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# Climate Communication and Indian Media: Challenges and Responses

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**Abstract**

Fast-depleting natural resources, global warming, and the consequent anthropogenic climatic change pose a severe threat to the very existence of life on our planet. Being a public concern, the problem for its solution, requires active public participation. It plays a crucial role by

mobilising people against the rampant exploitation of nature. Past researchers have analysed the role of media in this direction. This paper takes a stride in this direction by engaging with Gateway Belief Model and scrutinising how communicating scientific consensus through media impacts the belief in climate change and produces support for action. It also discusses the challenges media face in its attempts to communicate nature to the public. By focussing on examples from the Indian media, this paper problematises the intersection between religious belief and scientific research to underpin the relationship between public perception and policy prescription regarding the climate change crisis.

**Keywords:** Climate communication, Climate change, Media framing, Media and environment, Gateway belief model

## 1. Introduction

Climate and environment concern all. They concern media as well. Media stories about the environment are to be found every other day. Television channels and newspapers carry reports on a variety of environmental problems such as acid rain, air pollution, global warming, hazardous waste, ozone depletion, smog, water pollution, over population and rainforest depletion. Because of their potential consequences environmental problems are receiving growing attention from public and government.

Environmental journalism or simply journalism about our environment is an emerging area. It is said to form a part of a more general and multidisciplinary field called environmental communication. Environmental communication describes the many ways in which citizens, corporations, public officials, journalists and environmental groups raise concerns and attempt to influence the important decisions that affect our surroundings. The field assumes that human understanding of nature and our actions towards the environment don't depend solely on science, but on public debate, media and even ordinary conversations.

Environmental Communication has been defined as the planned and strategic use of communication process to support effective public participation, policy making and project implementation aimed at environmental sustainability. It is a two-way social interaction process that enables an understanding of key environmental factors and their interdependencies. Environmental communication makes efficient use of methods, instruments and techniques which are well established in development communication, adult education, social marketing, agricultural extension, public relations and non-formal training. Jurin, Roush, and Danter (2010) define environmental communication as the systematic generation and exchange of messages for and about the world around us. Environmental communication hence constitutes the various ways in which we communicate about our natural world; it helps shape our perceptions of the natural world and of our relationship to the earth. Environmental communication also is culturally rooted, shaped by cultures, authority and is interpreted individually.

Environmental Communication is sometimes treated as a field within the communication discipline, as well as one that cuts across disciplines. Theory and research within the field is focussed on communication and human relations with the environment. Those into environmental communication are concerned with the ways people communicate about the natural world because they believe that such communication has far reaching effects at a time of largely human created environmental crisis. Because human relations with nature are negotiated within cultural communication, mass media, public communication, interpersonal communication, popular culture and so forth environmental communication theory draws from cultural theory, media theory, rhetorical theory, social movement theory, pop culture theory and many other areas. Thus environmental communication researchers do make use of existing theories to serve as conceptual frameworks for their studies. Environmental communication scholars also borrow from eco feminist theory and political ecology, social constructionist theory, systems theory and performance theory. For example, in the media studies of environmental communication researchers have employed the framing theory to

analyze media coverage of the environment. Some have used ethnographic approaches in this connection.

Pleasant, Good, Shanahan, and Cohen (2002) collected citations of all papers matching specified keywords covering environmental communication topics in the social science journal literature from relevant indices from 1945 to 2001. They found that environmental communication research really began to take off in 1985. They concluded that, with the substantial amount of academic literature on environmental communication scattered in different journals of communication, science, and risk, there should be a specialized journal offering a discussion forum on environmental communication solely. Research articles about communication and the environment can be found as early as 1973 in *The Journal of Environmental Education*. Academic scholarship has swelled in environmental communication studies in the form of books, journal articles, and in discussions in communication trade magazines over the last thirty years. The amount of literature concerning environmental journalism is vast, in the form of quantitative and qualitative research. Often, the literature on environmental journalism leads one to the literature of science and risk communication, and the literature on science and risk communication leads one to the literature on environmental communication. Consequently, this study incorporates information from the literature on risk communication studies and science communication studies.

The role played by mass media in the social construction of environmental problems is sometimes called as environmental education (Hannigan, 1995). During the 1960s and 1970s, media, in United States, gave unprecedented coverage to environmental issues (Hannigan, 1995). Popular media has depicted environment as a friend as well as an enemy. Study of Canadian media reveals that nature has been portrayed as fragile, as a problem as well as a useful resource (Meisner, 2004). The same was seen as contributing to a growing public concern about environmental problems during the same period (Dunlap & Marshall, 2007). A similar correlation of media coverage resulting in increased public concern of environmental issues could also be seen at Japan (Sampei & Aoyagi-Usui, 2008). Media's agenda-setting effect is strongly demonstrated on environmental issues. The rise and decline of people's concern about environmental issues is closely related to the agenda set by media. People, as a matter of fact, obtain most of their political, economic and scientific information from television and daily newspapers.

Media coverage can also promote changes of values and attitudes toward the environment and environmental policies. The same may explain as to why political parties, interests groups, and business enterprises take an avid interest in environmental coverage by mainstream media. Attempts to solve environmental problems can threaten the benefits of business and industry (Dunlap, 1975), and thus often cause controversy between political entities. In the United States alone, democrats and republicans differ in their views regarding protection of environment and judicious use of natural resources, with the republicans being more sympathetic towards business interests often at the cost of environmental quality (Dunlap, 1975). The role of power thus is evident in the coverage of environmental issues by media. It can now be understood as to why different media at times pay attention to different

environmental issues, and a single environmental issue is interpreted in multiple ways by different media (Hannigan, 1995). In another study Dispensa and Brulle (2003) pointed at conspicuous differences across nations in the media coverage of global warming. The U.S. media, for instance, has tended to portray global warming as less serious than in some other nations.

## 2. Challenges Faced by Environmental Communicators

While studies have confirmed that media does report about environmental issues, even if varying in its tone and intensity, they have also chronicled the challenges faced by environmental communicators while writing about environment and sustainable management of natural resources.

One big challenge for journalists is that many environmental problems don't have a clear link with our lives. Cox (2006) contends that unobtrusive events, or events which are remote from one's personal experience such as chemical contamination, the loss of biodiversity, climate change, and other threats to human health and ecological systems, are less visible, therefore, often go unnoticed by the media for decades. Similarly, the effects of toxins are not easily observed. We rarely notice such toxins in our everyday lives as many toxic chemicals are invisible. Such contamination also may not be an issue for government officials and the media because of lack of immediate impact. This is what makes it difficult for environmental topics to fall in line with the media's conventions for reporting.

Media often reports environmental issues in sensational ways. For instance, Wilkins and Patterson (1990) found that newspapers frequently cover ozone depletion, global warming, depletion of natural resources as specific events rather than as long-term developments. Friedman (2004) adds that competition and the need to tell longer, complicated and more in-depth stories has increased pressure on journalists to dramatize issues to ensure that a story gets out. As a result, few mainstream media have the space to document less dramatic problems, such as loss of biodiversity or the impacts of new synthetic chemicals. Thus, although the environment may be an important concern, news media are pressured to underreport environment problems or to cover them in highly dramatized ways.

Studies have also hinted that media, in more homogenous communities, downplays the environmental threats (Dunwoody & Griffin, 1993). A study by Tichenor, Donohue, and Olien (1980) suggests that small-town newspapers are typically more consensus-oriented than are larger metro newspapers. This they may do to preserve local business interests.

Research also shows that the factors that influenced the news media's attention to risks include the knowledge of the journalists (Kitzinger & Reilly 1997). For instance, some journalists shy away from stories where they have difficulty understanding the issues.

Environmental issues depicted in the media are frequently presented as soft stories or as human interest stories. The reason for this is because this type of reporting is so different from the hard news such as crime or politics. However, Campbell (1999) argues the environmental issue is complex and technical, pluralistic, multidisciplinary and often composed of scientific data. Therefore, it should not be treated as soft news or labelled as not

important. The news is often softened with a human interest style format, for example, pictures of seals before and after culling which call up human emotions of anger, pity and sadness.

News traditions including event reporting, objective reporting, and writing about response rather than initiative challenge journalists. Advertiser pressure, management policy, unavailability of information, provincialism, reluctance to trust conservationist sources, and space, time and finances all create special challenges for environmental journalists. As Friedman (1991) pointed out, the amount of attention in the media given to the environment has significantly increased, but, the format of the environmental beat has not changed over the decades. While quantity may be up and environmental topics different and more varied, the quality of environmental coverage presents many of the same problems it did years ago. There are other similarities as well. No one knows the exact number of environmental reporters working in the mass media or the issues they cover under the rubric of environmental reporting.

Environmental communicators must wear many different hats. The environmental news writer is as much a business news writer as a science writer or political reporter. The environmental journalist's beat is extremely challenging because it encompasses the topics of many other beats like law, business, and politics (Friedman, 1991).

To understand and write about the environment is a tall order. Friedman (1999) explained, "Tracking a long-term controversy such as dioxin is difficult enough for scientists who spend years studying the issue. For journalists, keeping abreast of all the scientific data and arguments is an almost impossible task because they must keep track of a wide range of other scientific and environmental news, not just one issue" (p. 114). The sheer science on the environmental journalist's beat presents another major challenge to journalists. Overall, there is wide agreement that environmental journalist's beat is innately complex. The most fundamental problem characteristic of environmental news reporting is that environmental risk information is neither easy to obtain nor easy to understand.

Today, coverage of the environment requires one to foretell what kind of repercussions they will have, in the social and political realm (Nelkin, 1995). The difficulties in reporting on the environment involve uncertainties associated with research and innovation and with their long-term, real-life impacts (Gee, 2000). Knowing what new developments mean to society and how they are going to affect the lives of individuals is important to the public at large. Scientists and other experts often disagree about the facts, making it hard for journalists to judge the testimony (Corner & Richardson, 1993). Most stories about highly complex science and policy debates unfold slowly in meetings and journals.

According to Goodfield (1981), one of the common constraints of the media covering science is that science journalism cannot work the same way as basic journalism, in the style of the inverted pyramid. In telling a story about science, the reporter must start by building a series of bridges between the reader's understanding and the essential background information. One builds bridge after bridge until finally an understandable conclusion is reached, but if any one of these bridges is cut out, the whole story collapses. Translation is yet another challenge to

environmental journalists, from risk statistics to scientific processes. This is compounded with limited time and space for a journalists to explain.

A challenge journalists face personally is that they don't have an education or background in environmental issues or science. Needless to say, environmental news reporting is often tempered with inaccuracy. Journalists might avoid substantive questions because they are unable to evaluate what they are told. Friedman (1991) noted that some journalists couldn't interpret environmental pollution data and have to ask sources. In addition, many environmental journalists, like journalists generally, work in newsrooms in which higher-level constraints influence their work.

Most media do not have a full-time environmental reporter on staff. As Farrow (2000) said, in the US, environment is not a prime beat. Environmental journalists do not stay around very long. Resources to pay for environmental journalists and their work is limited (American Opinion Research, 1993).

Editors are another major challenge for environmental journalists. They may not have interest in environmental journalism, be educated about it, or believe it is important (American Opinion Research, 1993). Editors choose to describe science so that each description makes sense to their readers, fits with the latter's general beliefs about science, and therefore enhance the publication's marketability. The need to create the interest to sell newspapers to readers is another challenge for journalists covering science and the environment. Journalists may feel the need to find the new all the time, which is another challenge since environmental issues are chronic, long lasting issues. Editors usually evaluate news stories based on basis of colour and excitement (Nelkin, 1995). All these reasons exemplify the challenge that environmental journalists face covering their beat.

In writing about the organizational requirements of the news media, Willis and Okunade (1997) listed advertising, consumers, and marketable content. Researchers feel that publishers are dependent on advertising and consumerism, and covering the environment tends to attack that. The same may explain as to why environmental news stories rarely make headlines. Environmental reporters seem to compete for space.

Often power has a role to play during the media coverage of environment. Shabecoff (1993) asks why business leaders are so bitterly opposed to efforts to protect the environment. He suggests that many of our industry captains simply do not want to be told how to run their companies - not by the government and certainly not by a mob of tree-loving hippie environmentalists. The underlying issue is power, power over decisions that industry possesses and does not want to yield or share. This tug-of-war becomes especially touchy for journalists. According to Izakon (2001), journalists face a hostile environment when covering the environment because people assume a journalist is a tree hugger, leftist political activist.

Smith (1991) quoted Robert L. Rapetto, then senior economist at the World Resources Institute, "most conflicts over whether and how to address environmental hazards boils down to one argument: How much will it cost" (p. 161). Smith wrote, The solutions to environmental problems will increasingly revolve around tradeoffs between social and

political goals and economic impacts.

Challenges to environmental journalists are many, including news traditions, advertiser pressure, management policy, editors, space, time, finances, complexity of the environment beat, the relationships the environment has with other beats, translation of scientific or technical information, reporting repercussions, the uncertainty of the environment, disagreement between sources on the facts, the need to find the new, competition with other news, education of journalists who report about the environment, and the advocate versus objective role on the environmental beat.

### 3. Forget Challenges, Should One Cover Environment Like It Covered Today?

Traditional news values that include timeliness, proximity, prominence, consequence, conflict, and human interest are often labelled as criticisms of environmental journalism. Because environmental issues are different from many other news topics, environmental journalists may do more harm than help when adhering to news values like timeliness, conflict, and human interest.

Through all these years of environmental coverage, journalists have stuck to their own news values rather than moving toward or emphasizing ‘importance' as the one value they share with science. Sachsman (1999) has alleged that reporters generally apply the same standards to science reporting that they do to entertainment or sports reporting. He said that by hanging on to their own ways of looking at things, the media devalued the opinions of those involved in environmental affairs. In a study of risk news stories on hazards, Singer and Endreny (1993) found statements that were substantially different from the research report. They also found that important information was often not included in the story. The authors held that if readers and viewers are not made aware of these contingencies, if mass media accounts do not reflect limitations in the data or the research method used, and if conflicting findings are presented without interpretation or evaluation, then flaws exist in the communication process itself.

Singer and Endreny (1993) concluded that reporting about hazards is ordinarily reporting about events rather than issues, and about immediate consequences rather than long-term considerations. Allan concluded that reporting which reduces environmental risks to isolated events or incidents, fails to make the necessary connections at a social level. Environmental journalism is often belittled because of tendencies to be event-oriented, and failure to explain larger issues. Alternatives, risks, benefits, moral or ethical issues, and even economic issues were for the most part ignored. According to Singer and Endreny (1993), “Nothing in the rules of journalism says that the reporter must, in addition to describing an industrial accident, also inform readers about the likelihood of such an event occurring again, or about the risks posed by the industry in general, or about alternatives and their benefits and costs” (p. 163). As it can be seen, traditional news values depreciate journalism on the environment.

Through his study of radio broadcasts, Darley (2000) said the need for conflict and news as entertainment will hinder coverage of the issues of the environment and claims the environment demands keener and deeper reporting and discussion techniques. The question,

he said, should not be "Will this entertain?' but rather "Is this what we need to know?" (p. 166). As Allan (2002) found, Many of the deficiencies indicative of Western news coverage of post-Chernobyl [1986] developments in nuclear energy are attributable to the journalistic search for the novel and the unusual.

Lundberg (1984) found coverage of tropical rain deforestation in magazines comprehensively covered causes, effects, and background information, but addressed solutions and documentation least.

Another complaint has been that journalists tend to be crisis-oriented on the environmental beat (Hertsgaard, 1989). Stocking (1999) found that journalists make science more certain than it is by loss of caveats, single-source stories, lack of context, being more interested in the product over the process, and assuming science will bring a triumphant quest. On the other hand, some journalists make science appear uncertain and baffling. Also, journalists sometimes give equal weight to majority and fringe scientists, as well as scientists and non-scientists.

To account for the above patterns, Stocking discussed journalists' ignorance, education and experience as factors, journalists' concerns for scientists' values as well as allegiance to their own profession's values and standards, media routines and organizational demands. Goodfield (1981) found that many scientists believe that too many people in the media always will present the public with simplistic stories rather than struggle to explain complicated truths. Environmental journalism often demands thorough background investigation, translation of technical information, and consideration of larger issues like future consequences. As Goodfield (1981) states that environmental reporters do take the shortcuts. There are two kinds of shortcuts: one is simply not to go deep enough or spend time enough to find the correct story; the other is to create interest in an irresponsible way, by bending the facts, exaggerating the impact, distorting the consequences, indulging in a spot of free association, even just getting things plain wrong and not caring.

Journalists often want just a general understanding because of the constraints they work under, and don't interpret underlying issues (Nelkin, 1995). For example, Sachsman (1976) found that journalists often rely heavily on press releases, resulting in coverage that is actually done by a public relations practitioner. Taking the easy way out of a complex subject does not have positive consequences for anyone involved -- the media, the environment, or the public.

Friedman (1999) found that covering long-term issues in which the science is uncertain and keeps changing is not one of media's strong point. The media has serious problems covering long-term aspects of an environmental issue.

In addition to lacking long term coverage, Rubin and Sachs (1973) found that the environmental beat is prone to "Afghanistanism" which "is characterized by the presentation of bold editorial solutions for the problems of countries halfway around the globe but only silence for problems at home" (p. 252).

Environmental journalism is also criticized for always obtaining information from and using traditional, dominant sources like government officials (Rubin & Sachs, 1973; Sachsman,

1976). Traditional bureaucratic types of sources criticized by some scholars continue their dominance in shaping the news about an important public issue. Sources with expertise, but not affiliated with government, such as sources at universities were used only occasionally.

Finally, Simon (1980) in *Science* found that "Bad news about population growth, natural resources, and the environment that is based on flimsy evidence or no evidence at all is published widely in the face of contradictory evidence" (p. 1432).

To sum up, criticisms of environmental journalism include lack of context, confusing story framing, coverage with insufficient information, an emphasis presented that differs from reality, reports of events rather than issues, a focus on conflict or entertainment, use of traditional news sources, simplistic stories that don't make larger connections, coverage that is crisis oriented, the making of science as more certain than it really is, a reliance on press releases, a lack of long-term coverage, "Afghanistanism," or coverage that lacks locality, and stories that sell rather than inform.

## 4. Current Areas of Study

Although the study of environmental communication covers a wide range of topics, most research and the practice of communication fall into one of the following areas.

a. *Environmental rhetoric and the social–symbolic construction of nature.*

Studies of the rhetoric of environmental organizations and campaigns emerged as an early focus of the new field. Studies of language and other symbolic forms have allowed scholars to probe the constitutive power of communication to shape our ideas and the meanings of nature and the environment. For example Cozen (2010) has examined the images of food in advertising by corporations such as Shell and Chevron.

b. *Public participation in environmental decision making.*

Environmental communication scholars' work in this area has ranged from the study of citizens' comments on national forest management plans, public access to information about pollution in local communities, and obstacles to meaningful public dialogue over the cleanup of nuclear weapons waste.

c. *Environmental collaboration and conflict resolution.*

Dissatisfaction with some of the adversarial forms of public participation has led practitioners and scholars to explore alternative models of resolving environmental conflicts. They draw inspiration from the successes of local communities that have discovered ways to bring disputing parties together.

d. *Media and environmental journalism.*

The diverse research in this area focuses on ways in which the news, advertising, and commercial programs portray nature and environmental problems as well as the effects of different media on public attitudes. Subjects include the ability of media to influence which issues audiences think about; journalist values of objectivity and balance in reporting; media

framing or the viewers' sense-making. Studies in environmental media are also beginning to explore online news and the role of social media in engaging environmental concerns. These range widely, from an analysis of Facebook profiles created by environmental advocacy groups to studies of post network television.

e. *Representations of nature in corporate advertising and popular culture.*

There is a growing number of studies of how popular culture such as films, advertising, tabloids and even greeting cards influence our attitudes or perceptions of nature and the environment (Brereton, 2005). Scholars in cultural studies also are also mapping some of the ways in which popular media sustains attitudes of dominance and exploitation of the natural world.

f. *Advocacy campaigns and message construction.*

A growing area of study is the use of public education and advocacy campaigns by environmental groups, corporations, and by climate scientists concerned about global warming. Sometimes called social marketing, these campaigns attempt to educate, change attitudes, and mobilize support for a specific course of action. Scholars have used a range of approaches in the study of advocacy campaigns. For example, a growing number of communication scholars, scientists, and others are now studying the challenge of communicating the risks from climate change to the public as well as barriers to the public's sense of urgency (Moser & Dilling, 2007).

e. *Science and risk communication.*

Environmental communicators are concerned about conveying the risks of over exploitation of natural resources to a public worried about day to day problems. Risk communication encompasses a range of practices — from public education campaigns about the risks from eating fish with high levels of mercury to risk communication plans for use after a potential biological attack that unleashes the plague. Since the late 1980s, scholars also have begun to look at the impact of cultural understandings of risk and the public's judgment of the acceptability of a risk.

**5. Professional Associations and Institutes in Environmental Communication:**

The following is a list of forums and professional associations which work towards spreading environmental awareness among people. It is not an exhaustive list.

- Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists
- Society of Indonesian Environmental Journalists
- Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh
- Sri Lanka Environmental Journalists Forum
- Vietnam Forum of Environmental Journalists
- China Forum of Environmental Journalists

- Japanese Forum of Environmental Journalists
- Asian American Journalists Association
- Centre for Science and Environment (India)
- Centre for Environmental Education (India)
- Earth Journalism Network
- International Environmental Communication Association
- North American Association for Environmental Education
- Public Relations Society of America, Environment Section
- Society of Environmental Journalists
- International Institute for Environmental Communication
- Environmental Communication Network of Latin America and the Caribbean
- International Federation of Environmental Journalists

## 6. Environmental Communication in India

Research on environmental communication in India is scarce. Bulk of research on media coverage of environment, which includes climate change, depleting natural resources and related matters, has focussed on countries in the Group of Eight and other countries of the Global North. However, some studies (Kakade, Hiremath, & Rout, 2013) have given conclusive evidence that Indian media users get most of their information on climate change, judicious use of natural resources and related matters from television and newspapers. Billett (2010), for instance, has observed that the US is portrayed overwhelmingly negatively by Indian press, for contributing to environmental degradation. Needless to say, there is an acute need for serious research in the Indian context on media coverage given to environmental issues.

It mayn't be out of context to mention here that discussions of environmental communication in Indian context can ill-afford to ignore the rich Indian tradition of living in harmony with nature. A environmental journalist must acknowledge the fact that writing to Indians translates to writing to an ecologically sensitive audience. The concept of *Vasudeva Kutumbakam*, for example, contends that all living beings are part of one large family, protected and overseen by Mother Earth. A verse from the Rig-Veda states that “the sky is like father, the earth like mother and the space as their son. The universe consisting of the three is like a family and any kind of damage done to any one of the three throws the universe out of balance” (David, 1980). Another verse from Rig-Veda says “Thousands and hundreds of years if you want to enjoy the fruits and happiness of life, then take up systematic planting of trees” (Dwivedi & Tiwari, 1987). These verses carry a message to desist from inflicting any injury to the earth and embark upon constant a forestation for survival or else the ecological balance of the earth would be damaged. Rig-Veda has also spoken about floods

being caused by erosion of soil in the river banks, caused due to uprooting of trees.

The Atharva Veda also mentions the poisoning of environment as detrimental to the very existence of humans on earth (Dwivedi, 1990). It recalls that three things (air, water and plants) cover the universe and they are essential for all lives on earth to exist. Atharvaveda declares that "Plants and herbs destroy poisons (pollutants)". Some herbs, says Atharvaveda, purify the air. The fragrance of guru (*Commiphora mukul*) purifies the air and cure diseases. Atharvaveda has also warned not to dirty and add toxic substances into water bodies as it may lead to spread of diseases "he who dirties or spoils ponds, lakes, rivers, etc., or cause smell near residential areas is liable to chastisement (Joshi & Namita, 2009). Vedas attach great significance to the peepal tree (*Ficus religiosa*). Incidentally, the National Botanical Survey of India (NBRI) Lucknow, has identified about 150 trees and herbs including peepal which are pollution fighters. They are able to intercept several toxic gases and dusts and also infuse the atmosphere with plenty of oxygen (Rabindra, 1985).

The Yajurveda too mentions about plants and animals, the ill effects of cutting of trees; and the poisoning of the atmosphere; but it also discusses about energy relations of the global ecosystem. Yajurveda declares that the whole universe is full of energy in which the sun is at the centre and the ultimate source of energy for all living organisms on earth. The net energy flows from the point of production to the point of consumption through the plants, animals, human beings, the air, water and land, and is completely under the control of Almighty. Any imbalance in the energy flow leads to several natural disturbances like untimely rain, heavy rain, drought and flood, warm winter and cool summer. It is thus, not too far fetching to assume that Yajurveda warned us of global warming long before modern science was born!

Upanishads perceived the existence of God in trees and plants. Brhadaranyaka Upanishad equates trees with human beings (Trivedi, 2004). In the Taittariya Upanishad certain norms were prescribed for human beings to keep the environment clean. The Iso-Upanishad has revealed the secrets of existence of life on earth and the importance of every organism for mutual survival. Similarly the Jain principle of Asteya, distinguishing between need and greed, advises man to take from nature as much as satisfies one's need and not one's greed.

Environmental communicators in India will do well by not ignoring the fact that *Sanatana Dharma* was ecologically sensitive. Efforts to raise the environmental awareness of people, or to tune them to think in terms of sustainable development of natural resources, can definitely benefit by summoning the spiritual traditions of India.

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