

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE IN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT : Although there is no universally accepted definition on traditional knowledge, the term is commonly understood to refer to collective knowledge used by indigenous groups to guide and sustain themselves to their land and the nature surrounding the community. Traditional knowledge has adopted a more focal interest in resource management for the long term sustainability of the land. Although it varies from groups to groups, it has common elements and principles. Soil, water and vegetation are three basic natural resources. The management of natural resources to meet people's requirements has been practiced since the pre-Vedic era. Farmers gained this knowledge and developed skill through experience and learning by doing. Over-exploitation of natural resources by growing population resulted in various severe problems. Destruction of vegetation has resulted in unbalanced ecosystems. A balanced ecosystem is an urgent need. The collective interdependent values of Aboriginal worldview, system of governance, know-how and respect to the land are handed over to the next generations through dance, stories, songs and ceremonies. There is a profound spiritual connection therein. The resources that the nature gives are taken and used with the understanding that only what really needed is taken, and take it with care and appreciation.

Keywords: *Traditional Knowledge, Natural Resources, Ecosystem, Management Of Resources.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

The environment is a concept of wholeness (nature), with non-living and living components interdependent among themselves. It is aptly defined as 'the sum total of all conditions and influences that affect the development and life of organisms'. This comprehensive definition stresses totality, and every living organism from the lowest to the highest, including human being, has its own environment. The word 'nature' in the *Gita* also conveys the idea that it does not belong to anyone but everyone belongs to it, like a family does not belong to anyone but everyone belongs to the family. Like in a family, in the environment also interactions between its different constituents are expected, and these interactions sometimes might lead to hazardous situations. Interaction is leading to the faster deterioration of the environment. Natural resources are being exploited in the name of economic development. Indira Gandhi's interpretation is that the real conflict is not between environment and development but between the environment and reckless exploitation by man in the name of efficiency. We have to live a life according to the rhythm of nature. Human interference in natural environmental conditions often gives these dynamic processes catastrophic proportions, leading to disasters and irreparable damage to the natural balance of the ecosystem. It is not just concern about the extinction of the big

cats, but concern for all inhabitants and non-living resources. We have to stop this undeclared war against nature. Human beings are at the crossroads. Careless application of technology is leading to eco-degradation and pollution. Gandhiji emphasised, 'The earth provides enough for every man's need but not for every man's greed'. Sustainable development is, therefore, a concept of good and sound economic growth that can be maintained indefinitely with damage to the environment. Good environment generally begets good economics. The words 'economics' and 'ecology' have the same root, *oikos*, which refers to a house. While economics deals with financial housekeeping, ecology deals with environmental housekeeping. Studies have shown that the perspectives of ecology are different from those of economics in that the former stresses limits rather than continuous growth, stability rather than continuous 'development'. The ecosystem is the basic unit which has biotic and abiotic components that form an interrelated, interconnected and interdependent system. The most important characteristic of an ecosystem is that it is dynamic, evolving and auto-sustainable as long as it remains reasonably undisturbed and there is incoming sunlight. The equilibrium of an ecosystem is disturbed by external stimuli such as natural cataclysmic changes and ever-increasing human

activities dictated by socio-economic growth. The basic difference is that the socio-economic system, in contrast, is hitched only to one species, human beings. In an ecosystem, different species of plants and animals including human beings and micro-organisms form an interacting system. Thus, the economic process is unidirectional and human beings can only progress forwards. Conflict between the ecosystem and the socio-economic system arises from unidirectional and unlimited human wants to meet genuine needs as also greed. This has caused ecological crisis, which in other words means human exploitation of resources at a greater rate than can be normally regenerated under natural conditions.

2. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PARADIGMS

“We commit ourselves to apply our knowledge and expertise to fulfill our vision by, where applicable: Improving our understanding of forest ecological processes, and enhancing our capacity to manage forests in a way that will maintain the biological diversity, productivity and resilience of these ecosystems. “It seems obvious that the common procedure of incorporating traditional knowledge into environmental management is one that serves neither the interests of Aboriginal peoples nor the dominant culture. The full contributions of Aboriginal people and their knowledge to managing for sustainable use will not be realized if traditional knowledge continues to be treated as just some other category of information to be inserted into, or merged with, western scientific knowledge to further the agenda of environmental managers. Rather, they will be realized when we begin to shift focus towards applying those management philosophies and systems that give traditional knowledge its full meaning, merit, and efficacy”

3. TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE:

The use of the term traditional ecological knowledge or local knowledge is one way of recognizing that resource harvesters possess knowledge that they use to make decisions about their resource harvesting practices. Many resource harvesters depict their knowledge as based upon the practical adaptation of technique, technology, and institutions within a local environment. We have been using a working definition of traditional ecological knowledge as “a cumulative body of knowledge, practice, and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and their environments” Even though there is no clear delineation between traditional ecological knowledge and science, the recognition of traditional knowledge as a legitimate kind of knowledge is significant. It shows that the

distinction between traditional ecological knowledge and science is not the absence or presence of management systems but the existence of different concepts of management. Traditional ecological knowledge may best be considered as a knowledge-practice-belief complex. Traditional knowledge may be thought to consist of four mutually interrelated spheres that are nested in one another: local knowledge of plants and animals; land and resource management systems; social institutions; and world view. Local knowledge of land, animals, plants, and landscapes can include knowledge of taxonomies, spatial and temporal cycles, and behaviors. Land and resource management systems use such knowledge to develop appropriate practices, tools, and techniques for a local environment. Traditional resource management systems also require appropriate institutions that allow interdependent harvesters to coordinate activities, cooperate in tasks, devise rules for social restraint, and enforce those rules. Finally, the world view (ethics, religion, values) allows resource harvesters to weave their perceptions of the environment into a coherent system of knowledge and practice. Is traditional ecological knowledge relevant to current resource management? The term “traditional” is considered by some to denote knowledge and practice that is old and unchanging. However, there is not necessarily a contradiction between the terms tradition and change; change is simply what is noted if tradition is sampled along a temporal spectrum.

Tradition often changes by adaptive processes and incorporates trial-and-error learning. Tradition further implies that there is historical continuity in culture and in the system of knowledge. The term “tradition” has often been used by resource harvesters to emphasize that their knowledge has been generated out of accumulated practical experience. Often the term of choice of Aboriginal and other people close to the land, it refers to knowledge and practice generated out of the life experiences of generations of harvesters themselves.

4. REFINEMENT OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE WITH THE MODERN KNOWLEDGE:

All traditional knowledge based local practices are not always sustainable from the scientific point of view. But this practice is easily adaptive and diffusible among the different community members, as the local people have developed it. There is a need to subject the traditional knowledge to rigorous scientific testing to render their value to the world. The knowledge is dynamic, evolving to suit changing circumstances and remaining relevant to the groups, socio-cultural makeup. This refinement of traditional knowledge with modern scientific knowledge is necessary to solve the

problems towards sustainable management and development.

5. CONCLUSION:

Traditional knowledge is proven, practiced and accepted to the local people. So the local people would more easily adopt technology based on traditional knowledge. Most of the traditional conservation systems have been broken down as cash economics. So, awareness should be developed among the young generation about the importance of natural resources conservation.

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