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Eco-spirituality in *Bhūmi Sūkta*

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Abstract

*The prime concern of this article is to unfold the eco-conscience of Vedic people through the Vedic text. It is to trace out their environmental and ecological awareness. The article aims at perceiving their eco-spiritual consciousness. This study becomes significant to analyze the Vedic literature through naturalistic perspective and it assists the contemporary eco-campaigners to address the eco-peril of this planet. In order to achieve this objective, this study uses the qualitative research paradigm mostly on the thematic interpretation. It has amalgamated the essence of some of the disciplines of naturalistic school of thought. The core conclusion of them is incorporated within the frame of eco-spirituality that becomes the eco-tool to analyze the text. The primary text is the *Bhūmi Sūkta* (the hymn to the Earth) from the Atharvaveda. After making the eco-reading upon the hymn, it is quite evident that the Vedic people were aware of the biophysical and temporal aspects of the Earth, and the earth ethics was their life principle for coexistence. The conclusion of this study is that the Vedic people had cherished spiritual ecology for due existence of living and non-living things on the earth.*

Keywords: Earth, ecology, element, honor, nature, spirit.

Spiritual Ecology: An Introduction

The contemporary world is facing unprecedented ecological imbalance owing to collective outlook on nature. Undoubtedly, one's thought and attitude to nature guides an individual's activities and behavior and one's acts are responsible for the outcome. The major eco-crisis that the present world is facing is due to the anthropocentric conception and deeds. To put it other way, the human centric thoughts and acts are accountable to eco-threats. Satish Kumar rightly pinpoints the causes of contemporary eco-disorder: "The crisis of environment comes out of utilitarian, materialistic, non-sacred, non-spiritual worldview" (5: 222). The Earth is perceived to use for man's comfort and convenience. The concepts as such are not other than only one species centered thoughts that man thinks HE is the central species of the planet.

In order to respond the urgent eco-call of the planet, the modern eco-thinkers have forwarded some principles and initiated green movements. Basically, in this first quarter of the 21st century, ecocriticism is embedded in five broad eco-principles—Land Ethics, Biocentrism, Deep Ecology, Ecofeminism and Gaian theory. It is not possible to incorporate details of such extensive thoughts about nature and its preserving measures in such a short writing. Thus, a brief synopsis of these five naturalistic principles is presented here.

The land ethics devised by Aldo Leopold in his ecological writing, *A Sand County Almanac* is taken to be the most influential eco-ethics by eco-critics and environmentalists. The book "is often called the bible of the contemporary environmental movement" (Callicot, "From the Land" 177). It is biblical in excluding the divinity and in including the moral norms of ecology through land ethics. Leopold, precisely points out the ethical notion concerned to land: "In short, a land ethic changes the role of Homo sapiens from conqueror of the land community to plain members and citizens of it. It implies respect for his fellow members, and also respect for the community as such" (*A Sand County Almanac* 203-204). The essence of ethics for Leopold is to comprehend that an individual is mere a member of the integrated connection of the huge community of the entire living beings. He focused on the triad traits of the earth to maintain its purity, integrity, stability and beauty. He emphasized that the act of man is right if he preserves these attributes of the earth and wrong if he destroys them.

The bio-centrism adopts species-centered outlook on nature. The pioneer of biocentric notion is Paul W. Taylor. He has foregrounded the biotic world as a common world for each and every species. He argued that each species is "a unique individual pursuing its own good in its own way" and "humans are not inherently superior to other living things" (99--100). This overview of biosphere and its organisms has placed the plants, animals and human beings in one horizontal segment emphasizing on the integration of all the biotic species. Taylor's respect for natural world was identical to the 'reverence-for-life-ethic' propounded by a German philosopher, Albert Schweitzer. His life ethics was rooted in the metaphysics of Schopenhauer. And Schopenhauer's 'will-to-live' instinct of species is influenced by South Asian metaphysics of Vedanta—the metaphysics of *Brahmā-Ātmā* (Callicot, *Thinking Like A Planet* 213). In nutshell, the western conception of biocentrism is implicitly rooted in and indebted to the Vedantian thought of *Brahmā-Ātmā* in which the first is the ultimate being with plural manifestations with *ātmā*/the soul in each of them.

Relatively, a much biocentric principle is Deep Ecology generated by a Norwegian philosopher, Arne Naess in 1973. The Deep Ecology, according to Naess is a "rejection of the man-in environment image, a favor of the relational total field image with the value principles equal right to live and blossom and live and let live" (The Shallow and the Deep "151). His

emphasis is on the equal enhancement and flourishing of the non-human and plant world for the existence of mankind. His normative ecosophy—all species have alike soul, so let them live to live—is inspired by Gandhi's notion of the non-violence; he was inspired by the spiritual essence of *Bhagavad-Gītā*.

Unlike the biocentric eco-thoughts as such, the gender centered perception to nature is ecofeminism. The woman-nature connection is an age-old concept. Owing to the generating, nurturing and fostering features of nature, a woman is connected to the nature. But Plumwood argues that the woman-nature association is the outcome of the western dualistic thought that materializes, marginalizes, overpowers and exploits both woman and nature. In contrast, it superiorizes man and culture. Indeed, merely a gender cannot be attached or detached from the nature. In this sense, to see the image of a woman as life-giver, mother-earth and mother-nature is not considered to be the proper and justifiable way of protesting the domination over women and nature. Therefore, Plumwood prescribes a mediating view—"the best vehicle for envisioning our relationship with the earth may be ecofeminist spirituality" ("Ecofeminism" 305). This ecofeminine spiritual perspective perceives the earth the Goddess, the Great Mother of all species.

Another feminine and divine but science embedded perspective to see the earth is Gaian theory. A British atmospheric scientist, James Lovelock propounded this theory. Lovelock's theory observes the earth as a macro-organism and "as a single self regulating system comprised of physical, chemical, biological and human components" (Lovelock, *The Revenge* 32). The theory explains the planet as a single living ecosystem in which several ecosystems function like the organs of a body and all of them are energized by solar power. Her auto regulation is rewarding with comfort to those who obey her rules and ruthless to the transgressors of her eco-orders and organs.

These parental reward and punishment of Gaia bestow her divine life. It is "mere aptly like Shiva, the Hindu deity of destruction and creation" (Linden 341). Gaia offers the creativity from her womb of nature and that happens to be the deathbed of her offspring. Apart from the explicit metaphor of the Greek Goddess, Gaia, she is seen by Lovelock "like the other mythic Goddesses, Khali [*Kālī*: destructive but benevolent Hindu Goddess] and nemesis [Greek Goddess of fertility], she acts as a mother who is nurturing" however, she sometimes behaves cruelly to her generations (*The Revenge* 188). This parental and maternal figure of Gaia embodies the godhood—the creator and destroyer. The association of such different personalities of God with Gaian science tends to perceive it through the perspective of spirituality. Thus, this fusion of science and mythical aspect of religion in Gaia theory is very old and very new concept.

The five eco-concepts discussed above are not differentials rather they are complementary of one another. Then what it emerges as Kheel argues that "a number of theories or stories that, when woven together into a fabric or tapestry help to provide a picture or "portrait" of the world in which we currently live"(243-44). This realization of the need of the theories in a unit further seeks a unified whole of them.

The sought symmetry is the spiritual ecology that can incorporate the eco-thoughts and theories as such. The prime focus of the land ethics is on the realization of soil energy and its ecology. It places the man just as one of the members of the entire land community. Biocentrism's focal point is bioethics. Ecofeminism regards the earth as Goddess and it argues the Goddess ecology can be the mainstream not to be marginalized as nature and woman. Deep Ecology believes that self realization brings balance and harmony in nature. Similarly Gaia experiments the earth as a living organism. The macro being becomes the spiritual Gaia in Gaian science. This science is embedded in the spiritualism.

The core conclusion of the aforementioned five eco-concepts is to have the outlook on nature, its elements and organisms with the same perception as human beings foster to their species, i.e. to see non-human world's images upon one's self and treat with them accordingly. It is also the essence of the spiritual ecology. The material based ecology considers the biotic and non-biotic world just as the matters whereas the spiritual ecology embraces every entity and order of the earth as having spirit—the soul. It is to humanize the earth and her offspring. Vaughan–Lee believes that only the spirit based outlook on nature can sooth the distress earth and rejuvenate the aging Gaia (Introduction i-iv). Therefore, the implementation of the eco-essence of the spiritual ecology, at least, assists mankind to address the alarming threats and imbalance of the nature.

Based on this background, this article adopts a broad question: whether the hymn to the earth (*Pr̥thivi Sūkta*) of the Atharvaveda can be interpreted through the naturalistic perspective or not? And the prime research question of this study is: what eco-spiritual consciousness is articulated in the *Bhūmi Sūkta*? To put it other way, how has the Vedic bard perceived the earth and her biotic and physical organs in the hymn? So the objective of this study is to seek Vedic people's outlook on and understanding of the earth. In other words, it is to observe the consciousness of the Vedic people about the earth.

In order to address the research question and get to the objective, the afore-analyzed eco-tool is applied. The primary text is the translated version of the hymn contained 63 verses of the Atharvaveda by Raimundo Panikkar. The translated hymn is in *TheVedicExperience: Mantramanjari* prepared by Panikkar. The original hymn belongs to the first hymn of the 12th book of the Atharvaveda. In the in-text citation of the stanzas from the hymn, the first figure indicates the division of book, i.e. the 12th one, the second and the third separated by a dot

suggests the number of hymn and verse/*mantra* respectively. The *Atharvaveda* is in abbreviated AV. in the article, Sanskrit words appear in the diacritic form.

Cosmic and Elemental Whole

The hymn to the earth has envisioned an extensive ecological whole. Such massive whole consists of two integrations: the cosmic and earthly whole. The Vedic people might have felt the inter-attachment of cosmic bodies with the cosmic abode. The unflagging appearance and disappearance of sun, moon and stars in the vast cosmic abode might have made them feel the incessant integrity of the bodies with the cosmic region. This recognition further compelled them to experience the physical whole in the earth. The whole of their surroundings was prototypical one of the cosmological order. The Vedic bard named the uppermost region the heaven and the middle abode between heaven and earth, *antarikṣa*—the atmosphere.

However, they did not experience that these two heavenly and earthly wholes as distinct and detached ones rather they acknowledged them as a single unit: "Heaven and earth and the space in between have set me in a wide expanse! Fire, the sun, the water, the gods have joined to give me inspiration"(AV.12.1.53).The verse has created the whole of heavenly bodies with the elements of the earth. The whole of the three abodes—the heaven, atmosphere and earth—is conjoined with the heat and water elements. The unity of spatial and elemental whole is accompanied by the natural objects—the gods. The gods are the representatives of the natural phenomena; another identity of the natural object is the divinity. The sun causing heat and water element has created a whole of the entities of the earth. The center of such entities is the sun. And man is only one of the participants of this whole which is energized by the sun. Therefore, mankind's existence is possible only in the order of such huge whole; it is the vision of Vedic people about the massive whole.

As the solar whole is itself sustained by the cosmic order, the earth is also created and cradled by the same eternal order that the Vedic people conceived as *ṛta*. They recognized it as the universal order, the ultimate truth. The earth is also one of the creations of the *ṛta*. Vedic people were aware of this order: "Mother of plants and begetter of all things, firm far-flung Earth, sustained by Heavenly Law"(AV. 12.1.17). As the earth is originated by the universal ordinance, the elements of the earth are also the outcome of its self-order. The auto-order, however, is regulated and guided by the cosmic order. In modern science, the earth's auto-regulative internal acts are known to be the reaction of chemical, biological and bio-physical aspects.

The earth, one of the progenies of the cosmic law consists of five elements: heat, water earth/soil, air and space. They are *Agni*, *Apah*, *Vāyu*, *Prthivi* and *Ākāśa* (pañcamahābhūtas, 2. 5-21). These physical, tangible and spatial elements are known as *bhūtas*—the spirits. Indeed,

bhūtas generally refer to all the living and non-living things with the spirit in them. In the connection of *bhūta* with matter and spirit, Vannucci states: "The recurrent word *bhūta* indicates all beings, and being alive means to have a spirit, therefore whether material or immaterial as just air, *bhūtas* have a real existence" (*HumanEcology* 105). *Bhūtas*, in this sense, does not signify mere a matter, but it also denotes spirit embodied matter. And as they are primary and primeval parts of the earth, they are recognized as the great five elements—*pañcamahābhūtas*.

The *bhūmisūkta* has foregrounded the earth element. This element's representative is the planet itself with its three organs—hydrosphere, lithosphere and atmosphere. Making the earth in the center, the *sūkta* has envisioned the sole, conjoined and unitary wholes of these five elements. The *sūkta* has elaborated the significance of the elements in singleton, non-dual and holistic forms. The five fold collectiveness of these elements is enhanced and regulated by the earth. This conscience is articulated through the verses of this *sūkta*.

The heat element is Lord Agni for Vedic people. Owing to Agni, the mystery of being is possible. It dwells in everything and every being; it makes the things exist. About the universal attributes of Agni, the ṛṣi/poet states:

Agni resides on earth, within the plants.

The waters contain Agni; in the stone is he.

Agni abides deep in the hearts of Men.

In cattle and in horses there are Agnis. (AV.12.1.19)

The heat element pervades matters to man. The water element also contains heat. Heat dwells in the abiotic matter. It provides life to plants. It makes them alive. Animals and men exist thanks to the presence of heat in them. The life provider agent is, undoubtedly, the lord Agni.

Agni in this *sūkta* appears in three forms: the sun in the sky, lightning and thunder in the inter space and the fire in the earth. Having cosmic origin, it is common in the atmosphere of the earth. The sun is the sole source of the various forms of Agni found in the atmosphere and in the earth.

Agni blazes and flashes from the height of heaven.

To the god Agni belong all airy spaces,

Agni it is whom mortal men enkindle,

conveyer of offerings, lover of the clarified butter. (AV.12.1.20)

Originating from the uppermost region i.e. the sky, it downpours its energy in the universe. The visible form of Agni in the atmosphere is the lightning that Vedic people known as *apāmnāpat*.

The lightning might have caused the fire in the forests of the earth in primordial period. Consequently, one of the forms of Agni, the fire remained in the earth being the essential part of daily life for people. It appeared as the source of light in darkness and energy to cook raw food. The fire made mankind's life easy and comfortable and thereby human settlement became feasible. Being grateful to the lord Agni, they used its form, the fire to worship it. They expressed their gratitude offering oblation like clarified butter to the fire and making it the conveyer of this sacred act to the lord Agni of the heaven. Then the Vedic people began the holy practice of sacrifice making the lord Agni center of this ceremony. It was the way of expressing their indebtedness to the all benevolent Agni element.

The heat based and heat preserved earth has also embodied other elements. The earth unifies them for making the physical whole. The sages have observed that the earth is not the representative of only the soil element but it also consists of water and air spheres:

Earth, who of yore was Water in the oceans,
discerned by the sage's sacred powers,
whose immortal heart, enwrapped in Truth,
abides aloft in the highest firmament,
may she procure for us splendor and power,
according to her highest royal state! (AV.12.1.8)

The earth with its hydrosphere and atmosphere is ever active and functioning since long. It is the ultimate truth—the *ṛta* of the earth. The land, water and air spheres are three organs of the earth which make the complete earth. The sages had the conscience of the holistic function of heat and water on the space and land. As a result of this comprehensive structure and function of the earth, it provides food and treasure to mankind.

The earth embodied five elements is the lap of everything and all the creatures. As it is the womb of the heterogeneous elements, it integrates such distinct matters and allows them to carry on their respective functions. The earth has woven intricate pattern and network of elements and systems with the plants and animals: "The matrix of all things is Earth" (43). The earth is not only the shelter for breathing and non breathing things but it is also womb and tomb for all. Everything here on the earth exists due to her and at last everything gets subsumed inside her. This consciousness is carried out as:

She carries in her lap the foolish and also the wise.
She bears the death of the wicked as well as the good.

She lives in friendly collaboration with the boar,
 offering herself as sanctuary to the wild pig. (AV.12.1.48)

The earth provides home to all conscious and unconscious creatures. In this permanent house, all the evil and good natured living beings are born and die. However, the earth is not bias of her love to all the creatures rather she nurtures them equally offering her lap and boon. As it is her motherly nature, she deserves of the position of mother.

Therefore, this *sūkta* articulates the conscience of Vedic sages about the physical whole of the earth. They were aware of its origin that it is originated by the cosmic order. This order prevails in the earth as its own internal order. It is, thus embedded in and regulated by the cosmic and its own auto-order. For its self-order, it has its physical organs on which the five great elements holistically act. On this huge whole, the biological world survives. Along with this element based awareness of Vedic ṛṣis about the planet expressed in this *sūkta*, it has also recorded their consciousness about the eco-determinants of the earth.

Ecological Determinants

Ecology of certain place is determined by space time nexus i.e. geographical and temporal aspects. Basically, it is affected by the land structures like plain, hills and mountains and the presence and absence of the forests in these regions. Similarly, the rivers and oceans help to conduct water cycle as per the variations of land and forest structure. Along with such physical determinants, the temporal aspect also brings variations in the ecology of a place. The eco-determinants as such are also hymned in the *bhūmi sūkta*.

The hymn elucidates the importance of land, mountain and forests. The earth is embellished with uneven land and distinct physical patterns from low land to the high altitude where the vegetation has been the parts of ecology, food and medicine. In this context the following mantra is relevant:

Untrammied in the midst of man, the Earth,
 adorned with heights and gentle slopes and plains,
 bears plants and herbs of various healing powers.

May she spread wide for us, afford us joy! (AV.12.1.2)

The limitless (for ancient Vedic people) earth consist of varieties of land structures which are prone to produce plants with medicinal attributes useful for healing ills of humans and enhancing healthy life. The ecology fostered and flourished by the vegetation world in the physical sphere providing food and medicine ensures life and joy. Vedic people were always grateful to such agents of ecology.

The forests foster and fuel the ecology of any region. This conscience is sung as: "Your hills O Earth, your snow-clad mountain peaks, your forests, may they show us kindness" (AV. 12.1.11). The snow-capped mountains are the sources of glaciers and rivers. The forests and hills are the sources of biodiversity. Vedic people appeal these eco-determinants to be kind on them forever. They were also indebted to such agents of ecology carried out by the forests, hills, mountains and snow-capped mountains—the ecology of the land sphere.

Apart from such eco-holders, Vedic people were also equally conscious of the eco-conductors. Ecology is maintained and strengthened by the small and large running and naturally stored water bodies. This knowledge is hymned in this way:

On whom are ocean, river and all waters,
 on whom have sprung up food and ploughman's crops,
 on whom moves all that breathes and stirs abroad
 Earth, may she grant to us the long first draught! (AV.12. 1.3)

The essentiality of water for agriculture and living creatures is well expressed in this verse. The earth regulates the water cycle on her lap making the water bodies move incessantly. The earth causes and conducts the unceasing order of water:

On whom the flowing Waters, ever the same,
 Course without cease or failure night or day,
 may she yield milk, this Earth of many streams,
 and shed on us her splendor copiously! (AV. 12.1.9)

The verse articulates the *rta* of water that neither it stops nor gets failure rather the earth regulates it eternally. As a result, the order of the flowing waters becomes the lifeline of living beings and source of prosperity for human being in all the time.

Along with the conscience of the physical and spatial determinants of ecology as such, Vedic people were also aware of the temporal maintainers of ecology. They empirically experienced that the earth causes the seasons and every season comes with distinct traits. However, they might not have expressed the process of cause and effect as the revolution and rotation in the orbit and axis as in the modern understanding. Nevertheless, they had practically experienced that the temporal variation in a year brings the boon:

Your circling seasons, nights succeeding days,
 your summer, O Earth, your splashing rains, your autumn,

your winter and frosty season yielding to spring–
 may each and all produce for us their milk! (AV.12.1.36)

Unlike the four seasons found in practice in modern world, Vedic people divided a year in six seasons: spring, summer, rainy, autumn, early and late winter. They grouped two months in each season—*vasanta, griṣma, varṣā, śarada, hemanta, and śiśira*.

The eco-effect of these seasons to the insects and animals is sung in this *mantra*:
 The snake and the scorpion which viciously bite,
 which chilled by winter, lie slothfully hidden,
 the wriggling worm, all that stirs in the rains--
 may it creeping, not creep on us! Instead,
 may you grant us the blessing of all that is wholesome! (AV.12.1.46)

The verse records the awareness of Vedic people about the eco-effect of seasonal variation to the reptiles and worms. Owing to the chilly cold in winter some reptiles go in hibernation and they appear in warmer and favorable hot seasons. Similarly, the worm species make more movement in rainy seasons. They are poisonous and non-harmful; however, they all are essential in the ecosystem as they all perform their respective eco-work. Consequently, the ecosystem is not interfered and broken. The equilibrium in ecosystem bestows the boon and blessing to all the participants of the system in the nature.

The earth endowed with such appropriate ecosystem and ecological state is the perfect source of food for animals and human beings. Food is the ultimate base of life for living beings. "Earth is the source of food, rice and barley" (AV.12.1.42). The earth doesn't only provide shelter to the living beings but also makes them alive producing food that gives them *prāṇa*-the life to all the creatures. This conscience is expressed as: "On her grows food; on her the ploughman toils. She carries likewise all that breaths and stirs. Earth, may she grant us cattle and food in plenty!" (AV.12.1.46). Such wish and appeal of Vedic people to the earth suggest that the earth ensures life. She saves life providing wholesome and nutritious food as they believe that the earth is the bearer of the nourishment and strength of food and ghee (AV.12.1.29). So they were conscious that the ultimate source of life is the food and the food supplier is the earth.

The sound health of the earth ensures its aesthetic beauty. The health of the earth is determined by the sound totality of the five elements and equilibrium state of ecology and ecosystem. The beauty gained by such order ascertains the greatness of the earth as in: "O Goddess, you unfurled yourself, revealing your grandeur, then you were imbued with beauty

and charm"(AV.12.1.55). In the greatness of the earth lies the beauty and charm. In the greatness and beauty, there lies the fortune and glory of mankind. So the fate of man is concerned to the ecological order in the nature.

The healthy and beautiful earth protects life. The protection of life is associated with the preservation of the earth. At first the earth should be protected then only the lives dependent on it become safe. This chain of preservation and being secured appears in these lines:

Limitless earth, whom the Gods, never sleeping,

Protect forever with flagging care,

May she exude for us the well-loved honey.

Shed upon us her splendor copiously! (AV.12.1.7)

The never slumbering gods guard and save the earth eternally. Here, the gods represent the physical and temporal phenomena. If she is well preserved, she can shower her treasures to the living beings. The earth saves plants and trees holding them firmly on her bosom AV.12.1.57). The purifying (AV.12.1.29) and cleansing (AV.12.1.37) earth spreads her purity and foster the world and preserves from all perils. The wish of being saved on the lap of earth is in the refrain "Let no enemy ever wish us ill" (AV. 12. 1. 23-25) in the earth eternally. Thus, the Vedic people invoked the earth to be always secured from the ecological evils.

Along with the protective trait of the earth, the hymn entails her apocalyptic attribute. The Vedic people were aware of destructive deeds of the earth that they were victims of unfavorable and demonic activities of nature. They experienced the wrath of the nature. The fear of being suffered and thrown away is expressed:"Do not thrust us aside from in front or behind, from above or below!"(AV.12.1. 32). Owing to the nurturing, fostering, caring, preserving as well as annihilating attributes of the earth, Vedic people addressed her goddess. This dual role of the Earth goddess generates profound respect to her.

The goddess earth deserves of homage and honor. Vedic man considers the earth the mother "I am the sun of earth"(AV.12.1.12). Indeed, she is the mother of mankind. As she has the fertile womb to conceive and abundant generating energy, she is the "mother of all plants and begetter of all things"(AV.12.1.17). They "venerate to such divine and mighty mother" (AV.12.1. 26).This feature is transmitted to her from the cosmic law.

One of the forms of showing high esteem to the earth is the ritualistic way of honoring her. It is symbolic way of expressing gratitude towards her. They make ritual alter based on brick laying foundation (as given in detail in the *YajurVeda*) and the worshippers gather and offer the oblation to her. The preparation and process of offering proceeds:

The Earth on which they circumscribe the alter,
 on which a band of workman prepare the oblation,
 on which the tall bright sacrificial posts
 are fixed before the start of the oblation—
 may Earth, herself increasing, grant us increase! (AV.12.1.13)

The underlying purport of the oblation as such is that the way one treats her she also responds accordingly. To put it other way, if she is cared to keep her physical organs ever active and pure, she remains healthy and robust. She can nurture and ensure the health of life of mankind. So the caring and honoring the earth and being fostered and cared have reciprocal relationship. This is the theoretical purport of the symbolic sacrificial acts of Vedic people to show the veneration.

At the empirical level, the notion of sacrifice, *yajña* denotes the act of giving and taking. Before the arrival of mankind, the earth had begun to give her boons to the plants and other creatures. At first she started to give her treasures that mankind has to learn. Here, giving to the earth is meant to preserve all her internal orders, physical organs, ecological states, and ecosystem and elements—all biotic and non-biotic world. This makes the earth holy and wholesome. Only after the nature is replenished, it provides its boon to man. Unless one replenishes the nature, one is unsure to get returns. Therefore, the principle of give and take embedded in the practice of *yajña* in practicality is to preserve the purity and sanctity of the earth.

The earth has embodied holistic structure, the Vedic people believe in the comprehensive measures of preserving the sacredness of the earth. The apt unity and balance in ecosystem is ultimately beneficial to all the species (AV.12.1.16). The harmonious community of biotic world is for the sake of them. As they were well aware of the mass penalty by the earth (AV. 12.1.32), they unite together and extend their veneration: "O Earth we would approach you with due praise!" (AV.12.1.29). Such understanding, fear and invocation suggest that they were aware of the comprehensive composition of the planet. And if this order is violated, all the components' symmetry is misbalanced. So only the conscious participant, the man needs to be responsible to this harm and he should do all possible efforts to conserve the divine Mother earth.

Conclusion

In broader sense, the eco-study upon the *BhūmiSūkta* suggests that the Vedic people were aware of the composition of the earth, relationship between nature, environment and life on the earth. They were conscious that the earth is in its own order due to the cosmic law. For

them the environmental elements are not mere the matters rather they are spirit embodied entities. And the ecological world of the earth is determined by the rivers, seas, hills, mountains, forests, seasons and the entire biotic world. Through the hymn they have sung the greatness of the earth not considering it mere the soil rather it is the soul and they are not the landlord rather the earth is Lord—the Goddess for them. It is the earth ethics. They were equally conscious of the maternal and divine punishment and reward of the planet upon them. Therefore, as they understood the holistic biophysical order of the planet, they believed in the comprehensive spiritual practice like veneration and reverence, worshipping and caring in order to conserve the Great sacred celestial Mother Earth for co-existence of species.

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