

An Environmental Message in Shanti Mantra of Shukla Yajurved in Sanskrit Literature

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Abstract: Environment is the soul of life hood. There is no alternative for environment. From the time of human evolution mankind is constantly under the grace of nature. Environment exists here before the birth of man on this earth. From the very point when mankind started developing the journey of development is flawlessly ongoing. In this development environment has played a very supportive role. Unfortunately mankind started overlooking the changes role of environment and changes happened to it. Sometimes we have paid the penalty of it that shows that we need reminder of environmental awareness time to time. There is no dearth of writers in literature who uses their skill on environmental awareness. If we talk about Sanskrit literature there are plenty of examples of message giving Shlokas, elaborations, shubhashits, shukts and chapters. Sanskrit Vedaas are considered that they are not written by any human. They are much more than a knowledge bank. Here I have selected a Shanti mantra “ॐ द्यौः शान्तिरन्तरिक्षं शान्तिः” from Shukla Yajurved 36.17. It gives the example of greatness of Indian rishies and their environmental knowledge. Selected Shanti mantra is the paragon of environmental writing. We can consider it as a cosmic environmental prayer. This mantra throws light on multiple facets of environment. It starts form cosmic peace and moves on to air, water, land, foliage and gods. The message is that if we want clean and peaceful environment it is our duty to keep the environment clean. Tranquil elements of environment can keep mankind happy and prosperous and this way we can attain mental tranquility. In five lines of this mantra a very important message was given years back and it is at most necessary in current time. The mantra signifies the environmental gospel in which can make the world a better place to live.

Keywords: Environment, Sanskrit Literatures, Environmental imbalance

1. Introduction

Sanskrit literature is the oldest treasure of enlightened thought. Rigved is the oldest scripture acclaimed all over the world. Here bellow given mantra is chosen from Shukla Yajurved 36.17. It is considered as Shanti mantra. This mantra is a kind of environmental message given by ancient rishis. It not only talks about peaceful environment on earth but also cosmic peace. If we will take good care of our surrounding the world also will be pure and divine. Let's see the mantra...

ॐ द्यौः शान्तिरन्तरिक्षं शान्तिः
पृथिवी शान्तिरापः शान्तिरोषधयः शान्तिः ।
वनस्पतयः शान्तिर्विश्वेदेवाः शान्तिर्ब्रह्म शान्तिः
सर्व शान्तिः शान्तिरेव शान्तिः सा मा शान्तिरेधि ॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥ (Shukla Yajurved – 36.17)

Om Dyauh Shaantir-Antarikssam Shaantih
Prthivii Shaantir-Aapah Shaantir-Ossadhayah Shaantih |
Vanaspatayah Shaantir-Vishve-Devaah Shaantir-Brahma
Shaantih
Sarvam Shaantih Shaantireva Shaantih Saa Maa Shaantir-
Edhi |
Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaantih ||

Translation:

- 1) Om, May there be Peace in Heaven, May there be Peace in the Sky,
- 2) May there be Peace in the Earth, May there be Peace in the Water, May there be Peace in the Plants,
- 3) May there be Peace in the Trees, May there be Peace in the Gods in the various Worlds, May there be Peace in Brahman,

- 4) May there be Peace in All, May there be Peace Indeed within Peace, Giving Me the Peace which Grows within Me,
- 5) Om, Peace, Peace, Peace.

Present world is in dire need of this Shanti mantra. After the industrial revolution mankind started exploiting natural resources and that leads to environmental imbalance. Now even we have started stepping to other planets. When we are going beyond the orbit of earth we are also crossing the limit of environmental balance. Either knowingly or unknowingly we are spoiling the environment. This Shanti Mantra can give the solution to every nature related problem.

The message

If we start by studying the definition of Conservation, it is defined in 'A text book of environmental science' as

Conservation is the most efficient and most beneficial utilization of natural resources. It may also be defined as the rational use of environment to provide a high quality of living for the mankind... (P C Joshi)

God has made all the resources for us. We are to use them but nor over use them. It is rightly said that god has given to satisfy our need but not the greed. In India culture the term is given as Dohan. Like other mythologies in Hindu religion also there is a concept of heaven. This Shanti mantra also starts with the concept of heaven. It is a desired place for any person on earth. If the place heaven is free from vicious elements the gods who live there can live happily and they will be able to perform their duties to mankind well. In the other meaning this concept of heaven is also applicable for the place where we live starting from home, village to this earth. Peace is required at the top most or desired place in this world.

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Next element is Antariksh the sky. We consider it as cosmic prayer because it does not talk only about earth but also about cosmos. As sky has no limit this mantra also has no limit. According to Hindu mythology creation of this world is related to an explosion and all the planets and stars are result of it, the sound of it is known as Om. Our galaxy is known as the Milky Way and in Hindi we call it Doodh Ganga. According to Hindu mythology Lord Vishnu who takes care of world lives in Ksheer Sagar. The word Ksheer means milk in this regard it shows that the concept of galaxy and its name is influenced with the Hindu mythology. Hindu rishis were master of Jyotish shastre, astrology and the base of Jyotish is sky, star and their position. Calm and unpolluted sky can give peace to mankind. For good climate we are highly dependable on the sky, the moon, the sun, clouds and other objects of sky. If they all are undisturbed and clean they also give what we require.

We can only be able to develop if we are stable. That base of the stability is provided by earth. Our whole life is thankful to earth. Humans not only stay on earth but they also get the source of water from earth, they eat food grown on earth, they built their shelter on earth. With the blessings of land we won't be able to reach at this position where we are. That's why we respect earth by calling it the mother. Every morning we respect mother earth by reciting mantra for it that is

समुद्रवसने देवी, पर्वतस्तनमण्डले । विष्णुपत्नी नमस्तुभ्यं, पादस्पर्श क्षमस्वमे ॥

Meaning: O! mother earth, who has the ocean as clothes and mountains and forests on her body, who is the wife of lord Vishnu, I bow to you. Please forgive me for touching you with my feet.

In this mantra we describe earth which is wearing oceans as her clothes, mountains are her breast and O wife of Vishnu I am touching my feet to you. Please forgive me for this. Humans cover their 70% body by clothes. If we imagine earth as a human body it is 70% covered with water of ocean. Mountains are described as her breast because, a child gets nourishment from his mother's breast and we can see that rivers have their recourses on mountains.

Other important element without which we can't even move a step ahead is water. Importance of water is known to everyone but we don't behave like that. Great thinkers have foretold that third world war will be for water. Still we are not serious. In present mantra it is indicated to save water and to keep it pure. The word Apha stands for water. Pure water can keep us healthy. So we must keep all the resources of water clean. In Apha Sukt it is written that water can cure even diseases.

अप्सु मे सोमो अब्रवीदन्तर्विश्वानि भेषजा ।
अग्निं च विश्वशंभुवम् ॥६॥

Apsu Me Somo Abraviid-Antar-Vishvaani Bhessajaa |
Agni Ca Vishva-Shambhuvam ॥6॥ (Apha Sukta.6)

Meaning:

6.1: O Water, Soma told me that in Water is present
all Medicinal Herbs of the World, ...

6.2: ... and also Agni (Fire) who brings auspiciousness to the World.

Whether Greek, Rome or Indian civilization all the great civilizations are developed on the bank of rivers only. In our country cleanliness is compared with river Ganga. It means our people used to keep the natural resources of water clean but today we need to recall this message.

We become powerful and strong by various foods we eat. For that we are dependable on foliage. Farming made man civilized and he used to stay at one place. We get grain and vegetables from fanning sweet fruits from trees. Trees help in every manner from making house to giving shade, even it brings rain. In Matsya-purāṇa it is very wisely cleared that a pond equals ten wells, a reservoir equals ten ponds. A son equals ten reservoirs, and a tree equals ten sons!

दशकूपसमा वापी दशवापीसमो ह्रदः ।
दशह्रदसमः पुत्रो दशपुत्रसमो द्रुमः ॥

dasha-kūpa-samā vāpī, dasha-vāpī-samo hradah |
dasha-hrada-samah putro, dasha-putra-samo drumah ||
(Matsya-purāṇa 154:512)

Some medicinal plants cure our disease. In Ramayana even we find the herb which can give life to mortal person or can fill the wound. When Hanumanji goes to take those divine herbs he was advised by Sushen (the vaidhy of Lanka) that bring them with due regards and after using them Hanumanji once again goes back to put them back with due respect. This message is also applicable for us all.

Deities of world are allotted with some tasks which affects nature of earth. In Greek mythology even we find this concept. They have various deities for natural balance. According to Hindu mythology this task is given to a group of Devatas headed by Indra. Indian Rishis are also wishing peace for them if they are calm they can give us wellness too. Brahman here is considered as brain. May my brain be full of good thoughts hence I can think good for others and myself. Man can't be prosperous without a pious thinking. So O God bless me with a peaceful mind to think good for others. It is very significant that after wishing wellbeing and prosperity for rest of the world at last we have to think about our self. In an article 'Environmental policy and technological change' it is written in other words.

The relationship between technological change and environmental policy has received increasing attention from scholars and policymakers alike over the past ten years. This is partly because the environmental impacts of social activity are significantly affected by technological change, and partly because environmental policy interventions themselves create new constraints and incentives that affect the process of technological developments... (Adam B)

2. Conclusion

To conclude I would like to quote few words from Arun Goel's book 'Environment and ancient Sanskrit literature'

The Sanskrit language has become inextricably linked up with the people as the repository and expression of their life and thought. Taking a sober view of Hindu antiquity, Sanskrit has the Indian people for more than three thousand years. From the Vedas onwards right down to the present age, the Sanskrit tradition in the India scene has remained uninterrupted, and in spite of the evil days on which Sanskrit like all purely intellectual and cultural studies, has fallen, the Sanskrit tradition still continues to be effective within its own sphere... (Aruna Goel)

God has blessed mankind with his grace and made all things for our pleasure. We need to keep them clean for our next generation. If we will do so we can have a peaceful and prosperous life. In the seventh chapter (Vignanyan Yoga) of Bhagwad Gita lord Krishna says that my external material energy has eight divisions: earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence and false ego. It clarifies that God has created all this elements and they are also sources of energy so we must preserve them.

भूमिरापोनलो वायुः खं मनो बुद्धिरेव च ।

अहङ्कार इतीयं मे भिन्ना प्रकृतिरष्टधा ॥

(Shreemad Bhagwad Gita - Ch – 7 Shlok - 4)

The last words of this mantra are Shanti Shanti Shanti. The word Shanti is written three times. The reason after it is that the first Shanti is peace for cosmos. Second Shanti is for the external world and last word Shanti is for self. We have no potion except live and let live. This Shanti mantra was proper in the past and even it is present for current time and will remain proper for future as well.

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