



SAVING OF ARAVALLIS': A HISTORICAL STUDY OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Rubi Kumari

Research Scholar, Department of Geography, Janardan Rai Nagar Rajasthan Vidyapeeth (Deemed to University) Udaipur

Dr. Pankaj Rawal

Associate Professor, Department of Geography, Janardan Rai Nagar Rajasthan Vidyapeeth (Deemed to University) Udaipur

ABSTRACT Rajasthan has a long history, and people from ancient times till date are contributing their efforts to save the natural resources from the desert to the hills. Ancient literature displays a great understanding of the environment, notably in relation to the Aravali Range, which has provided nourishment and spiritual importance for millennia. The paper emphasizes the necessity of conservation by outlining human responsibilities in maintaining a complete and healthy environment. Texts such as the "Manusmriti" and the "Arthashastra" demonstrate a grasp of nature's connectivity to human well-being, highlighting the importance of protecting forests, trees, and wildlife. Texts mentioned in "Rigveda" and "Atharveda" describe the environment and the base of creation of humankind, namely water, fire, air, sky and earth. The history and evolution of countries, races, and cultures have been influenced by the environment, various factors that hinder the survival and growth of their inhabitants' livelihoods. This has led to a need to develop awareness among the people to rescue the environment. The study will put an emphasis on the history of Social Awareness by the people to rescue the Aravali and its adjacent area. Right from the long 17th century till date, people and rulers from different dynasties have contributed their efforts to keep the Aravali as a lifeline. Beginning from the Khejri movement in 1730 by the Bishnoi Society people to date. Since 1990, the Government has also put its efforts into Policy, law, and different initiatives to save the environment.

KEYWORDS : Aravali, Awareness, Bishnoi Society, policy, Environment

INTRODUCTION

Environmental awareness is the understanding of the environment, the impact of human actions on it, and the importance of sustainability and involves recognizing the interconnectedness of ecosystems, the challenges facing the planet, and the role individuals and communities play in protecting natural resources.

To define environmental awareness, we must first understand the environmental movement. Environmentalism is an ideology that emphasizes the necessity and responsibility of humans to respect, protect, and preserve the natural world from its anthropogenic (human-caused) afflictions. Environmental awareness is a crucial component of the movement's success. By spreading awareness to others that the physical environment is fragile and indispensable, we can begin fixing the issues that threaten it.

To define environmental awareness, we must first understand the environmental movement.

Environmentalism is an ideology that evokes the necessity and responsibility of humans to respect, protect, and preserve the natural world from its anthropogenic (caused by humans) afflictions.

Environmental awareness is an integral part of the movement's success. By spreading awareness to others that the physical environment is fragile and indispensable, we can begin fixing the issues that threaten it.

Ancient Rajasthani literature, like other Indian literary traditions, demonstrates a deep-seated environmental awareness. This awareness is reflected in the reverence for nature, the depiction of natural elements as divine, and the emphasis on sustainable practices within cultural narratives and religious texts.

The Aravali range is full of its green hills and forest area, which is an important aspect in reducing the carbon sink. The areas of Aravali absorb the Carbon Dioxide from the atmosphere and help with the weather changes in the region. There are a number of programs run by the Government, Government-supported agencies, NGOs, and others to save the Aravali and create awareness amongst the local residents to save the environment. There are some programs run by the Government where a number of trees were supposed to be cut for the installation of Solar Panels for the generation of electricity, whereas the Bishnoi Society opposes the same. India now the highest population in the world, leading even China and subsequently to create and facilitate the population, there is tremendous pressure on the Environment and Forest areas.

Especially in Rajasthan, which is known as RANGILO RAJASTHAN and a famous song even sung in almost all the events, "Kesariya Balam Padharo maro Desh", awareness program has a long history, which creates and attracts people towards Rajasthan. Aravali is the most beautiful part of Rajasthan, rich in Greenery, Flora & Fauna, Minerals, along with many more, and to save the same in an optimum way so that the economy and livelihood can be upgraded in a way to save the environment.

Objective

The research aims to understand how our ancestors have made efforts to date to save the environment and how the efforts of individuals, society, and government have contributed to environmental conservation.

- Efforts in ancient times and awareness processes mentioned in the Vedic literature
- Efforts made in modern relevance by the Society and Government through various initiatives.

Ancient History

The key aspects of Environmental Awareness towards the environment and Mother Earth have a long history in ancient literature and practices in Rajasthan.

Vedic Literature

The Vedas, considered foundational texts, portray the universe as an integrated whole, where natural phenomena are imbued with divinity. The Vedic people recognized the power of natural forces and revered them, fostering a sense of awareness and respect for the environment.

As per the article by Shri J.C. Narayan, it has been proven that in ancient times, people were also aware of the environment. As per Vedic literature, RIGVED it has states that nature is worshipped as a Goddess. In ancient times, people used the wood of Peepal, Chandan, and others in the Yagya significance to the purity of the air. This also emphasized on the conservation of trees, treating them as a God. In Indian culture, it is advised to plant TULSI in every home, at this is the only tree that gives oxygen round the clock.

Interconnectedness of All Beings

Ancient Indian thought emphasized the interconnectedness of all living beings and the environment. This understanding led to the belief that the environment should be protected for the welfare of all.

Emphasis on Harmony

Ancient Indians prioritized adapting to the environment rather than altering it, highlighting a philosophy of living in harmony with nature.

Forests and Ecology

Vedic literature acknowledges the vital role of forests in maintaining ecological balance. The Rigveda, for instance, cautions against cutting down trees, recognizing their role in pollution control.

Jainism

The Jain tradition, with its emphasis on non-violence (Ahimsa), also promotes environmental awareness. Jain teachings, such as those of Jambhoji, the founder of the Bishnoi sect, include rules that prohibit the cutting of green trees and animal slaughter, reflecting a commitment to protecting all living beings and their habitats.

Oral Traditions

Oral literature from Rajasthan also showcases eco-consciousness, with stories and narratives often featuring elements of nature and its influence on human life.

Consequences of Environmental Degradation: The Harappan Civilization's decline, as interpreted by some, is linked to ecological challenges, suggesting an awareness of the potential repercussions of environmental mismanagement.

Gurukul System

The traditional Gurukul system of education, which involved learning in natural surroundings, played a role in fostering environmental awareness from a young age.

Awareness Movement in Modern Relevance

The Bishnoi movement is a notable environmental movement that originated in Rajasthan, India, and is best recognized for its emphasis on tree and wildlife conservation. It was formed in the 15th century by Guru Jambheshwar (Jambhoji), who formulated 29 principles centred on environmental conservation. Amrita Devi and 363 other Bishnois sacrificed themselves in 1730 to prevent trees from being felled by the Maharaja of Jodhpur, which marks a watershed moment in the movement's history. Following this act of martyrdom, the Maharaja declared the Bishnoi lands protected.

The tribals of Rajasthan played an important role in conservation and created an awareness amongst the society to save the environment.

The Bhil tribe of Rajasthan is noteworthy in the environmental movement because of their traditional techniques of sustainable resource management and conservation, notably in water and forests. Their profound grasp of the local ecosystem, along with community-driven efforts, positions them as critical actors in environmental preservation and climate change mitigation. The Bhil society in Rajasthan follows a tradition known as HALMA, which is a traditional custom focused on water conservation and replenishment of subsurface water. They concentrated on preserving ponds, wells, and other water resources while also developing new ones.

The Garasia tribe of Rajasthan plays an important role in environmental movements because of their traditional techniques of forest conservation and sustainable resource management. They have a strong bond with the forest, relying on it for a living and considering it sacred. This relationship promotes a sense of environmental responsibility, which leads to active conservation efforts and opposition to destructive behaviours. In Sirohi district, the Garasia tribe has protected the terrified groves region of the forest, which was on the IUCN's (International Union for Conservation of Nature), red List.

The Meena tribe of Rajasthan is notable in the context of environmental movements because of their traditional ecological expertise, deep contact with the land, and history of opposition to natural resource exploitation. Their cultural traditions and historical conflicts demonstrate the value of indigenous knowledge in conservation efforts.

Apart from the above-mentioned, there are a number of local festivals celebrated in different months which are based on the conservation of Nature, spreading the message for the awareness towards conservation of Environment and flora & Fauna. One festival namely HARIYALI AMAVASYA which focused on the conservation of trees and save the earth. This is celebrated in the month of Sawan in form of Mela where people from different parts gathered together to save the earth. This festival is very famous in Udaipur and celebrated since last 127 years, beginning from 1898. In Ajmer, on the occasion of HARIYALI

AMAVASYA plantation of kalpvriksha and Peepal tree for the prosperity of the family and society. The HARIYALI TEEJ celebrated in the month of Sawan for the prosperity of greenery. The Gangour Festival is celebrated for the prosperity of Nature, especially for the conservation of water.

Piplantri village in Rajsamand district who developed a model and become famous for its pioneering environmental and social program, where 111 trees are planted for every girl born, a practice started by former village head Shyam Sunder Paliwal to promote gender equality and combat soil erosion and water scarcity. This initiative has led to significant improvements, including increased biodiversity, improved water levels, and better livelihoods for the residents. This practice has changed the demography of the Piplantri gained an International recognition in the area of tree plantation and environmental awareness. The farmer Shyam Sunder Paliwal was awarded PADMA SHREE in 2021 from the government of India for the exceptional work in socio environmental change in Rajasthan.

Awareness Program Under the Aegis of the Government of Rajasthan

Environmental awareness programmes in the perspective of Rajasthan In Rajasthan CEE (Centre of Environmental Education) has a project office in Jaipur and Jodhpur and MOEF has appointed consumer unity and trust society (CUTS) Jaipur as the RRA (Regional Resource Agency) for Rajasthan since 2006-07. CUTS Centre for consumer action Research and training (CUTS CART) is entrusted with responsibility of performing as the RRA and implementing all programs of NEAC and NGC Major programmes undertaken by the state as under

- a) NEEPS (National Environment Education Program) for schools, strengthening by Role play and various competitions in Schools, EES project (Environmental Education in the school) Projects School education strengthening Environmental Education in the school system by development of books teaching learning material and teacher training programs and EOSE (Environment orientation in School Education) programs and model through school education.



- b) "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" - The Government of Rajasthan along with various department and school and NGOs are working for plantation of Trees. Recently, at Udaipur on Ratmagiri Hiss area Bhuwana, Udaipur approximately 650 saplings of different categories planted with a target of making the barren land to the Oxygen Pocket in the presence of Udaipur Gramin MLA Shri Phhol Singh Meena.



- (Vaani Sharma, a student of DPS, Udaipur, under the awareness of "Ek Ped Maa ke Naam")

3. **Seed Ball technique Awareness:** In Rajasthan, the Government

has launched seed ball techniques where the school children make a small ball of mud and cow dung and put the seed in the ball. Once the Ball dried, the children used to throw through rubber gulel by hand in barren areas, especially in the rainy Season, to grow the saplings.



(Sanganer Area, Pratap Nagar, Kids Academy Children made 10000 seed balls)

4. **Initiatives by the Local Institutions:** The district administration is also running various programs along with different villages to create awareness amongst the villagers on the Environment and Tree plantation. At Shri Ganganagar, in Fatuhi Village, 50 youths, along with villagers, planted more than 50,000 saplings of different varieties on the occasion of Hariyali Amavasya. The movement is continued since 2018 and till date they have planted many saplings Out of 40,000 saplings have grown and survived as Trees.

Ongoing Programs by the Government of Rajasthan Under the Aegis of Environmental Awareness

Rajasthan's environmental awareness policies have evolved through various stages, starting with the establishment of the Department of Environment in 1983, focused on address environmental concerns and participating in national environmental awareness campaigns like the National Environmental Awareness Campaign (NEAC) launched by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. The Environment (Protection) Act was enacted in 1986 with the objective of providing for the protection and improvement of the environment. Rajasthan Environment Policy of 2010 outlined key environmental challenges and strategies, including the need to address issues like water and air pollution, deforestation, and biodiversity loss.

Tree plantation is a regular activity in Rajasthan and government of Rajasthan attained the highest number of treee plantation amongst the country. Under the scheme "Hariyalo Rajasthan" the government of Rajasthan has a target of plantation of 10 crores trees in FY 2025-26 in Rajasthan.

Forest Area in Rajasthan – A Glance

| Sr. No. | Particulars | Details |
|---------|--|-------------------|
| 01. | Recorded Forest Area | 32,869 sq. km. |
| 02. | Forest Area: Geographical area under forest | 9.60% |
| 03. | Forest Cover: Total forest cover | 16,548.21 sq. km. |
| | Forest cover under very dense forest | 1,270.14 sq. km. |
| | Forest cover under moderately dense forest | 3,842.07 sq. km. |
| 04. | Tree Cover: Total tree cover: | 10,841.12 sq. km. |
| 05. | Total Forest Cover & Tree Cover: Total Forest cover and tree cover | 27,389.33 sq. km. |
| | Total Forest Cover & Tree Cover: Percentage of geographical area under forest and tree cover | 8.00% |

(Source:- India State of Forest Report-2023)

The government of Rajasthan launched various program for the awareness of Environment through several media like

- State Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan The government of Rajasthan has launched its Biodiversity Strategy & Action within the national framework of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan.
- Joint Forest Management In recognition of the importance of people's participation in the protection of forests, the Government of Rajasthan initiated the Joint Forest Management (JFM) programme on degraded, barren, and community lands in 1991. As of 31.3.2007, the government has managed 769895.70 hectares of forest area. In this partnership, communities are allowed usufruct rights from the forests in lieu of protection. These programs are run mainly in village development works.
- Rajasthan Forestry and Bio-diversity Project The objectives of the Rajasthan Forestry and Biodiversity project is to restore the

ecological status of the Aravallis, conserve biodiversity, check desertification, improve moisture regime, and protect infrastructure in the desert areas.

- Harit Aravali Vikas Yojna The forest department of Rajasthan launched "HARIT ARAVALI VIKAS PARIYOJNA" on 19.02.2025 for the compliance of the announcement made in the budget 2025-26. Under the scheme, the forest department has made several policies and procedures to connect the local residents, institutions, and various NGOs to create awareness on the HARIT ARAVALI and environmental concerns for the conservation of forests.
- Eco Tourism Policy 2021 - Under the Rajasthan Eco Tourism Policy, which introduced in 2021 by Government of Rajasthan have focused on sustainable tourism practices, community involvement and conservation of nature and cultural heritage. This policy aims to balance between tourism development and environmental protection and the well being of local communities by organising various tour and tracking programs by the schools and institutions.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Rajasthan, the largest state in Western India, right from the desert to hills and the people of Rajasthan put their efforts since ancient times to save this for the future. The government is putting their all efforts to create an awareness amongst the society, schools and by making of policies and laws. In present scenario, people are migrating from rural to urban area leading the land degradation, cutting of forests and many more which leads to affect the environment. The government of Rajasthan has initiated many of the programs from villages to city to implement and create awareness amongst the people of the society towards the environment and why this is necessary for society on a large scale.

The government has also been moving towards the renewable source of energy especially through Solar System. Government is putting its efforts in making of Solar Plants in Larger areas especially in northern Rajasthan districts but simultaneously the government is cutting a huge number of trees. The suggestion to the Government is to build this Solar plant on Barren Lands and the abandoned mining areas so that the environment could not be harmed.

REFERENCES

- A.N. Mathur, N.S. Rathour, V.K. Vijay – Environmental Awareness
- Verma, S Vadic Studies Bhartiya Prakashan, New Delhi 1-200, 1984
- Narayan, J.C. Vadic solution of modern environmental problem
- Abhilasha Singh, 2002, Sustainable Development & Water Resource Management in dry area, Jhunjhunu district
- Ali, A and Swami, 2002, Agricultural resources of the Rajasthan desert: An assessment
- Saxena, H.M. 2004, Geography of environment and ecology
- D.B.N. Murthy, Environmental Awareness & Protection: A Basic Book on Evs. New Delhi: Deep and Deep publication
- Jaimini Sarkar, "Indian Science through the Ages". Scientific Reporter ,August 2011, pp:8-14
- Ms. Rajani Rao U, ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS IN ANCIENT INDIA. International Journal of Life Sciences Research ISSN 2348-3148 (online) Vol. 2, Issue 2, pp: (1-7), Month: April 2014 - June 2014
- Dr. Ravi, ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS IN ANCIENT INDIA: AN ANALYSIS, International Journal of Education and Science Research Review, Volume-9, Issue-5 Sep - Oct -2022
- "Hinduism - Gods and Goddess in the Vedas." n.d. Accessed February 22, 2018. <http://www.hinduwebsite.com/hinduism/vedicgods.asp>.
- Sharma, B. K.; Kulshreshtha, Seema; Rahmani, Asad R. (2013-09-14). Faunal Heritage of Rajasthan, India: General Background and Ecology of Vertebrates. Springer Science & Business Media. p. 482. ISBN 9781461408000.
- "Environmental Protection During Ancient and Medieval Periods Law General Essay." n.d. Accessed April 14, 2019. <https://www.uniassignment.com/essaysamples/law/environmentalprotection-during-ancient-andmedieval-periods-law-general-essay.php>.
- Rajasthan State Environment Policy, 2010
- https://environment.rajasthan.gov.in/content/dam/environment/RPCB/Reports%20n%20Papers/ClimateChange_09_04_2012.pdf