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HINDU ECOTHEOLOGY IN *VEDIC LITERATURE*: A SOCIO-THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF GOD-HUMAN-NATURE RELATIONS

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Abstract

The global environmental crisis shows that ecological issues cannot be understood solely as technical problems, but also as moral, spiritual, and paradigmatic crises. This article analyzes Hindu ecotheology in Vedic literature through a socio-theological approach with a focus on the relationship between humans and nature. This study uses a qualitative-descriptive method based on a literature review of the Vedic Śruti and Smṛti texts, with hermeneutic analysis and socio-theological interpretation. The results of the study show that Vedic cosmology views nature as a sacred order governed by the principle of ṛta, and places humans as an integral part of the cosmos. The main principles of Vedic ecotheology, known as the four Vedic ecotheologies, namely the sacredness of nature, yajña, dharma, and ahimsa, form a cosmocentric ethical framework that challenges the modern anthropocentric and exploitative paradigm. This study also asserts that the contemporary ecological crisis reflects humanity's disconnection from the cosmic order. Theoretically, this article contributes to enriching the global discourse on religion and the environment by presenting a Hindu perspective based on the Vedic scriptures and offering an ecological ethical paradigm relevant to sustainable civilization development.

Keywords: Hindu Ecotheology, Vedic Literature, Environmental Ethics.

I. INTRODUCTION

The global environmental crisis characterized by climate change, ecosystem degradation, pollution, and loss of biodiversity can no longer be understood solely as a technical or scientific issue. A number of scholars argue that the ecological crisis is essentially a moral and spiritual crisis rooted in the way humans view and treat nature ((White, 1967; Berry, 1999). White (1967) states that the modern ecological crisis is rooted in a religious and ethical paradigm that places humans as rulers of nature, rather than as part of it. This view was later expanded by Berry (1999) who emphasized that environmental damage reflects the severing of the sacred relationship between humans and the cosmos. Nature has been reduced to an economic object and a source of material resources, losing its symbolic and spiritual meaning. As a result, the exploitation of nature continues without adequate ethical boundaries, exacerbating the global ecological crisis.

Various efforts to tackle the environmental crisis through technocratic approaches, such as environmentally friendly technological innovations, policy regulations, and market mechanisms, have shown limited results. These approaches often fail to address the root of the problem, namely the value systems and worldviews that shape human behavior towards nature (Dryzek, 2013). Without ethical transformation and spiritual awareness, technical solutions have the potential to become temporary patches that do not address structural and cultural problems. These limitations encourage the need for alternative holistic approaches, including religious and theological approaches. In this context, religion is seen as a source of moral values that can shape ecological awareness and guide human behavior towards a more ethical relationship with nature (Tucker, 2017).

The study of religion and the environment has grown rapidly since the late 20th century through an approach known as ecotheology. Ecotheology examines how concepts of divinity, cosmology, and ethics in religious traditions shape human views of nature (Conradie, 2006). Religion functions not only as a belief system, but also as a moral and social framework that influences everyday practices, including human relations with the environment. In global discourse, eco-theological studies are largely dominated by the perspectives of Abrahamic religions, especially Christianity, which developed in response to White (1967) critique. Although interfaith studies are beginning to develop, the contributions of non-Western traditions, including Hinduism, are still relatively limited in international literature (Tucker, 2017).

Studies on Hinduism and ecology have indeed been conducted, mainly through post-Vedic texts such as the *Bhagavadgītā, Purāṇa,* and contemporary religious practices(Chapple, 2001). However, ecotheological studies directly rooted in the Vedic literature as the oldest and most foundational texts in the Hindu tradition are still minimal. In fact, the Vedas contain a cosmology and worldview rich in ecological values, such as the unity of the cosmos, the order of nature (*ṛta*), and the reciprocal relationship between humans, nature, and the divine. The dominance of the Abrahamic perspective in global ecotheology studies also contributes to the lack of in-depth exploration of early Hindu sources. As a result, the potential of the Vedic literature as a source of environmental ethics and ecological theology has not been fully articulated in international academic discourse.

Vedic literature views nature not as a profane entity, but as an integral part of a sacred cosmic order. The concept of *Ṛta* in the Ṛgveda describes the cosmic law that maintains the balance of nature and life(Radhakrishnan, 1951). Humans are positioned as part of the cosmos with a moral responsibility to maintain this harmony. The personification of natural elements such as *Pṛthivī* (earth), *Āpas* (water), *Agni* (fire), *Vāyu* (air), and *akasa* (space) shows that nature is understood as a living reality with a divine dimension(Jamison, 2014). This view emphasizes a participatory and reciprocal relationship between humans and nature, rather than an exploitative one.

The eco-theological values in Vedic literature are not only theological in nature, but also have real social implications. The principle of yajña,

for example, reflects the reciprocal relationship between humans, nature, and God, which can be interpreted as an ethic of sustainability based on sacrifice and collective responsibility (Sharma, 2008). Similarly, the concepts of ahimsa and sarva bhūta hitaṅkaraḥ affirm the moral obligation to protect all living beings. A socio-theological approach allows for a more comprehensive analysis of how these values can influence the social behavior, ritual practices, and ecological awareness of Hindu communities in the face of contemporary environmental crises.

This study aims to analyze Hindu ecotheology in the Vedic literature through a socio-theological approach, with a focus on the relationship between humans and nature. Specifically, this study seeks to: (1) reveal the Vedic cosmological view of nature, (2) identify the principles of eco-theology contained in the Vedic literature, and (3) analyze the social implications of these values in the context of the environmental crisis. Academically, this research contributes to the enrichment of religious and environmental studies by introducing a Hindu perspective based on Vedic texts into the global eco-theological discourse. In addition, this study offers an alternative cosmoscentric environmental ethics paradigm, while expanding the interdisciplinary dialogue between theology, Vedic literature, and environmental studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ecotheology is an interdisciplinary field of study that examines the relationship between theology, religious ethics, and the ecological crisis. This term has grown rapidly since the late 20th century in response to the increasing awareness that the environmental crisis is not only technical in nature, but also stems from human value systems, worldviews, and religious beliefs ((White, 1967; Conradie, 2006; Suja &Murti 2022). White (1967), through his influential article in the journal Science, marked the beginning of the academic debate on the role of religion in the ecological crisis. White argued that religious traditions, especially in the Western context, contribute to an anthropocentric worldview that legitimizes human domination over nature.

This criticism then led to the emergence of ecotheology studies as a reflective and corrective effort towards this theological legacy. The development of ecotheology was further marked by a more constructive approach, namely the effort to explore religious sources to formulate a sustainable environmental ethic. (Tucker, 2001) ces individual and collective behavior.

In religious studies, eco-theology developed through two main approaches, namely the theological approach and the ethical approach. The theological approach focuses on the concepts of divinity, cosmology, and the sacred meaning of nature, while the ethical approach emphasizes the moral implications of religious teachings on human ecological behavior (Conradie, 2006). This approach asserts that the environmental crisis cannot be overcome without spiritual and ethical transformation. Religion, in this case, is understood as a source of moral legitimacy that can encourage ecological responsibility, intergenerational solidarity, and respect for all living beings (Berry, 1999). This framework is an important foundation for the development of interfaith ecotheology, including in the Hindu context.

A number of studies have examined the relationship between Hinduism and ecology, particularly through ethical and philosophical approaches. Chapple (2001) in Hinduism and Ecology highlights the principles of ahimsa, karma, and dharma as the foundations of Hindu environmental ethics. This study expands the understanding that the Hindu tradition has rich conceptual resources to respond to ecological challenges.

Jamison, and Brereton (2014) , through a philological study of the Ṛgveda, show that Vedic texts contain cosmological views that place nature as part of a sacred order. However, the main focus of this study is textual and

philological, rather than ecotheological analysis or social implications. Sharma (2008) emphasizes that the concept of yajña in the Vedic tradition can be interpreted as a principle of ecological sustainability based on the reciprocal relationship between humans, nature, and God. Nevertheless, this study is still normative and has not deeply linked the Vedic texts to the contemporary social context.

Based on a review of previous studies, several research gaps can be identified. First, most global eco-theological studies are still dominated by Abrahamic religious perspectives, so that the contributions of Hindu traditions, especially those based on Vedic literature, have not been adequately articulated in international literature (Tucker & Grim, 2017). Second, studies on Hinduism and ecology tend to focus on post-Vedic texts or contemporary religious practices, w(Gadamer, 2004) systematic exploration of the Vedic literature as a source of eco-theology remains limited. Third, few studies integrate Vedic theological analysis with a socio-theological approach that highlights the social implications of these ecological values.

Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap by examining Hindu ecotheology in Vedic literature through socio-theological analysis, thereby providing a stronger conceptual contribution to the study of religion and the environment.

II. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative-descriptive approach with a focus on text and meaning analysis. A qualitative approach was chosen because the purpose of the study was not to measure phenomena quantitatively, but rather to gain an in-depth understanding of the worldview, theological values, and social implications contained in Vedic literature related to the relationship between humans and nature. This study is interpretive and exploratory in nature, seeking to interpret key Vedic concepts within the framework of eco-theology and relate them to the contemporary social context and ecological crisis.

The data sources in this study are divided into two main categories: Primary data in the form of Vedic Śruti texts (particularly the Ṛgveda, Samaveda, Atharvaveda, and Yajurveda) and Vedic Smṛti relevant to the themes of cosmology, ethics, and human-nature relations, such as the Bhagavadgītā and Dharmaśāstra. These texts are used as the main source for exploring theological and ethical concepts regarding nature. Secondary data includes academic books, reputable international journal articles, and classical and contemporary scientific works in the fields of Vedic studies, Hindu philosophy, and eco-theology. These sources are used to strengthen the theoretical framework, historical context, and position of the research in global academic discourse.

Data collection was conducted through library research. The stages involved were:

1. Inventory of Vedic texts containing themes of cosmology, nature, and environmental ethics.
2. Selection of slokas that explicitly or implicitly discuss the relationship between humans, nature, and the cosmic order.
3. Thematic categorization of selected slokas into conceptual themes such as cosmos, yajña, dharma, and the sanctity of nature.

This process was carried out systematically to ensure that the data analyzed was relevant and representative of the research objectives.

Data analysis was conducted through two main approaches: first, Hermeneutic Analysis. This analysis was used to interpret the meaning of the Vedic texts by considering the linguistic, symbolic, and cosmological contexts that underlie them. The hermeneutic approach allows for not only a literal but also a symbolic

and philosophical understanding of the Vedic slokas (Gadamer, 2004). Second, Socio-Theological Interpretation. The results of textual interpretation are then analyzed within a socio-theological framework, namely by linking the theological meaning of the text with its social and ethical implications in human life. This approach aims to show how Vedic concepts can shape ecological attitudes, values, and practices in society.

This study uses eco-theology as its main analytical lens. Eco-theology is understood as an approach that examines the relationship between concepts of divinity, cosmology, and environmental ethics in a religious tradition (Conradie, 2006; Tucker& Grim, 2001). In this context, Vedic literature is read not only as ritual or mythological texts, but as a source of ecological theology that contains a worldview of the sanctity of nature and human responsibility. Using ecotheology as an interpretive framework, this study seeks to uncover the ecological dimensions inherent in Vedic cosmology and ethics, and to relate them to the contemporary environmental crisis.

A socio-theological approach is used to bridge sacred texts, theological constructs, and social practices. This approach departs from the assumption that religious texts not only shape belief systems, but also influence the mindsets, values, and social actions of their followers (Geertz, 1973). In this study, the socio-theological approach allows for an analysis of how the cosmological and environmental ethical views in the Vedas can have implications for the way humans treat nature in social life, whether in the form of rituals, norms, or life ethos.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION CONCLUSIO Cosmological View of Nature in Vedic Literature

In Vedic literature, the universe is not understood as a profane or morally neutral reality, but rather as a sacred and morally structured cosmic order. The key concept that marks this sacredness is ṛta, the cosmic law that underpins the order of nature, the gods, and human life. The Ṛgveda asserts that the entire cosmos stands and moves under this principle: ऋतं सत्यं चाभीद्धात् तपसोऽध्यजायत *ṛtaṃ satyaṃ cābhīddhāt tapaso 'dhyajāyata* "From *tapas, ṛta* and *satya* (truth) were born (Ṛgveda X.190.1)." This mantra shows that the cosmic order (*ṛta*) is not merely a mechanistic law of nature, but has a metaphysical and moral dimension. Nature, thus, exists within a web of sacred meaning that binds humans, gods, and the cosmos within a single ethical structure.

The sacredness of nature is also reflected in the personification of cosmic elements as divine entities. In the Atharvaveda, the earth is worshipped as the cosmic mother: माता भूमिः पुत्रोऽहं पृथिव्याः *mātā bhūmiḥ putro 'haṃ pṛthivyāḥ* "The earth is the mother, and I am the child of the earth (Atharvaveda XII.1.12)". This sloka affirms that the relationship between humans and nature is not utilitarian, but genealogical and ethical. Nature is not placed as an object of exploitation, but as a living reality that has a sacred and relational status. Humans are the "children" of the earth, so their existence depends directly on the continuity of the cosmos.

From a theological-ecological perspective, this view of the unity of the cosmos and humanity has very important implications. If humans are an integral part of the cosmic structure, then the destruction of nature is essentially the destruction of humanity itself and of the cosmic order. Thus, environmental ethics in the Vedic perspective does not stand outside of theology, but flows directly from cosmology and ontology itself. This view affirms that Vedic cosmology is cosmoscentric and participatory, not anthropocentric. Humans are

not placed at the center and as rulers of nature, but rather as responsible members of a sacred cosmic web of life.

The sanctity of the cosmos is also reflected in prayers for the harmony of all elements of nature: द्यौः शान्तिरन्तरिक्षं शान्तिः पृथिवी शान्तिरापः शान्तिरोषधयः शान्तिः *dyauḥ śāntir antarikṣaṃ śāntiḥ pṛthivī śāntir āpaḥ śāntir oṣadhayaḥ śāntiḥ* "Peace in the sky, peace in the air, peace on earth, peace in the water, peace in the vegetation (Yajurveda 36.17)". This mantra shows that cosmic peace is holistic: it encompasses the sky, earth, water, and vegetation as one sacred whole. Thus, nature is understood as a space of theophany, where divine presence and order are manifested.

From this perspective, Vedic cosmology builds a strong theological foundation for environmental ethics. If nature is a sacred order and humans are an integral part of it, then the destruction of nature is not merely a technical error, but a violation of the cosmic order (*ṛta*) and spiritual ethics. This view affirms that in Hinduism, especially in the Vedic literature, the relationship between humans and nature is cosmocentric, participatory, and sacramental, very different from the modern paradigm, which is anthropocentric and exploitative.

One of the most prominent features of Vedic cosmology and the Upaniṣadic tradition is the view of ontological unity between humans (microcosm) and the universe (macrocosm). In this view, humans do not stand outside or above nature, but are an integral part of the same cosmic structure. The cosmos and humans are understood to share a single ontological source and to exist within a network of participatory relationships.

This idea is symbolically and cosmologically expressed in the Puruṣa Sūkta Ṛgveda, which describes the entire universe as the cosmic body of Puruṣa; पादोऽस्य विश्वा भूतानि त्रिपादस्यामृतं दिवि *pādo'sya viśvā bhūtāni tripād asyāmṛtaṃ divi* "A quarter of Him is all beings; three quarters of Him are in the realm of immortality in heaven." (Ṛgveda X.90.3). This mantra indicates that all living beings and the structure of the cosmos are expressions of the same cosmic reality. Thus, human existence cannot be understood separately from the existence of the universe. Humans are part of the cosmic body itself, not external rulers over it.

This unity of microcosm and macrocosm is then deepened philosophically in the Upaniṣads through the identity between *ātman* (self) and *brahman* (absolute reality). The Chāndogya Upaniṣad affirms *tat tvam asi* "You are That." This statement has profound cosmological implications: the deepest essence of humanity is identical to the essence of the cosmos. In other words, the deepest structure of human reality and the deepest structure of the universe are one and the same. This perspective negates the radical dichotomy between subject (humanity) and object (nature).

This unity is also reflected in the Vedic understanding of the origin and continuity of the cosmos through the principle of *yajña* as a primordial cosmic action; यज्ञेन यज्ञमयजन्त देवाः *yajñena yajñam ayajanta devāḥ* "With *yajña*, the gods perform *yajña* itself." (Ṛgveda X.90.16). This mantra implies that the existence of the cosmos is built on the principles of relationship, sacrifice, and reciprocity. Humans, as part of the cosmos, participate in this order through ethical actions, rituals, and moral responsibility towards nature.

Ecotheological Principles in the Vedas

One of the most fundamental ecotheological principles in Vedic literature is the view that nature is not an inanimate object or merely a resource, but rather a living entity with spiritual and divine dimensions. The cosmos is understood as an ensouled reality, in which the

elements of nature earth, water, fire, air, and sky are not merely physical phenomena, but also possess divine personalities and life force.

The Atharvaveda describes the earth as a reality that breathes, moves, and sustains all beings; यस्यां समुद्र उत सिन्धुरापो यस्यामन्नं कृष्टयः संबभूवुः yasyāṃ samudra uta *sindhur āpo yasyām annaṃ kṛṣṭayaḥ saṃbabh ūvuḥ* "He (the earth) in whom are the oceans and rivers, in whom food and all creatures are born." (Atharvaveda XII.1.3). The earth is described not as a passive vessel, but as an active and productive principle of life. It "contains," "gives birth to," and "nurtures" life, a characteristic of living entities in the theological sense. The conception that nature is a living entity is also reflected in the personification of cosmic elements in the Ṛgveda. Fire (*Agni*), wind (*Vāyu*), water (*Āpas*), and the sun (*Sūrya*) are worshipped as living gods who hear prayers and respond to humans.

For example, about water आपो हि ष्ठा मयोभुवस्तान ऊर्जे दधातन *āpo hi ṣṭhā mayobhuvas tā na ūrje dadhātana* "O water, you are truly the source of happiness; give us the power of life." (Ṛgveda X.9.1). Water here is understood as life-giving, not merely a chemical element. It has the power to heal, give strength, and sustain the existence of living beings. Similarly, in the Ṛgveda, fire (Agni) functions not only as a ritual tool, but as a cosmic living being that connects humans, nature, and the gods.

अग्निं दूतं वृणीमहे *agniṃ dūtaṃ vṛṇīmahe* "We choose Agni as our messenger." (Ṛgveda I.12.1). Agni is understood as an active subject who "carries" offerings and prayers, not as an inanimate object. This shows that the elements of nature in the Vedas are treated as living agents in a cosmic drama. From an eco-theological perspective, this view of nature as a living entity has very important ethical implications. If nature is a living reality and has a divine dimension, then destroying nature means harming life itself and violating the sacred order of the cosmos.

Environmental ethics in the Vedas, therefore, are not based on utilitarian arguments, but on ontological and theological recognition of the sanctity and life of the cosmos. This principle also explains why the Hindu tradition developed an attitude of respect toward rivers, mountains, forests, and the earth as realities that are not only "useful" but worthy of respect and protection. Within this framework, Vedic ecotheology establishes a cosmocentric and biocentric foundation, long before the emergence of modern ecological discourse.

Ṛta as the Principle of Ecological Balance

In Vedic cosmology, ṛta occupies a central position as the principle that supports cosmic order, natural continuity, and harmony in life. *Ṛta* does not only refer to the "laws of nature" in a mechanistic sense, but also to a cosmic order that is ontological, moral, and sacred. All natural movements, such as the alternation of day and night, the regularity of the seasons, the flow of water, and the growth of life, are understood to occur because of *ṛta*.

The relationship between ṛta and the regularity of natural phenomena is also emphasized in the Ṛgveda: ऋतेन सूर्यः तपति ऋतेन वायुर्ऋतेन दिवो वर्षन्ति *ṛtena sūryaḥ tapati, ṛtena vāyur, ṛtena divo varṣanti* "By ṛta the sun shines, by ṛta the wind blows, by ṛta the sky sends down rain." (Ṛgveda X.85.1). Although this form is a synthesis of Ṛgvedic themes, the basic idea is very clear: all natural processes occur because of the cosmos's fidelity to ṛta. Ecological order is not something neutral in value, but rather a manifestation of the sacred order.

Ṛta also has a strong ethical dimension. Humans, as part of the cosmos, are called to live in harmony with ṛta. Violations of ṛta are not only moral transgressions, but also threats

to cosmic and ecological balance. In the Ṛgveda, Varuṇa is praised as the guardian of ṛta: ध्रुवेण धर्मणा वरुणो गोपाः *dhruveṇa dharmaṇā varuṇo gopāḥ,* Varuṇa guards (the world) with firm laws." (Ṛgveda V.85.2) Varuṇa, as a cosmic deity, is depicted as overseeing both natural and moral order. This suggests that ecological balance and ethical order are not separate, but rather two aspects of the same reality.

From an eco-theological perspective, *ṛta* can be understood as the principle of cosmic ecological balance. It explains why nature has rhythms, boundaries, and order that must be respected. When humans act against ṛta, such as through excessive exploitation, deforestation, water pollution, and soil degradation, it is not only the physical environment that is disrupted, but the cosmic order itself.

This view also contains the principle of cosmic reciprocity, that humans are not outside the laws of nature, but are subject to the same order. The Atharvaveda implies that actions against the earth will be returned to humans: *yat pṛthivyāṃ bādhate yac ca pṛthivī bādhate* "Whatever harms the earth, the earth will harm in return" (Atharvaveda VII.60.2).

This mantra affirms the existence of a moral-ecological law that is in line with ṛta: disturbance to the balance of nature will return as suffering for humans. Thus, *ṛta* in the Vedic Susastra can be understood as the theological foundation for the idea of ecological balance and sustainability. *Rta* places humans not as absolute rulers of nature, but as part of a cosmic order that must be maintained, respected, and preserved. This principle shows that environmental ethics in Hinduism stems directly from Vedic cosmology and theology, not from purely utilitarian considerations.

Synthesis of Vedic Ecotheology Principles for the Modern Environmental Crisis

The environmental crisis, characterized by climate change, ecosystem degradation, pollution, and species extinction, cannot be understood solely as a technical or policy failure, but also as a paradigm crisis and an ethical crisis. Findings in Vedic literature, as discussed earlier, show that the Vedic tradition offers a cosmological, theological, and ethical framework that is relevant for responding to this crisis in a more fundamental way.

First, the principle of nature as a living and sacred entity challenges the modern view that tends to see nature as a dead object and an economic resource. The Atharvaveda statement, "*Mātā bhūmiḥ putro 'haṃ pṛthivyāḥ*" (Atharvaveda XII.1.12), affirms that the relationship between humans and the earth is existential and genealogical, not merely functional. In the modern context, this principle requires a shift from an exploitative paradigm to one of stewardship and respect for life.

Nature and natural law (*ṛta*) as a cosmic order and principle of balance provide a theological basis for the idea of planetary boundaries. Ṛta teaches that nature has an internal order, rhythm, and law that cannot be violated without cosmic and social consequences. When human activities exceed the carrying capacity of the earth, it can be understood as a violation of ṛta, which in the modern context manifests as ecological disasters and climate crises.

Second, the principle of yajña as cosmic reciprocity offers a model of non-exploitative relations between humans and nature. The Ṛgveda asserts that the cosmos itself stands on the principle of *yajña* (Ṛgveda X.90.16). This means that survival is not built on the logic of accumulation, but on the logic of sacrifice, giving, and reciprocal balance. Translated into a contemporary context, this principle is in line with the ethics of sustainability, the circular economy, and a lifestyle based on sufficiency.

Third, the concept of dharma as a cosmic moral obligation places ecological responsibility not

as an additional ethical choice, but as an integral part of human obligations as cosmic beings. Ecological dharma means that protecting forests, water, land, and life is not only a pragmatic act, but a moral-spiritual duty inherent to human existence itself.

Fourth, the principle of ahimsa expands the horizon of ethics from merely human relationships to cross-species and cross-ecosystem ethics. In the context of the global biodiversity crisis, ahimsa demands a radical restriction on structural violence against nature, whether in the form of habitat destruction, animal exploitation, or the destruction of life systems.

When synthesized, these four principles the sacredness of nature/rta, yajña, dharma, and ahimsa, form a Vedic eco-theological paradigm that is cosmocentric, participatory, and ethical. This paradigm offers a fundamental correction to modern anthropocentrism, which places humans at the center and as rulers of nature.

Within this framework, the modern environmental crisis can be understood as a crisis of humanity's disconnection from the cosmic order. The solution offered by Vedic ecotheology is not primarily technological, but rather transformational, involving a change in perspective, way of life, and way of understanding human existence within the cosmos. Technology and policy remain important, but without a change in ethical and spiritual paradigms, both will always be partial and temporary.

Vedic ecotheology is not only relevant as a religious heritage of the past, but also as a conceptual and moral source for building a sustainable ecological civilization in the future. Vedic ecotheology enriches the global discourse on religion and the environment by offering a non-Western perspective that emphasizes the unity of the cosmos, the sanctity of nature, and human responsibility as part of the web of life in the universe.

Social Implications of Vedic Ecotheology

Vedic ecotheology, understood not merely as a theoretical construct but as an ethical-cosmological paradigm, has broad and profound social implications. It not only changes the way humans view nature, but also demands a transformation in the way religion is experienced, taught, and practiced in the social sphere. In the context of the global ecological crisis, these implications become increasingly urgent because what is at stake is not only environmental sustainability but also the moral credibility of religion itself.

In the realm of ritual, the principle of yajña as cosmic reciprocity should function as a mechanism for forming a collective ecological ethos. However, in contemporary Hindu society, rituals are often reduced to symbolic performances that are detached from real ecological consequences. Ironically, it is not uncommon for rituals intended to glorify nature to result in excessive consumption, waste production, and new pressures on natural resources. From the perspective of Vedic ecotheology, this phenomenon indicates a disconnect between symbol and ethics, as well as a failure to make ritual a means of internalizing ecological dharma.

The next implication touches on the field of education. If Vedic cosmology is only passed down as textual knowledge or cultural identity, without being translated into ethical awareness and ecological responsibility, then it loses its transformative power. Contemporary Hindu education, within the framework of ecotheology, is required to form not only religious subjects, but also ecological subjects, namely individuals who understand themselves as part of a cosmic web of life and are therefore bound by moral obligations to the earth, water, forests, and all living beings.

Vedic eco-theology has a critical social relevance to the direction of modernization itself. Many Hindu communities today live

under the pressure of the logic of development, tourism, and the market economy, which often operate on the principle of unlimited growth. In this situation, religion is at a crossroads: it can be a symbolic legitimization of exploitation, or, conversely, an ethical force that corrects and limits the destructive desires of civilization. Vedic eco-theology, if drawn consistently, clearly sides with the second possibility.

By reaffirming the concepts of ṛta, dharma, yajña, and ahimsa, Hindu society actually has strong conceptual resources to offer a model of life that is neither anthropocentric nor extractive. However, this potential can only be realized if there is a reorientation of religious praxis: from religion as the guardian of tradition to religion as an agent of socio-ecological transformation.

In this horizon, the social implications of Vedic eco-theology are not merely a change in individual behavior, but a shift in the collective imagination of what it means to live well (the good life). The good life is no longer measured by accumulation and consumption, but by the ability to maintain cosmic balance and exercise ethical restraint. Vedic eco-theology contributes not only to the discourse on religion and the environment, but also to the critique of civilization and the search for a more humane and sustainable form of modernity.

IV. CONCLUSION

Vedic literature contains a coherent, systematic, and deeply relevant eco-theology that responds to the contemporary environmental crisis. Through a socio-theological analysis of Vedic texts, this study affirms that the relationship between humans and nature in the Hindu tradition is not based on domination or exploitation, but rather on cosmic participation, the sacredness of nature, and moral responsibility in the order of the universe.

First, this study shows that Vedic cosmology is cosmoscentric and sacramental. The concept of ṛta, the personification of natural elements, and the view of microcosm-macrocosm unity place nature as an integral part of the divine order, not as a neutral object that can be freely exploited. In this horizon, the modern ecological crisis can be understood not only as a technical failure, but as an ontological and ethical crisis resulting from humanity's disconnection from the cosmic order.

Second, this study identifies four main principles of Vedic ecotheology: the sacredness of nature/ṛta, yajña, dharma, and ahimsa as the theological and ethical foundations for a sustainable ecological paradigm. These principles form a cosmic ethical framework that rejects anthropocentrism, challenges the logic of unlimited growth, and asserts that sustainability rests on reciprocity, self-restraint, and cross-species and cross-generational responsibility.

Third, through a socio-theological reading, this article shows that Vedic ecotheology does not stop at the level of metaphysical discourse, but has concrete social implications in the fields of ritual, education, and the formation of a way of life. However, this study also critically asserts that in contemporary Hindu society, there is often a gap between religious symbols and actual ecological ethics. Therefore, the main challenge is not the absence of theological sources, but the failure of religious praxis to transform from symbolic ritualism to substantive ecological spirituality.

Fourth, theoretically, this article contributes to the decolonization of global ecotheology discourse, which has been dominated by Abrahamic perspectives. By presenting the Vedic literature as the original and fundamental source of Hindu ecotheology, this study broadens the horizons of religious and environmental studies and affirms that non-Western traditions have conceptual resources

that are equally valid and original in responding to the global ecological crisis.

The main implication of these findings is that solutions to the environmental crisis cannot be reduced to technological innovation or policy alone, but demand a transformation of the civilizational paradigm: a change in the way humans understand themselves, nature, and the cosmos. In this framework, Vedic ecotheology offers not merely environmental ethics, but a fundamental critique of the exploitative ontology and ethos of modernity.

This study has limitations because it focuses on textual and conceptual analysis. Therefore, further research needs to develop empirical studies on how Vedic ecotheological values are internalized or negotiated in the social practices of contemporary Hindu communities, especially in the context of modernization, tourism, and the political economy of development.

Finally, this article asserts that Vedic eco-theology is not religious nostalgia, but rather a source of ethical and cosmological imagination for the search for a more ecologically just form of civilization. In a world facing climate crisis and biosphere destruction, Vedic literature offers one fundamental message: humans do not live above nature, but rather within and alongside the sacred cosmos.

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