sup> Smoke, raised from a burning corpse, is to be avoided (IV/69). Fire is not to be placed in bedroom (to avoid CO<sub>2</sub> and CO pollution) (IV/54) Fire should not be blown with mouth (fly ash and smoke raised may enter to respiratory tract) (IV/53) Sleeping in a deserted dwelling or under the tree during

night time should be avoided (Choked / confined air is poisonous and plants release only CO<sub>2</sub> during night time; also may be due to unpredicted biological activity) (IV/57,73).<sup>8</sup> Here in the last two instances, he warns people from doing their own harms.

### Water Pollution

Manu says that filthy substances like urine, feces, saliva, clothes defiled by impure substances, blood poisonous things and any other substance considered to be impure, should not be thrown to the water body (IV/56).<sup>9</sup> He, who has committed any blameable act in water (as above), shall subsist during a month on food obtained by begging and shall mutter the seven verses addressed to gods like Indra *et al.* (XI/256).<sup>10</sup> Knowingly or unknowingly if someone gets relieved of the necessities of nature, being greatly pressed, in water; should go for a minor penance i.e. touching a cow after the bath (XI/203).<sup>11</sup>

### Ethics for conservation of Bio-diversity

A twice-born man (*Dvija*) of virtuous disposition, wherever he dwells, even in the time of distress shall not cause injury to any creature (V/43). Usually, there is a charge against Manu is formulated by certain people that he had given many privileges for the Brahmins. For Example, If a Brahmin and a Vaisya do the same crime, the punishment for the Brahmin will be lesser than the other. Here he says that at any cost a Brahmin should not cause any harm to anyone. He, who desires to obtain endless bliss and good for all, should not be a cause to the sufferings of bonds and death to living creatures (V/46).<sup>12</sup> He, who wishes to attain what he fixes in his mind, should not injure any creature (V/47).<sup>13</sup> In order to preserve living creatures, either day or night, even with pain to the body, one should walk carefully scanning the ground (VI/68).<sup>14</sup>

Abstention from injuring creatures (*Ahimsa*) is to be considered as the foremost among the social verdicts (declared by Manu) (X/63).<sup>15</sup> He, who kills the animals without a (lawful) reason is certainly expected to suffer violent death (many times) in his future births (V/

38).<sup>16</sup> He, who injures innoxious beings with a wish to give pleasure to himself, will never find happiness, neither during his lifetime nor after death (V/45).<sup>17</sup>

Penance for Killing of Animals One must go for spontaneously spring up in forests should be followed by penance (XI/64, 65, 143, 145, 146). V) Injury to Biodivepenance if he kills the following animals (XI/69, 110, 116, 117, 132, 135-138).

Penance must be followed the sinful killing of snakes (*Ahi, Sarpa*), iguana (*Godhi*), frog/toad (*Mandukam*), small fishes(*Meena*), small animals those have bones *Asthimattaam*), boneless animals (*Anasthaam*), insects small and large(*Krmi, Kīṭa*) and destroying of any kind of creatures that breed in food, condiment fruits and flowers (*Sattvānām* - life from substrates: Microbes) (XI, 69,71, 132, 140, 141, 142).

Penance for Spoilage of Plant Diversity Injuring medicinal plants and cutting down green trees for firewood, cutting of fruit trees, shrubs, creepers, lianes, flowering plants, destroy of agricultural species for no good purpose and all plants that rsity, is Offensive The king is advised not to go for hunting, as King's conduct is expected to reflect upon the society (VII/47,50).<sup>18</sup>

In case of death of an animal for food purpose, the followings are to be considered as slayers *viz.* the perimeter for slaughtering, the killer, the seller, the buyer, the cook, the caterer and the consumer of meat(V/51).<sup>19</sup> The meat-eater is more guilty than the slayer of the animal (V/34).<sup>20</sup> A careless driver of cart shall be inflicted with a fiscal punishment who causes the death or injury of any living being such as a man, cow, elephant, camel, horse, a small cattle, to beautiful wild quadrupeds and birds, donkey, sheep and goats, dog or pig (VII/ 296-298).

If an animal is struck with a blow that causes it pain, the offender should be punished with a fine in proportion to the amount of pain caused (VIII/286). If a limb is injured, causing a wound with hemorrhage, the assailant shall be made to pay all the expenses of the sufferer's cure VIII/287). According to the usefulness of the several kinds of trees, a fine must be inflicted for injuring them (VIII/285).

### Sympathy for Animals

One must gently place some food on the ground for dogs, crows, and insects (III/92).<sup>21</sup> One should not travel with untrained beasts of burden, nor with animals that are tormented by hunger or disease, or whose tails have been disfigured (IV/67).<sup>22</sup>

One should travel with beasts without urging them much with goad (IV/68).<sup>23</sup> A cow should be protected from any sort of danger and any injury caused to cow should be followed with penance (XI/ 113, 115, 116, 117) One should not step over a rope to which a calf is tied (IV/38), to avoid any injury to the fickle calf apprehending a wrong webbing of the tied rope. A cow should not be interrupted while it is suckling (IV/59). Any damage caused by a cow within ten days of her calving should not be considered as a cattle mischief (VIII/ 242)

The peculiarity of the law of Manu is that all these laws are not at all purposefully written for the sake of environmental protection, but they are ethical statements which in turn results in the protection of the environmental safety through biological, social and psychological balance. Finally, all these statements in toto will connect as environmental protection. Hence these are the moods which inculcated in every type of social atmosphere and will work as a panacea for all the problems caused by the sociocultural and environmental imbalance of the land. Even though the whole laws of Manu is

not in use after the period of independence there are certain rules and regulations which are being practiced in certain communities even today.

### Endnotes:

1. आद्याद्यस्य गुणं तेषामवाप्नोति परः परः। यो यो यावति यश्चैषां सस तावद्गुणः स्मृतः। (1/20).  
मनः सृष्टिं विकुरुते चोद्यमानं सिसृक्षया। आकाशं जायते तस्मात् तस्य शब्दं गुणं विदुः। (1/75).  
आकाशात् तु विकुर्वाणात् सर्वगन्धवहः शुचिः। बलवाञ्जायते वायुः सवै स्पर्शगुणो मतः। (1/76).  
वायोरपि विकुर्वाणात् विरोचिष्णु तमोनुदम्। ज्योतिरुत्पद्यते भास्वत् तत् रूपगुणमुच्यते। (1/77).  
ज्योतिषश्च विकुर्वाणात् आपो रसगुणाः स्मृताः। अद्भ्यो गन्धगुणा भूमिरित्येषा सृष्टिरादितः। (11/1/28)
2. एवमेतैरिदं सर्वं मन्त्रियोगात्महात्मभिः। यथा कर्म तपोलोगात् सृष्टं स्थावरजंगमम्। (1/41).  
चराणमन्नमचरा दंष्ट्रिणामप्यदंष्ट्रिणः। अहन्ताश्च सहस्तानां शूराणां चैव भीरवः। (5/29).
3. सर्वेषां तु स नामानि कर्मणि च पृथक् पृथक्। वेदशब्देभ्य एवादौ पृथक् संस्थाश्च निर्ममे।। (1/21).
4. ऋषियज्ञं देवयज्ञं भूतयज्ञं च सर्वदा। न्यज्ञं पितृयज्ञं च यथाशक्ति न हापयेत्।। (4/21).
5. एतच्छौचं गृहस्थानां द्विगुणं ब्रह्मचारिणाम्। त्रिगुणं स्याद्द्वनस्थानां यतीनां तु चतुर्गुणम्। (5/37).
6. ज्ञानं तपोऽग्निराहारो मृत्मनो वार्युपाञ्जनम्। वायुः कर्माकंकालौ च शुद्धेः कर्तृणो देहिनाम्।। (5/105).
7. नागिनं मुखेनोपद्यमेन्नानं नेक्षेत चस्त्रियम्। नामेद्ध्यं प्रक्षिपेदनौ न च पादौ प्रतापयेत्।। (4/55).
8. नैकः सुप्याच्छूयगेहे श्रेयांसं न प्रबोधयेत्। नोदक्ययाभिभाषेत यज्ञं गच्छेन्न चावृतः। (5/57).  
अद्वारेण च नातीयाद्ग्रामं वा वेश्म वाऽऽवृतं। रात्रौ च वृक्षमूलानि दूरतः परिवर्जयेत्।। (4/73).
9. नाप्सु मूत्रं पुरीषं वा ष्ठीवनं वा समुत्सृजेत्। अमेध्यलिप्तमन्यद्वा लोहितं वा विषाणि वा। (4/56).
10. मन्त्रैः शाकलहोमोलैः अब्दं हुप्ता घृतं द्विजः। सुगुर्वप्यापहन्ते नो जत्वा वा नम इत्युचम्।। (11/256).
11. वेदोदितानां नित्यानां कर्मणां समतिक्रमे।। स्नातकव्रतलोपे च प्रायश्चित्तमभोजनम्।। (11/203).
12. यो बान्धनवधक्लेशान् प्राणिनां न चिकीर्षति। स सर्वस्य हितप्रेप्सुः सख्यमत्यन्तमनुते।। (5/46).
13. यद्दध्यायति यत् कुरुते धृतिं बध्नाति यत्रच। तदवाप्नोत्ययत्नेन यो हिनस्ति न किश्चन।। (5/47).
14. संरक्षणार्थं जन्तूनां रात्रावहनि वा सदा। शरीरस्यात्यये चैव समीक्ष्य वसुधां चरेत्। (6/68).
15. अहिंसा सत्यमस्तेयं शौचमिन्द्रियनिग्रहः। एतं सामासिकं धर्मं चातुर्वर्ण्येऽब्रवीन्मनुः।। (9/63).
16. यावन्तिपशुरोमणि तावत् कृत्वोऽहमारणम्। वृथापशुञ्जः प्राप्नोति प्रेत्य जन्मनि जन्मनि। (6/38).
17. योऽहिंसकानि भूतानि हिनस्त्यात्मसुखेच्छया। सजीवश्च मृतश्चैव न क्वचित् सुखमेधते। (6/45).
18. मृगायाक्षौ दिवास्वप्नः परिवादः स्त्रियो मदः। तैर्यत्रिकं वृथात्या कामजो दशमो गणः। (7/47).  
पानमक्षः स्त्रियश्चैव मृगाया च यथाक्रमम्। एतत् कष्टतमं विद्याश्चतुष्कं कामजे गणे। (7/50).
19. अनुमन्ता विशसिता निहन्ता क्रयविक्रयी। संस्कर्ता चोपहर्ता च खादकश्चेति घातकाः। (5/51).
20. न तादृशं भवत्येनो मृगहन्तुर्धनार्थिनः। यादृशं भवति प्रेत्य वृथामांसानि खादतः।। (5/34).
21. शूनां च पतितानां च श्वपचां पापरोगिणाम्। वायसानां कृमीणां च शनकैर्निर्वपेत् भूवि। (3/92).  
नाविनीतैर्ब्रजेत् धूर्वेनच क्षुद्वाधिपीडितैः। न भिन्नश्रृंगाक्षिखुरैर्न वालधिनिरूपितैः। (4/67).
22. विनीतैस्तु ब्रजोन्नित्यमाशुगैर्लक्षणान्वितैः। वर्णरूपोपसम्पन्नैः प्रतोदेनातुदन् भृशम्। (4/68).

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## ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS IN SANSKRIT

*Prof. A. Girija*

India has a unique tradition in conservation of the flora and fauna of the lands. Living in the lap of nature observing the wonderful gift of the mountains, plains and river banks producing more than five thousand varieties of plants, their use for cattle fodder, food produce and medicines were clearly noted and handed down to generations of people. More than one thousand plants are used in Āyurveda. The tribal people comprising of more than eighty million have been playing an important role in identifying and collecting these medicinal plants. It is worthy of praise in this context that the government of India has recognised this important role of the tribal by conferring Padma award on Smt. Lakshmikutty, a tribal lady expert in this tribal medicines, in the function organised in connection with the Republic day 2018.

### Maintenance of Ecological Balance

Energy should be preserved for the survival of all species of living beings. It is the most important duty of the National Governments, international community and every responsible organization. Conservation of the richness of natural resources should be given utmost priority and violation of the rules and regulations to protect environmental balance should be prevented effectively. Over exploitation to make more profit with the help of new technologies is a result of greed and it is a reckless and remorseless tendency that should be checked.

Legitimate use of the resources of nature and the proper use of science and technology for the preservation of the wealth of nature should be given top priority in planning. Science and technology should be used positively for the prevention of pollution of environment. For example, the use of electricity produced from solar