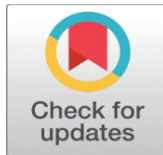
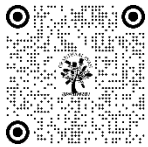


INTANGIBLE CULTURAL CONSERVATION AND NATURE PROTECTION THROUGH SPIRITUALISM IN UTTARAKHAND

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ABSTRACT

The Identity of every civilization is associate with its cultural heritage, In every human societies it is found that protection of nature and its natural resources in different forms. In prehistoric era Man lives in the lap of nature and nature worship is known as naturism which is the ancient form of religion. Worship to Sun, Moon, Earth, Mountains are found in every civilization since past. Nature worship is often considered the primitive source of modern religious believes. Common to most forms of nature worship is a spiritual focus on the individual's connection and influence on some aspects of the natural world and reverence towards religion. The reverence for these deified natural forces was expressed through various rituals, including food offerings, sacrifices, and festivals. Sacred groves were considered the dwelling places of these deities, and entering such spaces was often restricted to priests or those performing rituals. The concept of Prakriti, or nature, in Hindu philosophy further emphasizes the divine nature of the natural world. Rituals often involve offerings to rivers, trees, and mountains, which are seen as embodiments of the divine feminine energy popularly known as Shakti.

Keywords: Culture, Tradition, Spiritual, Conservation, Religion, Belief, Protection, Heritage

1. INTRODUCTION

Supporting art and culture, helping to sustain tradition and promoting environmental conservation helps to ensure our cultural and natural heritage for the benefits of future generations. Respect for nature is inherent in many religious faiths. The world's religions have made a contribution to environmental conservation and sustainable development through faith-based non-governmental organizations. Partnership between secular conservation and development organizations and faith-based groups, however, they are not always easy. Such partnership face various challenges, including differences in worldviews, conflict between identities, and the attitudes and behavior of religious groups that may not be favorable to conservation and development. Despite a possible overlap of values, these incompatibilities can often cause tension between secular organizations and religious groups. A number of examples, however, suggest that faith-based groups are starting to address these incompatibilities. It is suggested that partnership with faith groups might be valuable because these groups can enhance public support for conservation and development. While secular

organizations need to work with faith group on the basis of shared ethical or moral values, identifying effective ways to strengthen the linkages between secular organizations and faith groups is also necessary.

Living in harmony with Nature has been an integral part of Indian culture. This has been abundantly reflected in varieties of traditional practices, religious belief, ritual, folklore, arts and crafts, and in the daily life of the Indian people from time immemorial. The present day global concerns for sustainable development and conservation of natural resources spanning the two decades between the Stockholm Conference of Environment in 1992 and the United Nations Conference on Human Environment and Development (Earth Summit) at Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (Mahapatra, 1992) are of the recent origin in comparison to the long tradition and cultural ethos of nature conservation in India.

Virtually all the countries of the world have rich traditions embedded in the ethics of protecting nature. Many ancient cultures tell us how communities lived in harmony with nature, with a tradition of reverence for the elements that constitute ecosystems, drawing their sustenance from natural resources and at the same time protecting the environment that sustains them. Modern man tends to look down upon indigenous people as primitive, backward and superstitious. They may be poor, illiterate, and disadvantaged in many other ways, but they have a tremendous understanding of ecosystems and the factors that sustain them. In the words of Sitakanta Mahapatra (1992): "They still look upon life as a gift to be celebrated; and this ancient Earth as one to be praised, worshipped and also celebrated. They are the one to whom the earth is not something to be used, not a possession or an object for exploitation but a living entity, an object of reverence, and the relationship is one of sacred trust and loving intimacy. They believe as much in celebrating one's life in this world as in remembering, adoring and celebrating the world in one's life. The sacred soil of ancestors into which one is born is thus a part of one's fundamental psychic experience of life and is a part of its spiritual dimension. The earth, the land, the village enter into and are secure in racial memory and it is only an ethical imperative to worship the Earth Goddess as the Mother Earth."

Indigenous people in many countries attribute supernatural powers on plants, animals, rivers, oceans, mountains, the wind, sun and moon. Respect for nature is inherent in many religious faiths. Many Hindu Gods and Goddesses are shown to use different animals as their mounts. Sacred groves or sacred forests preserved with reverence have been part of Hindu and Buddhist culture. In Christianity as well as in Islam, conservation of the environment is based on the principle that nature and its components are created by God, and humans are entrusted with the responsibility of protecting it. Many religions and moral philosophies have professed the unity of all life on earth and the obligation of human beings to care for them. Today, when people throughout the world are perturbed by the degradation of the environment and the disastrous consequences of this, traditional ethics & wisdom of nature conservation could be looked upon as a source of inspiration and guidance for the future. The age old traditional wisdom are recognized gradually in almost all societies. Perhaps no other culture can provide such a profound variety of cultural practices and ecologically sound relationship with nature as in the Indian society. This paper is an attempt to bring together some of the information available on this aspect of Indian culture from various sources like elder disciples inherit, oral literature and folk stories. Sometimes due to lack of disqualification in the elder disciple, the election for this post is also held on the franchise of the Panchs. Rawal has the right to the temple, but sometimes the managers also arrange for the temple on Rawal's disqualification. The Priest otherwise known *Pandas* of Kedarnath shrine are second class householders who are Garhwali and live in the villages around Ukhimath, they also do farming. The worshipers of Kedarnath are also devotee. The temple is in the hands of Tehri royal dynasty, the court of authority. The income of the temple was 60 grams which was in British Garhwal was rupees 1080 and 75 grams of those in district Almora; Rs. 707 or 10 thousand sometimes comes to 15 or 20 thousand annual offerings. All the other types of income; including the highest income of fifty-five or fifty thousand annual temple income, yet the income of this temple is much less than the temple of Badrinath (*The Imperial Gazetteer of India*).

It is impossible to find out who used to worship Kedarling in this Kedar region in the Vedic and mythological period, but it is proved from the conjecture that at that time Kedarling would have been be severed by the looks of Siddha, Gandharva, Kirads, where as in the Puranas, it is said that in these Himalayas some of the history of the latter is derived from the books of Kedarnath. When Panduputra Yudhishthir went to heaven ascendant, Lord Shiva cursed him when he disobeyed the lord of the Ganas, Veer Bhadra that you should take human life, which is, man should take birth and atone for this disobedience. Then Veerbhadra praised Lord Bholenath with Pratapasvara, then Shiv was pleased that you would go to Chola country and be born in the house of Vedapathi Brahmin and be famous by the name of Bhakund, then worshipping my devotion with full devotion and near that body from me. Ganadhishr was born in the house of Vedpathi Brahmin in the Chola country by Performing Shivaagya. His name was Huma there and after completing Vedasastra, he took Brahmacharya in his youth and went to Varanasi. After staying there for a few days, went to Gangotri, where his holiness took a bath in Ganga and stayed for some time. In places like Tungnath, Rudranath, Kalpeshwar etc., devotional

worship was performed. From there again went to Kashi. He also kept some disciples there. Then, with the disciples, he found Poona in Kedarpuri, where he performed austerities to appease Shiva. Shiva appeared pleased and asked Bhakund and said Varahi. Bhakund pleaded that if God, & if you are happy then release me from this human body and take me back in your service and further allow the practice of worshipping Kedarlinga Bhakund to walk in the disciple community forever and ever. Then Shiva freed *Bhakhund* from the human body, and ordered the practice of worshipping Kedarlinga *Bhukund* to walk in the disciple community. Since then the same ancient practice has been able to continue in the disciple community of the same *Bhukund*. This mythology is not only the ancient temple of Kedarnath. This is not a legend, it is written in Mahis. No further proof of how far this article is true and untrue, but it has been found that the original man of the Rawals of Kedarnath was *Bhukund*. After Bhukund, nothing can be found exactly as to who is Rawal and at what time. If the period of Rawalchari of these Rawals is also kept on an average of 10 years, their original male Bhukund is estimated to be 1280 years before Christ and 1214 years before Vikram Samvat.

The birth of Bhukund is written only after the Pandavas go to heaven. It is found from the mythology that when Kaliyug started to coming, Yudhishtira had given the kingdom to Janmejaya, son of Abhimanyu, grandson of Arjuna, and all five brothers including Draupadi had gone to Himalaya for Swargarahana by where they went to heaven. Gatakali is written in 5021 years in the Panchangas of the beginning of Kaliyug, it seems that Bhukund's existence seems to be 31001 years before Christ, and Ramesh Chandradatta has written the time of Mahabharata in his book titled 'History of Ancient Civilization of the Year of India', 1250 years before Christ. Earlier these people were worshippers or Mahants, but now they are called Rawals. Probably in Samvat 1733, when the priests of Badrinath got the Rawal title from the Srinagar court, Kedarnath was also given the same title as the priests or Mahants of the same temple. Due to the absence of their time, it cannot be said that the first of which was given the title to Rawal. (<https://www.quora.com › Will-the-Pandavas-and-Draup>)

Uttarakhand is primarily a hilly state with only about ten percent of its total geographical area in the plains. According to a report of Uttarakhand Tourism Board, 2008, Uttarakhand economy mainly relies on tourism industry as tourism is one of the highest revenue earning industries in the state. Uttarakhand, being situated on the foothills of Himalayas, comprises of numerous hill stations which attract tourists from across the globe thereby bringing money to the state. Pilgrimage tourism form about 70% of the tourism sector in the state. Pilgrims in huge numbers visit this Himalayan state every year due to countless holy sites such as *Char Dhams* shrines, Rishikesh, Haridwar, Panch Prayag, Panch Kedar, temples etc. Pilgrimage has traditionally been a major segment of tourism in the State. Important places of pilgrimage of different religions are located in the State. Among these Badrinath, Kedarnath, Yamunotri, Gangotri, Haridwar, Hemkund Lokpal, Nanakmatta, Meetha-Reetha Sahib, Piran Kaliyar, Punyagiri are some of the best known. Many important religious *yatras*, of which Nanda Devi *Raj Jat* and Kailash Mansarovar *Yatra* are the most popular, also take Place in the State. There are several other Places of pilgrimage like Panchbadri, Panchkedar, Panchprayag, Patal Bhuvaneshwar etc., which need to be developed on a priority basis. The term 'pilgrimage' can be defined as a journey to a holy place, undertaken for religious reason or a journey to a place with special significance. Pilgrim means who goes on a journey to a holy place for religious reason. The Himalayas is known to world for its different tourist activities in landscapes, highly elevated peaks, river valleys, dense forest cover, indigenous culture of people and the highland sacred pilgrimages centers. Pilgrimage tourism is one of the most religious-cultural and socio-economic activities in Himalayas has been practicing from time immemorial and is the major source of income, approximately 60 percent of the total income is earned from its practices.

In the Garhwal Himalaya, the pilgrimage centers are located on the base of the lofty snow clad mountain peaks and on the course of the major rivers. The pilgrimage circuit '*Char Dham*' has been divided into five pilgrim routes and socio-economic impact of pilgrimage tourism has been dependent on it. Data on pilgrimage tourism were collected from the primary and secondary sources and as well as from observation after rapid field visit of the pilgrimage centers particularly in Kedar Valley. A case study of the four villages enroute to Kedarnath were conducted to have an idea of income of the people earned from pilgrimage related the services, providing to the pilgrims. It was noticed from the case study that the number of people involving in providing services to pilgrims are although less in these villages yet; the income earned from its practices is higher than practicing agriculture. This study reveals that the socio-economic development of the region can be attained through practicing pilgrimage tourism along with traditional agriculture of the region. This long tradition and belief in the conservation of nature is also vividly alive in contemporary times. One of the most successful conservation movements in India today is the Chipko movement spearheaded by the womenfolk of Mana village in Gopeshwar district of Garhwal in the Himalaya. Commercial felling of trees was effectively stopped by

them by hugging the trees when Lumbermen arrived to cut them. This simple yet effective action eventually saved 12,000 sq.km. of a sensitive water catchment area. There was a similar to Apiko movement in the southern state of Karnataka.

2. ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

India is no exception to the global phenomenon of environmental degradation brought about by developmental activities. Rapid industrialization, growing urbanization, intensive cultivation, and other developmental activities, coupled with increasing biotic pressure has had a very adverse impact on India's environment. The major areas of environmental concern today include, (i) deforestation, (ii) degradation of land resources, (iii) pollution of air and water, (iv) threat to natural living resources - wildlife, fisheries, etc., and (v) problems associated with urbanization - slums, sanitation, and pollution.

Human and animal pressures have led to considerable deforestation. Deforestation leads to soil erosion and sedimentation that shortens the economic life of reservoirs, hydroelectric facilities, and irrigation systems. The problem of water and air pollution is assuming serious proportions in various parts of the country. With eighty per cent of industrial production confined to ten cities, atmospheric pollution is concentrated principally in the major cities and industrial towns. Apart from industries, the density of traffic is also contributing substantially to air pollution. Habitat destruction has endangered the survival of a number of plants and animals. Two species of mammals - the Indian cheetah and the Lesser Indian rhinoceros, and two species of birds-the Pink headed duck and the Mountain quail-have become towards extinct during twentieth century alone. Eighty-one species of mammals, 38 species of birds, and 18 species of amphibians and reptiles are now listed as 'rare' and 'threatened'. Among these are the tiger, leopard, Asiatic elephant, and all- the three species of the Indian crocodile. About 1500 species of plants are on the endangered list.

India has often been described as a rich land with poor people. Its average annual precipitation, the second highest in the world, next only to South America, its perpetual sunshine, and its other resources-natural and human-place it among the potentially rich nations. History, however, decreed otherwise and it found itself in 1947, at the time of Independence, among the poorest with "a majority of its people suffering from hunger, ignorance, and disease, and with little infrastructure for irrigation, power, transport, communication or industry. Only 25 per cent of its men and 7 per cent of its women knew how to read and write. The founding fathers of the nation led by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru realized that political independence would have no meaning unless it enabled them to quickly release themselves from the morass of poverty. Thus began, in the word of Indira Gandhi, 'an enterprise unparalleled in human history-the provision of basic needs to one-sixth of mankind within the span of one or two generations'.

It was in the early seventies that, along with the rest of the countries of the world, India became conscious of another disquieting trend. The same efforts that had helped to bring people above the poverty line also put greater pressure on the natural resources of the country. The vast majority of our people are directly dependent on the country's natural resources for their basic needs of food, fuel, shelter, and fodder for their cattle. While the annual per capita income in India has been rising over the years, about 40 per cent of the people are still below the poverty line. Environmental degradation has adversely affected the poor who depend upon the resources of their immediate surroundings. Thus the challenge of poverty and the challenge of environmental degradation are not two different challenges, but two facets of a single challenge. In a developing country attempting to achieve rapid economic growth, there are often tensions between the claims of environmental protection and those of development. That environmental conservation cannot be isolated from the general issues of development and must be viewed as an integral part of it, and an essential prerequisite for sustainable development, is being increasingly understood today. Conscious efforts are now being made to integrate environmental concerns into policies and programs relating to economic development. It is at this juncture that we should look back upon our rich tradition of living in harmony with nature, which over the years have been overshadowed by the western utilitarian approach to scientific and technological developments.

Madhav Gadgil and Romila Thapar (1990) focus our attention to our traditional relationship with nature when they say: "India obviously needs a new strategy of resource use and a new common belief system to hold the society together and put this strategy into operation. The present strategy of resource-use intensification, leading to increasing levels of outflows from the countryside to the urban-industrial sector, which is heavily subsidized by the state, and from the country as a whole to the developed world, and the belief system center on development and national prestige, which has replaced the unifying theme of a national struggle against the British, have proved inadequate. The new strategy has to be grounded in efficient, sustainable use of resources and supported by a belief system based on respect for the natural endowments of the country. There are welcome signs that such a strategy and such a belief system are beginning to emerge, although not enough has happened in tenues of concrete action. What does ultimately happen will depend

critically on how far society recognizes the real power of those whose well-being is organically linked to the health of the resource base of the country the peasants, the tribal peoples and the nomads".

3. ROLE OF MUSEUM FOR CONSERVATION OF CULTURE:

Museums collect and preserve our objects and materials of religious, cultural and historical value. They are a good source of entertainment. These museums help to preserve and promote our cultural heritage. Museums are storehouse of old artifacts, sculptures, objects, history etc. The role of museum is to preservation of Indian traditional art and craft practices by contextualizing the practice and increasing the connection with society. To diminish the seclusion of tradition from society a method of paradigm shift from traditional art form to a contemporary popular mass media is discussed in the museum. Museums play a crucial role in preserving local culture. With careful documentation and artifact preservation, a culture can be recorded and remembered regardless of its future. It can also be shared and understood by those from different cultural backgrounds. The aim was to establish the potentiality of virtual digitally preserve the tangible traditional heritage after transferring into new paradigm and create an avenue to preserve the vernacular craft-guilds with their socio-cultural context—the intangible cultural heritage of India. Through the museum the revival of traditional art and craft and rejuvenation of the craft-guilds are aimed. This is the right time to approach a paradigm shift towards new-media for documentation, representation and dissemination of our heritage art and craft practices before they completely die. The musicological intervention is more informative, communication design intervention creates a bottom-up inductive approach of interactive story-telling process to impart knowledge about cultural heritage. So to conserve the tangible cultural heritage of Uttarakhand museum shall be play an important role.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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