

# Paradigmatic Shifts in Philosophies of the Human Consciousness

*From Early Societies to Modern Urbanised Cultures*

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**Abstract**—Humans have gone through a change in philosophical perspectives throughout their existence. The shift from being in sync with nature, to being categorically disconnected from it in the modern age, has been a long ongoing process. This paper strives to compare in detail the differing perspectives between the modern industrial culture (Sanskriti) and the ancient ways our ancestors thrived in harmony with nature (Prakriti), and tries to bridge the gap between these two worlds.

**Keywords**—Pançamahabhūta, Sanskriti, Prakriti, Kincentric Ecology, TEK, Capitalism, Industrial, Kali Yuga, Sustainability

## I. INTRODUCTION

The investigation into the varying environmental effects that have been taking place recently was analysed in this piece, through a few important spheres. Through the process of research, it was realised that modern capitalist society and essentially, the materialistic mentality that have plagued mankind in the modern age have done a great deal to separate humans from the age-old relationship it has had with nature. Indigenous cultures throughout the world, as well as in India have long housed the ancient ways of living in harmony with nature. Even in this modern day and age, the tribal societies across the globe follow some sort of nature-worship, animism and such institutions of connection with nature. To look at mythology, ancient Indian texts detail that the entire world is built out of nature and its components. This will be expounded in the following.

## II. EFFECT OF NATURE'S WRATH: SHIFT FROM COLLECTIVISM TO INDIVIDUALISM

Satya Yuga or the Krita Yuga has been explained in Hindu texts as a time of unparalleled excellence. It is out of the four yugas or epochs: treta, dwapar, kali and satya yuga, that the latter or the Age of Truth is unanimous with the prevalence of justice, happiness, morality and the rule of gods. It is said that humanity was free from illusions of all the ills it suffers from presently. The four yugas can be understood in a way which encapsulates the essence of dwindling spiritual morality in humans throughout the ages. Satya Yuga, synonymous with the prevalence of truth in everyday life, was the golden age for humanity. In Krita yuga, people led peaceful lives. They were gentle and did not fight with each other. They had control over their senses. It can be said that morality has only gradually diminished as time progressed. The increase in lack of awareness about oneself and the subsequent alienation of man from its natural habitat can be considered as a major factor in the manifestations of impurities and vices in this world. Again, we find a premonition of such a societal decay in Hindu mythological texts. One of the most prominent observations of this presentiment comes from the rich philosophical sermon of Krishna in the Mahabharata, the Srimand-Bhagavatam:

*“Sri-suka uvaca*

*Tatas canu-dinam dharmah*

*Satyam scam kshama daya*

*Kalena balina rajan nanksyaty ayur balam smith”*

The verse translates as the following: Vyasa's son Sukhadeva says “Then, O King, religion, truthfulness, cleanliness, tolerance, mercy, duration of life, physical strength and memory will all diminish day by day because of the powerful influence of the age of Kali.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>As described in Chapter 02, Twelfth Canto, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

The essence of truth is reduced by a quarter every yuga, therefore, Kali Yuga is said to possess only the remaining one-fourth of truth. The lifespan of man, mythologically so, in the kali yuga reduces from a thousand years to a hundred only. It is here that all sorts of evil, dishonesty, war and crime, deception, trickery, strife, ignorance, oppression and atrocities have manifested. Humans have now, in the kali yuga, lost sense of their inner purpose and selves. Human acts entrenched deep in exploitation and gross abuse of power have always resulted in the degradation of nature. The example of nuclear bombings on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is one such example. The mystic Osho has very rightly critiqued human behaviour in this regard- "I cannot conceive that the man who dropped the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was a machine. He also had a heart, just like you. He also had his wife and children, his old mother and father" (Osho, 2001). When we study the human-nature relationship in the context of Mahabharata or Ramayana, and contrast it with where we stand in terms of this oneness presently, a completely artificial and self-engrossed approach can be observed. No consideration for either human life or the ecology was felt in the act. Only blind lust for power consumed by hate and sheer ignorance. In our time, warfare is an industry. Another instance closer to home is the tragedy which struck the state of Uttarakhand in 2013, also known as the Kedarnath Floods. Massive cloudburst which caused unprecedented floods in Kedarnath was not an uncommon natural phenomenon. What turned it catastrophic was the ever-increasing human encroachment and interference in the pathways of natural streams. The insatiable greed for generating more and more profit by reckless exploitation of nature is the root cause behind such environmental disasters. This engagement and interface of humans with nature has become complex and uncontrolled to such an extent that we humans are unable to recognise the simple and basic fact of human-nature relationship which has been aptly summed up by Gandhi when he said "The earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs but not every man's greed" (Dube, 2020) Friedrich Engels thus argued that man has to give back to nature what it receives from it. (Foster, 1997) In this sense, ecological sustainability should be viewed as a nature-imposed necessity for human production (Foster, 1997, p. 287). Nature has always struck back whenever man has tried to cross barriers it shouldn't.

It seems that the echo of nature's devastating responses to man's greed is aptly reverberated in the import of Lord Krishna's core message of the Gita when he says-

*"Yada Yada Hi Dharmasya  
Yada Yada Hi Dharmasya  
Glanir Bhavati Bharata  
Abhyutthanam Adharmasya  
Tadaatmaanam Srijaapmyaham"*

The verse translates as the following: *"Whenever There Is A Decline In Righteousness And An Increase In Sinfulness, O Arjun, At That Time I Manifest Myself On Earth."*<sup>2</sup>

The practice of the philosophy of colonialism intertwined with exploitation stemming from capitalism is the main factor in the post-industrial revolution changes in the Indian ecosystem. The neurologist V.S Ramachandran has very rightly said, "Remember that politics, colonialism, imperialism and war also originate in the human brain." (Ramachandran) This follows the argument that we have, as a society, reached a point where only self-interest reigns supreme over all our actions. The shift from collectivism to individualism in the way of working can be clearly seen in the perception of the relationship between humans and nature in a post-industrial revolution world and more so in the Indian context. It is imperative to understand the need to critique the expansion of the philosophy of liberal capitalism and study the detrimental effects of British imperialism which Lenin described as "the highest form of capitalism."

The exploitation of natural resources of colonial India reached imperceptible magnitudes due to the consequences of eastward expansion of European ambitions. The philosophy of colonialism, thus follows what the Mahabharata preached or rather cautioned against:

*"Vittam eva  
kalau nram janmacara  
gunodayah dharm  
nyay-vyavastha yam  
karanam balam eva hi"*

The verse translates as the following: *"In Kali-yuga, wealth alone will be considered the sign of a man's good birth, proper behaviour and fine qualities. And law and justice will be applied only on the basis of one's power."*<sup>3</sup>

If we are to take it theologically, then, capitalism is the highest form of evil the Kali Yuga prophesied. The blind lust to exploit the people, their natural resources and the consequential destruction of their natural environment all for monetary gain is a brief summary of colonial rule in India. The rationale behind mentioning this period of Indian history in this context is to understand

<sup>2</sup>Described in Chapter 04, Verse 07, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

<sup>3</sup> As described in Chapter 02, Text 02, Canto 12, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

the influence of current socio-economic and political practices on the human-nature duality or oneness. These practices we follow today are an import of British industrial rule (aptly, the industrial revolution) over India for almost two centuries. The effects of the emergence of capital in Europe post-feudalism heavily impacted the Indian people. Although these trends come mostly under the domain of fields like history and politics, it is important to however understand the philosophical shift that took place in the Indian subcontinent once its people were introduced to the ills of European industrialism. Thus, ecological changes are a direct result of the shift in people's perception of their relationship with the environment. The annihilation of the Indian weaving community due to the introduction of machine-made clothes became a trendsetter. It is due to this disconnect that the Indian subcontinent, considered to be a treasure trove of natural resources, underwent irreversible ecological changes. It is therefore important to note here that the propelling force of change was a different type of ideology, one which advocated erratic modernization along with a disregard of the hitherto sacred nature of the human-nature relationship.

### III. INSIGHTS FROM GANDHI AND MARX

The origin of private property and also its subsequent abolition is at the crux of Marxist philosophy. It is following the crisis of the earth that Marx remarked that from the standpoint of a higher socio-economic formation, the private property of particular individuals in the earth will appear just as absurd as the private property of one man in other men. "Even an entire society, a nation, or all simultaneously existing societies taken together, are not owners of the earth, they are simply its possessors, its beneficiaries, and have to bequeath it in an improved state to succeeding generations, as *boni patres familias* [good heads of the household]." (Marx, 1867)

Another element in this regard is the abolition of the antagonism between town and country. The pertinent question of sustainability which even Engels had commented upon is raised here. The imperceptive stress on development which completely negates ecological sustainability is another import of the village town dichotomy which has come up due to diminishing human-nature oneness.

Thirdly and most importantly, Marx in the Critique of the Gotha Program says the following, "Labour is not the source of all wealth. Nature is just as much the source of use-values (and it is surely of such that material wealth consists!) as labour, which itself is only the manifestation of a force of nature, human labour power."<sup>4</sup> (Marx, 1875) It is extremely paramount to note how the liberal-capitalist philosophy forces us to believe that wealth originates solely from man's labour but conveniently misses the key point connecting with this paper that labour originating from nature is of supreme value and there can exist no sort of estrangement between the two. While we delve into the glorious past of the sacrosanct relationship between humans and nature through our study of the Indian magnum opuses and others mentioned above, it is imperative we also critically philosophise this relationship in today's context.

Over a hundred years ago, the father of our nation, Mahatma Gandhi, wrote in the Hind Swaraj, quoted by himself as a "severe condemnation of 'modern civilization'" (Gandhi, 1909), his philosophy of freedom and what modernity meant to him and for his view of the world. The book remains an instrument in the hands of those who wish to reconnect with nature. Gandhi wrote with absolute conviction the ills of modern British civilisation built on capitalistic imperial ambitions. He rejected their rule not solely because of its colonial nature but also since he felt it would bring ruin to the soul of Indian society. Gandhi believed that modern civilisation had reduced morality to enlightened self-interest empowered with immense greed and thus undermined the autonomy of moral aspects of human nature. He rightly perceived the world order of his time as volatile and extremely exploitative of not just humans but the resources they owned individually and collectively as a society. The constantly unstable and tense order of functioning, Gandhi felt was being misunderstood as productive vitality, necessary to build a world economy based on extraction and pollution. Due to his deep concern for the human soul and that of the society, he propounded the destruction of consumerist materialistic ways the world was headed to. In his view, rapid urbanisation due to the current manner of production would lead to a complete annihilation of the village community. This would further result in the kind of society we are existing in today, one devoid of any connection with the natural world. He, similar to Marx, accepted that the relations of humans vis-a-vis their environment and more so amongst them, were rapidly changing into something very hollow and superficial, or to say completely self-centering, in other words, in egocentric ways.

This critical philosophical analysis of the intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship of humans stands right, especially in view of recent happenings. In the name of development, progress which will benefit only a handful of the rich, while endangering the lives of hundreds of thousands of exploited people, the privileged are now venturing into what is being called space tourism, the precursor of what we saw in Jeff Bezos's recent space trip. This particular adventure is said to be very seminal in terms of environmental degradation. The recent visuals of the forest fires emerging from countries like Greece, Turkey and the Amazon forests only deepen

the anxiety and anger against the callousness of those powerful enough to put an end to this environmental degradation. This leaves us with questions. While we wait for corporations and politically powerful people to act, how can individuals on a spiritually aware level contribute to this fight against our own selfishness, greed, apathy and soulless attitude? How can we form a reconnect with what makes us who we are? How can we make sure scientific development is not used as a subterfuge to make the rich richer while inching closer to our own downfall? The Srimand-Bhagavatam as if prophesying the nature of man's status in post-industrial revolution society says that the basis of one's power is the sole reason for the rampant inequality we face today. It also immensely echoes with the Philosophy of Colonialism discussed earlier.

<sup>4</sup> Marx, Karl. "The Critique of the Gotha Programme" Moscow. Progress. 1875 p. 18

Gandhi was not a traditional philosopher but it was his philosophy of truth, non-violence ambivalence that changed the history of the subcontinent and subsequently its present. Philosophy can steer thinking to inspire movements. The numerous actions of dissent considering environmental conditions that have taken place in India find themselves deeply connected with his philosophy. Amongst the many discussed above there is also a mention of the Narmada Bachao Andolan, spearheaded by Medha Patkar. She, along with the dwellers of the Narmada valley, fought exactly the kind of societal decay Gandhi warned about in his book. If we look around us we will easily be able to observe that much of our discourse today is dominated by strife, hate, separation and selfishness. The United Nations in the recently released report<sup>5</sup> on climate change, has indicated that the earth is as warm today as it had been over 125000 years ago. It goes on to say that this may well be the final call for humanity to halt its endeavours in selfish greed and somehow prevent this now-inevitable climatic cataclysm.

However, Bhakti can lead towards Mukti. Kali Yuga is a combination of good and evil, that is, in this Yuga there is the chance to reap great spiritual benefits even as there are plenty of opportunities to incur its damaging effects. An allegory is used to explain this. Bhakti is depicted as a young woman who, with her children jnana and vairagya, has arrived at the Yamuna's banks after journeying through numerous locations. Jnana and Vairagya, her children, are lying unconscious alongside her, and she is attempting to resuscitate them. Narada appears in that direction as a result of Divine Will. She begs him to help her feel better. She reveals that she is Bhakti, and that the two men are her sons, jnana and vairagya. It represents the fact that humans achieved mukti through jnana and vairagya in the previous Krita, Treta, and Dwapara yugas. However, in the Kali Yuga, only bhakti can lead to mukti.<sup>6</sup>

There are many who in their own capacity as individuals have taken up the responsibility to rectify the ills, reconnect with mother nature and preserve as well as create conditions for it to thrive in abundance. One such promising example is that of Isha Foundation's Project GreenHands whose aim is to rejuvenate India's forest cover making a considerable impact. Their initiative has also been awarded the Indira Gandhi Paryavaran Puraskar, the country's highest environmental award.

Another such endeavour was founded by actor Aamir Khan along with Kiran Rao, namely the Paani Foundation. The aim of this initiative is to render the state of Maharashtra drought-free, a man-made environmental disaster which has led hunger, thirst and debt to prevail in the villages of this Indian state. The organisation works to build social harmony and cooperation between the stakeholders of village communities. There is consensus around the fact that no one but human greed and mismanagement is to be blamed for the environmental disaster that occurred almost every year prior to Paani Foundation's intervention.

Philosophy thus is not just for the past. It is always for the present and the future.

Before modern contemporary civilization came forth, humans had a deep rooted kincentric connection with nature. This can clearly be seen in the tribal and indigenous societies that exist throughout the world today. The tribal societies, being untouched by modern civilization, still keep their deep-rooted sense of connection to nature. These indigenous cultures number over 476 millions, and can be found in over 90 countries. In India, the tribal societies usually can be found in the forested regions of the country. Usually, the North-Eastern regions of India house such indigenous cultures.

#### **IV. PAST TEACHING THE PRESENT**

One important thing to note is that tribal cultures and their livelihood depend much on the natural forestry that surrounds them. There is an interconnectedness between the two domains, sustaining both of them. The idea of Kincentric Ecology can be taken as the basis here. These aforementioned tribal societies see the environment around them as their own "kin", that is, their own family. In such a concept, the environment itself, and also the societies are part of a larger extended family. One of the positives about such a mentality towards nature is that thinking of the immediate surroundings as part of one's own family gives a better incentive for people to look after nature. The oncoming of modern industrial civilisation has created such disconnect. The simple and basic philosophies of the indigenous cultures, that is, the Kincentric Ecology philosophy was replaced by a more individualistic philosophy that is personified by the exploitation of nature that has seeped into our modern world. As aforementioned, the industrial revolution that took place in the 1800s in Europe had a long term effect on every country on Earth. This includes India, as well.

What was the driving force behind the industrial revolution? Modernization and economic improvement. Striving to attain development led to a disconnect from nature, where instead of being seen as humans' own kin, nature was seen more as a storehouse of resources, out there to be used up and exploited, as humans have seen fit. This brought about processes such as the excavation

of the soil to find ores. Nature was now simply a means to an end. It is then a relevant question to ask whether such development or “modernization” that is founded on a cost of nature itself is even worth obtaining.

How do humans come out of this hole that they have dug themselves into? One way could be to look at the tribal societies again. It is clearly evident that the materialism that has become so prevalent in our modern world and effectively, the mentality and

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<sup>5</sup> IPCC: *Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.*

<sup>6</sup> “Bhakti Leads to Mukti.” October 29, 2019. <https://www.thehindu.com/society/faith/bhakti-leads-to-mukti/article37223227.ece> philosophy of our current generation of humans have not been about the preservation of nature. In fact, as the world is progressing even further, nature is taking a toll. Whereas, the indigenous cultures believe in simple living. Their philosophy in general is based on love and respect towards all nature. Being of a more “base” style of living, their mentality is vastly different from the more “modernised” individuals that dwell in the more urbanised parts of the world. It is a question to be asked, then, why around the world, villages and rural areas are cleaner and more environmentally conscious, than the cities, which are supposed to be richer and abound with more amenities. Perhaps the Kincentric Ecology that has become lost in today’s individuals is still present in the tribal societies, which we will explore in this writing. If today’s urban societies can recreate the same philosophy that persists in the indigenous cultures of the world, and return back to a more kincentric ecological philosophy of the more “primal” humans, perhaps nature can be saved.

The philosophy of Kincentric Ecology has helped indigenous cultures to reclaim their stock of land that was taken away from them by the more “modernised” sections of the society. In effect, this philosophy can be taken as such to really be the grounds through which humans can reestablish their long-lost connection to Mother Nature. Many tribal societies are at the forefront of environmental conservation due to their “basic framework” of culture. The idea of kincentric ecology is deep-rooted in their tradition and culture, which directly opposes the viewpoints of modern industrial culture. A more indigenous approach to the restoring of our lands and environment is at its utmost importance during this present time. It is also true that for the longest time, any involvement that humans have had with nature has led to widespread destruction and exploitation of the land. Individuals living in cities and urban landscapes, who are far removed from the lap of nature have not really made the realisation that human involvement can do much more than just the often dreaded exploitation of nature. Dr. Enrique Salmon (2000) also talks of how an indigenous worldview is important. A more so-called “primitive” worldview should not be shied away from, should not be thought of as outdated or useless. In fact, the Native American tribes have always looked at their surrounding environment as an extension of themselves.

“The trees are us, we are the trees. I am rain, rain is me. The rain is all around me. It aligns me”<sup>7</sup>. The native American indigenous worldview can be encapsulated as such. Their philosophy, thus, is vastly different from urban and more “modernised” societies, who do not think to conceptualise nature as such. Once a society begins to consider nature as a “kin”, there would then be no reason to introduce such concepts as “wild” or as part of a different plane altogether. This would lead to cultural, sociological and environmental symbiosis, which would then be the basis for humans to be more environmentally-conscious.

## V. SOLUTION LIES IN OUR GLORIOUS PAST: THE NEED TO GO BACK TO NATURE

Indigenous people and their folk tales often speak of a connection to nature. It is unfortunate that individuals residing in urban societies cannot really make note of any such stories, as they have lost this intrinsic connection to nature. The American Indian myths are ripe with such stories of land creation. The Yokut people of the Tulare Lake Region of the California Central Valley believe that the eagle and coyote came together and breathed life into humans by shaping them up from clay. Thus stories exist in tribal and indigenous cultures all over the world. The oral traditions of these tribal indigenous faiths are passed down through generations, thus teaching moral lessons on land conservation and environmental protection. The American Indians feel that losing nature is similar to losing one’s own flesh. All of this is due to the philosophy of Ecological Kincentricism that permeates through the life and culture of the hundreds of tribal indigenous faith that exists around the world. Nature, in such ideology, would be our own extended family.

Indigenous communities usually inhabit some of the most biologically diverse locations on earth. Therefore, they grow up in the lap of nature. Their food sources are around them. One of the most interesting aspects of these tribal indigenous cultures is that their philosophy teaches them to only take from nature what is needed or necessary. That is, in extension, never to exploit nature more than what is required. In such contexts, the word “exploit” probably also need not be used, as the act of using nature also follows up with giving back to nature. There is an intricate interrelationship that exists between nature and the indigenous societies, thus. Many of the indigenous cultures around the world have their ceremonies and festive rites centred around food. They often evoke the spirits of nature and thank them, by way of rites and rituals, for the harvest. Clans and familial systems, in such cultures, take account of the food, as such there exists some form of accountability. There is a two-pronged process of tribal food ecosystem.

First, the harvest is meant for one’s own family or the broader community that surrounds them. This form of internal exchange first sees the indigenous communities thanking the spirits for the harvest and the food that is produced in abundance. The individuals

residing around them are then invited to taste the food. Thus, food becomes an intrinsic part of the culture- it creates an inter-dependency on food and the nature that it springs out of. Whatever is left after the initial consumption is then left for trade outside the community. Thus, it creates trade routes for the tribal populace. Food being an important aspect for creating intra-tribal relationships and alliances. Therefore, one can clearly see a big role of food, and by extension, nature, in the society of these indigenous cultures. The food that is harvested, thus is an essential commodity that keeps their society running. Unlike the more modernised cultures of today, the food that tribal cultures produce are not “private property” as such. They are, essentially,

<sup>7</sup>Salmon, Enrique. A-dae Romero-Briones. Renick, Hillary. Costa Temra. “Recognition And Support Of Indigenous California Land Stewards, Practitioners Of Kincentric Ecology”. p. 6

often stored in granaries for the use of all the inter-tribal community members. This would, by definition, be the very opposite of the more industrial conceptions of “private-property”.<sup>8</sup>

Olson (2014) has said that our health, economies and happiness, all depend upon the environment in one form or the other. The many indigenous cultures around the world have been ignored throughout history and their habitats have been displaced to create spaces for industrialisation. The loss of tribal communities means the loss of ancient practices that hold an immense amount of environmental knowledge. The indigenous people were mostly hunters/gatherers, and this practise was beneficial for their survival. In such a continuing lifestyle, it happened that they became forefront experts in the land’s flora and fauna. They became equipped with knowledge that many so-called “civilised” communities remained unaware of. Hunter-gatherers are often thought to be intrinsically ingrained into the land that they inhabit. They are able to name the flora and fauna that surrounds them, predict weather phenomena etc. When we walk the land today, we therefore are living in the most primitive way known to our species, and returning back to the way of life that is most intrinsic for humans, as they know it. (Copeland & Copeland, 2011).

Due to the environmental damage meted out by the more urbanised societies, there has been a call for environmental restoration using Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). The inclusion of traditional knowledge as such, and combining them with more modern restoration practises will maximise the effectiveness of restoration, altogether. TEK can be defined as, "a cumulative body of knowledge, practice, and belief, evoked by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with the environment... (TEK) is both cumulative and dynamic, building on experience and adapting to changes" (Berkes 1999:8; see also Johnson 1992).

Restoration philosophy has only developed properly in the last two decades. They incorporate cultural dimensions into restoration definitions, methods and applications. The traditional practices that have existed in the indigenous populace’s traditions and cultures were lost mostly because of encroaching upon their land by the more industrialised cultures. TEK looks to bring forward these long-lost practices and bring them back into the spotlight. Again, the concept of Kincentric Ecology is one of the key concepts in TEK. Aldo Leopold (1949) believes that an individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts and that each citizen is ethically bound to maintain cooperative relations with the biotic community. The act of land restoration is a process of making amends to our kin, which is nature, for all the harm that humans have done to it. Restoring relations to nature can also be seen parallelly as a way of returning back to the more naturalistic mindset, whereby we think of nature, not as a sphere to conquer and exploit, but as our own extended family. Such ideology posits a way of rebuilding a connection to nature, which at this point in time, is a desperate need for us humans.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge has several practices that combine the more tribal ideas with the more scientific ideas. One of the key concepts is the process of Species Monitoring. Both disciplines regulate the habitat management and harvesting practices according to the status of a wildlife species. Temporal restriction of harvesting, fishing, hunting etc. are also practised, so as to enable the environment to heal properly and to mitigate the harm. Integrated species management is also an important strategy in TEK. In this, multiple species across multiple habitats are regulated instead of a single species in the course of resource management. Higgs (2003) argues that for restoration practises to succeed, they must involve people at the community level properly. Community-based restoration practices are an important process for building a communal relationship. An understanding of bioregional community health developed in the citizens of the Pacific Northwest region in the US when they started focusing on not just a single species but community-based restoration. (Senos, 2006, House 1999). Due to the context of the world we live in, in reference to the various ecological degraded environments that humans live in, a call for community-based restoration is urgently required.

The fragmented cultural practices of the various oppressed and ignored minorities of the world urges one to restore the said practices. As indigenous cultures reclaim their land, more ecological practices would be restored. The process of restoring a lost grassland or a forest, for example, then would mean a restoration of long-lost environmental practices or knowledge. Indigenous languages often have a way of understanding the environment that can complement the Western science and medicine properly. In the context of the Western countries, for instance, the Karuk people teach their youth how to conserve the surrounding lands and important practices that would keep their culture afloat. Many indigenous tribes, as such, believe that the youth in their communities must play an important role in the preservation and restoration of their environment. This is true for all indigenous cultures around the world. In effect, there is a good reason for this idea’s importance. The youth in today’s more modern societies, have a lack of interest in preserving the environment. What the indigenous cultures do better in this context, is to engage the youth of their

community in such practices of restoration. This ensures that the practices that were erstwhile lost in the more industrial revolution of the 1800s would never happen again.

Salmon, Enrique. A-dae Romero-Briones. Renick, Hillary. Costa Temra. "Recognition And Support Of Indigenous California Land Stewards, Practitioners Of Kincentric Ecology". p. 12

The youth of these tribal communities, as such, would do their own part in upholding the long lost traditions, with a view to making sure that they would never become lost again. When the youth show a lack of interest in the preservation of their own culture, it will lead to the loss and extinction of said culture altogether. The minorities of a region are always at the risk of being superseded by the majority, and thus it is important for the minority populace to stand together and protect their traditions. The tribals of North-East India, for instance, is one good example. Many smaller tribes in the region are losing their way of life, culture and language due to the sheer domination of the bigger and more dominant culture.

Multiculturalism, while being a good thing often, also has led to such loss of land and culture. The local indigenous tribes of Tripura in North East India have a very little populace, as compared to the bigger domination of the Bengalis living there. The loss of the native tribal populace has led to the loss of culture and language in these areas. With that, the loss of ancient indigenous practices also has come into effect. The youth are not interested in learning the native language and culture, as they believe that there is no "use" for learning their ancient ways.

## VI. TRIBAL CULTURES STEEPED IN NATURE

The domination of the bigger cultures has led to such an effect on the youth. Multiculturalism, as well as modernisation, have come to these regions at the cost of the loss of native culture. The proper way to implement modernisation is to keep a healthy balance between the tribal practices and the more modernised ones. Something that is similar to the TEK philosophy may be useful, whereby there is a combination of both old and the new ways. The languages spoken by the tribal cultures are an important way to understand the practices of their society. Many such languages have been lost due to the modernisation that has taken place. Restoration of language, therefore, is an important aspect of TEK, as well. Native languages have, entrenched in them, various practices and knowledge of the environment. Such languages describe ecological conditions and processes, not to be found in western medicine. It can also be seen that indigenous cultures that have retained their language show the highest degree of retention of cultural practices. Language, thus, is the vehicle of understanding a culture. The loss or displacement of such, can lead to a loss of the original way of life, i.e., their mindset. In the context of North-East India, many tribal cultures have lost their lay of land, as well as their culture. Not much has been done about this issue. Many tribal communities in North-East India have their language considered as endangered. The youth of their communities are not taught the ancient way of life, as practised by their own ancestors. In such contexts, TEK restoration as practised in the United States and the tribal populace of their regions, may serve as a useful guideline.

The Karuk youth, as aforementioned, are taught hunting, fishing, as well as scientific monitoring techniques for the preservation of their own culture. Same cannot be said for many tribal communities in North-East India, and other regions of the country, as well. Proper TEK restoration techniques should be taught to the youth of the myriad of tribal communities in the NE India region. The elders, too, should take a stand in preserving and passing down their own traditions- something that is missing currently, in the tribals of the region. Ancient culture is often forgotten in lieu of the more modernised mindset that has permeated in the region. This leads us back to the old traditions of the region.

The tribal cultures of North-East India have had a long history of connection to nature that is seen in their traditions, and their way of life. As with these aforementioned American indigenous cultures, the tribals of India too, have their history and folk tales depicting the long-standing connection that they have had with the environment. Much like other indigenous cultures, they too are dependent on the surrounding environment for their livelihood. A famous example is of the Chipko Movement that started in Uttarakhand in 1973. The indigenous Garhwali people of the Uttarakhand region, started this ecological movement, in response to the encroaching of their land by the outsiders in the region.

Their struggle was a fight not just for their own livelihood but to conserve the nature that surrounds them. There were vast drives for afforestation and banning of quarrying and other environmental exploitation works in the area. Their struggle personified the basic kincentric philosophy of the indigenous people all over the world. In the region of North-East India, plenty of the large tracts of land are under the control of local tribal communities. Despite the inaction of various tribes to protect their land, a study by Tiwari et al. (2010) confirms that TEK practices have definitely been going on in various areas. There have been protected areas such as sacred groves, clan forests or village restricted forests etc. Many of the inhabitants believe that there are deities in and around the forested areas that protect the village from famine and other diseases. (Mahapatra et al. 2005; Singh et al. 2017; Manoharan and Chinnappan 2019). Many sacred groves are found in each of the North-Eastern states. Traditional folk medicine also plays an important role in the culture of the tribal indigenous populace. The World Health Organisation, 80% of the rural population of the developing Asian and African countries utilise locally available plants for their medicinal needs. Notably, the indigenous populations of the North-East consume many of these locally available plants for both prevention of diseases, as well as part of their cuisine. Along with such plant products, many animal products are used in traditional folk medicine, as well. Among the Chakma community of Arunachal Pradesh, *Achyranthes Aspera* is used against urinary disorders (Sarmah et al. 2006). The Khasi tribe of Meghalaya, for instance, use piper epulides mixed with honey and egg yolk for the treatment of severe cough. There are many such traditional folk medicine practices amongst the many tribes that inhabit the NE region.

Indigenous people also have, in their culture, many superstitions regarding the environment that surrounds them. These stories were universal in mostly all human cultures, but with modernization practices, many of these became lost in time. The tribal cultures of North-East India still hold true to these beliefs, as much of them have not been touched by industrialisation yet. It is now known that a total of ten plant species are used as indicators in weather forecasting, predicting natural calamities, or as taboos or omen, amongst the Meitei tribe of Manipur, India. (Birkumar, 2011).

Birkumar (2011) reported that *Agave americana* is used to predict the direction of winds and storms. A family that cultivates *Alocasia indica*, and if that said plant starts flowering, it is believed that the family could face financial difficulties. There is a prohibition of cutting down *Bambusa* on Tuesdays and Saturdays. This is connected with a decreased prosperity of the family that engages in such an act. Many other plant species, such as *Brassica campestris*, *Ficus rumphii*, *Hibiscus cannabinus*, *Mangifera indica*, *Platyserium wallichii*, and *Terminalia tomentosa* have associations with various beliefs in the state of Manipur.

The study conducted by Chinlapianga (2011) in Mizoram has revealed that tribes there forecasted the weather through TEK. There are various beliefs there such as if male bamboo partridges (*Bambusicola fytchii*) roar during sunrise in Spring and Summer, there will be a possibility of rain. If frogs croak in a water-body until sunset, there is also a possibility of rain, it is believed. Although many such beliefs at first glance seem to be midwives' tales, many of the environmental indicators actually might contain knowledge that is unknown to the outside culture and society. More studies need to be carried out to better understand the legitimacy of bioindicators amongst the indigenous communities of the world.

North-Eastern tribes have a unique way of building their homes. Most of them build bamboo houses on stilts. The exact reason for this is unclear, but it is believed, at least for the tribals of Assam, the building of stilt houses is to counteract against the floods that happen every year. Jadav Payeng, belonging to the Mishing tribe of Assam, is now considered to be the "forest man of India". By constructing a whole forest over the course of a few decades, he has completely improved the environment for the better. His efforts were a prime example of looking at the environment as your next of Kin, i.e., the philosophy of Kincentric Ecology.

Living Root bridges are a popular example of the traditional tribal ecological knowledge. The Khasi people have this belief that God had divided humans into 16 heavenly families. 7 out of these families are stuck on earth, while the rest of the families are stuck in heaven. It is believed that these families could go in and out of heaven whenever they pleased. This, in effect, stopped when humans out of their own folly, cut down a divine tree which was located at Lum Diengiei peak. This grave error trapped a part of the heavenly families on Earth, while the rest still reside in heaven. Such stories showcase how nature is viewed as divine in the Khasi traditions.

Eco-Swaraj, or radical ecological democracy was envisioned by Ashish Kothari, a renowned Indian activist, to allow for individuals and communities to make ecological decisions by themselves that directly affect their lives. Its main aim is to introduce the concept of ecological wisdom and resilience in political and cultural ethos. The North-East tribals have this Eco-Swaraj idea emergent in their communities, as well. Their ideology promotes an egalitarian, democratic and spiritual attitude towards nature. (Kothari, 2016).

In the traditions of the Mishing tribe of Assam<sup>9</sup>, there is a folktale of a young girl called Tamang, who was set off to be married. But she had a lover. Distraught at the thought of getting married to an unknown person, she decided to end her life by jumping in the river Subansiri. But she knew she wouldn't die because she knew how to swim and stay afloat. Therefore, she decided to tie a pestle around her neck and a mortar around her stomach. She then jumped into the river. She did not drown, however. Instead, she gradually began to turn into a river Dolphin (called Sihu in the local language). The pestle around her neck became the snout of the dolphin. Her lover, later, hearing the news of Tamang's apparent "death", decided to kill himself. He tied stones around his neck, and thorns all over his body. Then he, too, jumped into the river. He gradually transformed into a crocodile, as such. It is said this is why Mishing people never kill the dolphins or the crocodiles that live in the Brahmaputra and its tributaries. The essence of the story showcases the respect towards nature as harboured by the indigenous Mishing people of Assam.

Another folktale is seen amongst the natives of Tripura<sup>10</sup>. A poor old woman residing on a hilltop would always beg for some rice. She had an iguana that lived in a small hole next to her. She would always give some amounts of rice to the iguana, and she herself would not eat until the iguana had eaten the rice. She cared for the iguana like her own companion or family. One day, a few boys from the village, excited with the thought of tasting something new, came up with a plan to kill the iguana that lived next to the woman. One night, when the old lady was fast asleep, these boys sneaked in and chopped the iguana's head off, and ate it. That night, a voice awakened the sleeping old woman, warning her to run away from the village. It would appear that the entire village was submerged in water. The voice that had awakened the woman was later known to be the voice of the iguana, whom the old lady cared for. The iguana had flooded the entire village because of the boys killing and eating its meat along with wine, for pleasure. The old lady's compassionate behaviour with the iguana is a moral lesson. The iguana represents nature, being taken care of, by the woman. Nature, or the iguana in this context, gives back to the old lady by warning her of the impending disaster on the village. The destruction itself is a type of reaction to the ecological imbalance symbolised in the act of the boys

<sup>9</sup> Dey, Tulika "Folk Tales of North-East India: A relook for Environmental Studies Classroom Transaction". Pedagogy of Learning, Vol.-3, Issue-2, p. 17, Oct. 2015.

<sup>10</sup> Dey, Tulika. "Folk Tales of North-East India: A relook for Environmental Studies Classroom Transaction". Pedagogy of Learning, Vol.-3, Issue-2, p. 23, Oct. 2015.

killing the iguana for pleasure. Similar folktales exist in many indigenous cultures around the world, not just the North-East of India.

The Tani tribes of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam believe that the first man, Abotani, descended from the Sun itself. The Khasis of Meghalaya believe in the creation of the Earth purely in naturalistic concepts. In the beginning of time, the earth was just one cast stretch of land, monotonous and without features, as such. One day, the mother of three Goddesses- Ka Ding (Fire), Ka Um (water) and Ka Sngi (sun), visited Earth. During her stay on Earth, she fell ill and passed away. This led to her three daughters doing their best to dispose of their mother's mortal remains. Ka Sngi (Sun) first scorched up her rays to dispose of her mother's body. In such due process, the earth's bushes and plants all dried up, as well as all the rivers and streams. But the body of their mother did not disappear. Then it was up to Ka Um (water) to do her part. She submerged the entirety of the earth in water, but to her dismay, the body still did not disappear. Lastly, it was up to Ka Ding (fire). For many days, she deployed great flames all over the Earth. The Earth heated up and everything was burnt up in flames. After all this, the body of their mother finally disappeared. It is believed that the Earth was born anew after all this. The former monotonous tract of land was now filled up with features like gorges and mountain ranges, as well as waterfalls and oceans/rivers, etc. The folktale here shows the belief that the Khasis have in regards to the supernatural power of the Sun, the Moon, and other natural elements. Animism, or the belief in nature spirits, thus, is an important aspect of tribal cultures all over the world. (Dey, 2015).

Through the course of this paper, it is seen for sure that modern cultures have become disconnected with nature for a variety of reasons. At this present time, TEK (Traditional Ecological Knowledge) provides a vehicle to restore the ancient tribal traditions and folk knowledge. Although practised in the North-American context profusely, it is still needed to be maximised in the various tribal regions of India and not just the North-East. As aforementioned, linguistics are an important part of ancient tribal traditions. The restoration of tribal linguistics will increase optimization of tribal knowledge, and therefore lead to a widespread of indigenous culture that will be an important complement to the Western medicine and scientific processes.

To reestablish our connection to nature, we must do away with the more modern philosophy of materialism and look back to our ancestors' and their way of life. Indigenous cultures, mostly of which have not been touched by modern industrialisation, still continue the age-old practices. Thus, it would do our current society good to look up to these indigenous cultures and practices and adopt their philosophy of Kincentric Ecology. Rather than looking at nature as our enemy, we need to start looking at it as our extended family. Only a retreat to such a mindset will lead to a proper saving of nature. It would be similar, then, to reconnecting to our long-lost family member.

## VII. PANCHABHUTAS IN THE INNER & EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

While we delve into the relationship between nature and humans, we must also take a closer analytical look at what actually comprises these two entities. Taking birth from the womb of Sanskrit, the word '*Pañcamahabhūta*' (पंचमहाभूत) is an amalgamation of the three words, '*Pañca*' (पंच), '*Maha*' (महा) and '*Bhūta*' (भूत). One can trace the origin of the word, '*Bhuta*' from the root word '*Bhu*' (भू) which is the elucidation for any entity possessing its own individual existence. '*Pañca*' points to the number five, '*Maha*' means great and '*Bhuta*' states about things that already exist. From a minuscule breathing insect to a gigantic to an inanimate statue, everything, both living and non-living that resides in the arms of Mother Earth is made from the Pañcamahabhūtas. The five elements are as follows: *ākāśa* (ether), *vāyu* (air), *Agni* (fire), *ap* (water) and *ḥsiti* (earth).

*"Tasmādvā etasmādātmana ākāśaḥ sambhūtaḥ; ākāśadvāyuh; vāyoragniḥ; agnerāpaḥ; adbhyaḥ pṛthivī; pṛthivyā ośadhayaḥ; ośadhībhyo nnam; annāt puruṣaḥ; sa vā eṣa puruṣo nparasamayaḥ."*

-Taittiriya Upanishad<sup>11</sup>, Sage Vaishampayana, 6th Century B.C.

The meaning of the above verse is as follows: "*Ātmā arose the Ākāśa; then Vāyu arose from Ākāśa and subsequently Agni from Vāyu, Water from Agni, Earth from Water, herbs from Earth and food from herbs. From food arose Man and so, Man consists of the essence of food (Annarasamaya)*"

The verse elucidates the composition of individuals and nonliving things in the realm of Earth. The phrase, '*Man consists of the essence of food*' delineates how many evolves from a single cell to a full-grown human due to this very characteristic of food. Hence, all entities, both living and nonliving evolve to reach their state of existence. According to the aforementioned theory of the Pañcamahabhūtas, in addition to the human body, even the food and medicines we consume are constituted of these five elements. The verse explains how air took birth from the ether, fire from the air, etc. Within the six orthodox schools of Indian philosophy, Nyāyā, Vaiśeṣika, and Sāṃkhya focus on all the five elements present under the concept of the Pañcamahabhūtas. From the realm of the heterodox schools of thought, Jainism, Buddhism and Cārvāka consider the existence of only four elements out of which, *ākāśa* is excluded.<sup>12</sup>

11 Sreedharan, Karthikeyan. "The Science of Taittiriya Upanishad." IndiaDivine.Org, www.indiadinive.org, 30 July 2017

12 Pancha Mahabhuta." Charak Samhita, www.charaka samhita online.com, 23 Sept. 2021.

With numerous facets to itself, the contemporary world possesses numerous instances where the correlation with the Pañcamahabhūtas can be deciphered immensely. When we light an earthen lamp, the element of *fire* is ignited not in the environment but in our souls as well. The lamp that burns out the negativity embedded in today's world in the form of jealousy, greed and inhumanity is carved out from Mother Earth i.e. clay through the means of an artisan. The name itself, 'Earthen Lamp' has the element of 'Earth' in it, thus signifying how the roots of this artefact lie in the centre of the environment i.e. soil. When a fire is lighted into *space* with the aid of *air* using oil that resonates its base with the *water* element, the light emitted from the same wins over the prevailing darkness that is hovering over human minds in the form of negativity. If we notice carefully, all of the five elements come into play to make light happen. This demonstrates how almost every object is an amalgamation of the Pañcamahabhūtas; from inanimate to animate.

The flames of fire have been respected and explored and is usually credited for the lifestyle of yoga that commenced over 5000 years ago – from the bodily hearthplace utilised in rituals, to the inner flame of the heart, and the digestive hearthplace or agni. In the historic Vedic texts, the fire deity (additionally called Agni) is referred to in one of the first actual verses. It represents the hearthplace in the sun, lightning, in addition to the fires lit inside houses and for extra specialised sacrificial uses. The symbol of the fire itself seems to be very different, as the flame of the fire can move and spread violently. It represents divinity and purity, and is related not only to wisdom and discernment, but also to elements related to the flames of evil and hell. As the guardian deity of the South-East, Agni, the God of Fire, has traditionally been one of many summoned gods alongside Indra (the god of the storm) and Soma (the god of the moon) with the latter also being a mysterious medicine in ancient times. Liquids like the same were consumed in rituals and elaborate yoga sacrifices to the gods were offered. Over time, Agni has been physically and mentally involved in the transformation of food, helping to turn food into energy, ideas into action, and offerings into smoke to sublimate the gods.

Upon deep pondering, we realise how the element of fire is local to nature and capable of being produced and harnessed through humans. We additionally have the obligation of remembering how the strength of the hearthplace may be used for both right acts and evil. In our day to day lives, we encounter individuals who are labelled as 'fiery'. Fire may be the catalyst for strength and dynamism, however it could additionally be unfavourable if we don't realise a way to control it.

The elemental Earth represents the structure of solids and the universe. The earth gives shape to the human body and all creations. The structure provided by the Earth is a channel through which other elements flow. All elements are born of ether and are contained in the lap of earth. The origin of the element of the earth is the scented Tammatra called Gaṇḍa. The state of the earth's elements in the body and the ability of the sense of smell are closely related. Gandatan Matra is the root cause of the sensory experience. It is the seed of energy or potential. It emerges from the causal body that germinates on the Earth element. Next, the elements of the Earth build the possibility of experiencing subtle body scents and the structure that allows them one to experience scents physically. Therefore, Gandatan Matra is not the scent itself, but the scent depends on it. The scent turbulence reflects the imbalance of the Earth's elements.

The earth is cool, stable, heavy, dry, coarse, dense, dull, clear and hard. The element of the earth is an antidote for symptoms of opposite nature in the body. Whenever an individual feels warm, unfounded, chaotic, thin, liquid, lacking self-esteem, insignificant, frustrated, cheek-wrapped, vulnerable, or unable to cope with stress, it is important to absorb the nature of the earth. In the cycle of life and death, earth represents the gestational period inside the womb where the basic structure of the body is formed. During this time, proper maternal nutrition providing the necessary earth element is essential for proper growth and development. A lack of earth element at this time can permanently cripple a child. The earth element continues to play an important role in the development of the child until growth is complete.

Water, known as Apah / Neer / Jal, is an element of emotion, sensitivity, and moisture in human composition schemes. This element brings softness, empathy and compassion. This is one element that changes shape several times because it exists in different states of matter, but it remains essentially the same. The human body is more than 70% water and plays a very important role in Panchamahabhutas and also in maintaining delicate balance. Of the five elements, it needs to be consciously consumed for the body's system to function properly. It is an essential medium necessary for purifying not only the outside but also the inside.

Water is a lunar-related element, which is present in the Svadhithana or sacral chakras. People who are easily disturbed by emotional decline, the flow of relationships, emotionally sensitive, or have an uneven mood can greatly benefit from rebalancing and maintaining this factor. A good water balance allows for a stable flow of relationships and can easily connect with people who are subtly aware of the transactional/ karmic nature of these equations. These deficiencies undoubtedly affect the kidneys and adrenal glands, causing a fight, startle, or escape response. Occlusion of creativity, conception, and often depression can occur. Water helps remove toxins from the body and even removes negative energy from its main area, the heart. Not surprisingly, meditation is also known as swimming in the water of consciousness.

In ancient Greece, four wind gods dominated the north, south, east, and west directions and were considered "moving" in four seasons throughout the year. Vayu is the main Hindu god of wind and breath, and his bright tanks are said to be "very beautiful" and "noisy" in the sky. As the ancients know, we may not be able to see the air and the wind, but they have a great impact on the world around us, invisible but powerful of nature. The element of air has been associated with gods and goddesses for thousands of years due to its lightness, clarity and nature of movement.

<sup>13</sup>Within our own body, there is a subtle energetic wind (known as Vāyu) that corresponds to our physical and emotional behaviour. The yoga text states that one of the keys to taking care of yourself is to keep these winds moving. These aerial movements include:

- o Udana Vayu: Speaking, chanting, vomiting, thinking.
- o Planavayu: Subtle movements of life energy around the heart and lungs.
- o Samana Vayu: Air energy that controls digestion in the centre of the body.
- o Vyana Vayu: It penetrates the whole body.
- o Apana Vayu: It controls energy such as the ability to feel a connection with the Earth, excretion, and menstruation.<sup>13</sup>

In the case of invisible elements, the air certainly contains many sacred symbols such as communication, breathing, and life. By thinking about how the elements of the air interact with our senses, in a way, helps us to be more present and sensitive to the world around us, i.e. nature.

Often referred to as "space," it is the essence of emptiness. A space filled with other elements. The origin of ether is Śabda. Śabda is the sound of tammatra. In other words, it is the original, obscure sound. It is a primitive space that occurs long before vibrations take the form of sound in the ear. Sound and ether are inseparable. Ether has properties, but unlike other elements, ether properties are not the opposite of the actual properties themselves. For example, it is cold. It's cold because the heat of the fire isn't enough.

Ether is light because it lacks the weight produced by the earth and water. It does not move because it lacks the driving force of air. It is subtle because it lacks the deep presence of a more obvious element. It is also ubiquitous. It's everywhere. This is the board on which all other elements are derived. It is part of all other elements. Ether can be found in every aspect of creation. Ether is the most vast of the elements. Without shapes and boundaries, ether has no boundaries. Due to its vast quality, ether is a differentiator.

In the body, ether expresses itself in an empty space. Empty intestines, blood vessels, bladder, and lung cavities are filled with ether. When unchecked, ether waits for a driving force to help move outward from the centre of the entity. This gives shape to its shape and makes a difference. In embryo formation, ether is responsible for allowing changes and growth to occur. Ether creates a space that is filled with other elements. The subtle and most perceptible is the function of the ether element. The spirit is made of ether. It has no shape and is almost impossible to contain. The mind is easily disturbed, but ether provides the basis for thoughts and emotions to ride like ocean waves. The sattvic or undisturbed mind is an expression of the essence of ether. (Dr. Marc Halpern, 2010) Reconnecting to the earth element and feeling more 'grounded' can be as simple as walking in nature and really noticing your surroundings. Rather than plugging into a podcast or checking your phone, notice the colours of the trees, notice how the light filters through the leaves, or how your surroundings change from season to season. Doing this is a form of Shinrin Yoku, known as 'forest bathing' or 'nature therapy', and can be deeply restorative for the nervous system. From a yogic perspective, the colour red is linked to the root chakra and the earth element. Increase your earth energy by wearing red, or focussing on a red object as part of your meditation practice.

Many practices such as somatic cells, body scan meditation, and guided relaxation focus on feeling the physical sensations. However, one can change their state of mind by shifting their focus to aspects that are not felt by their body. To be more aware of the connection to the elements of space, one should first pay attention to the properties that exist in their body: warmth, coolness, weight, lightness, movement, and tranquillity. Then focus on the space around their body. One should pay attention to the temperature of the air, the sounds they hear, and the lights in the room. Shifting attention between the body and the space around us helps create a sense of connection with the world around us. It can give the mind a break from stress and chatter.

Petrichor, known as the "earthy" scent, is the scent that is created when it rains on previously dry land and is said to be one of the most pleasing scents that humans enjoy. The sense of smell itself is incredibly powerful, and spending time in nature after the rain can enhance your ability to smell certain beneficial scents. The next time one goes for a walk after a shower, they should sniff the trees, leaves, and the earth. Trees and plants also produce beneficial natural chemicals called phytoncides that have a positive effect on our immune system and mood.

Heat is a catalyst for processes in the body that not only promotes circulation and relieves stiffness in joints and muscles, but also promotes sweating and increases the body's resistance to high temperatures. It's important not to get too hot, but regular visits to the sauna and steam room can release physical and emotional tension and send blood to tissues that need healing or repair. increase. To maintain circulation, warming the body regularly, especially in cold weather along with taking a warm bath, concluding, and trying hot stone massage and hot yoga classes would help.

Breathing is probably the most direct and intimate way we can connect with the air element. Doing a simple Sama Vritti (even breathing) for a few minutes before waking up in the morning helps a lot. In this exercise, one will observe the subtle sensations of life energy moving through their body by gently inhaling and exhaling with an even count. Similar to Buddhist techniques,

13 Halpern, Dr Marc. 2010. "The Five Elements: Air in Ayurveda." California College of Ayurveda. June 10, 2010. breathing observation is used as a meditation tool to take the practice one step further. Focus on breath, and when the mind wanders, return to focus. If time permits, starting with 5 minutes and meditating for up to 20 minutes per day is beneficial.

## VIII. CONCLUSION AND THE WAY OUT

Evidently, a vivid and almost paradigmatic shift has occurred in human consciousness throughout history. While humans in the ancient days lived close to nature and had this familial bond with it, modern civilization has undoubtedly broken this connection. As such, humans today have been awfully disconnected from nature. The loss of a kinship with the environment surrounding ourselves has led to grave consequences. The Industrial Revolution had changed this philosophical mindset of bare-living that early mankind practised. Fortunately, certain pockets around the world house tribal indigenous populations that have had the fortune to remain untouched by urban civilisation.

Such isolation from the modern world has led to these cultures preserving ancient ways of harmonious relationship with nature, which have become lost in the modern world. Traditional ecological knowledge that humans have had in the past, as can be seen in Ayurvedic and elemental knowledge professed in the ancient Indian texts, can be regained if the consciousness of humans can be repurposed in a way which balances today's fast paced living with the old ways of the past. The disconnect that exists now in relation to nature can be alleviated by a subsequent reconnection. The philosophy of the early societal cultures (i.e., one of minimum living) ought to be constructed, and consequently modelled in a way which accepts and establishes equilibrium between the two antagonistic ways of the past and the present. The modern materialistic mindset cannot perhaps truly be done away with for it is a product of the material conditions of the evolving human. What we can however do is to revolutionise philosophy and make sustainable growth with human-nature harmonious existence as its focal point.

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