

Biocentric Resources in Our Indigenous Knowledge: Special Focus on Bengali Proverbs

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Abstract: According to biocentrism, all living organisms have moral status. At first, biocentric view has been found in the Eastern religion Jainism. In the West, the first prominent exponent to advocate this notion was Albert Schweitzer. He introduces a view of reverence for life, and all living beings have a will to live. In nineties, Paul Taylor presents a sophisticated version of biocentrism. This article attempts to show that our indigenous knowledge is full of biocentric resources. Bearing this sense in mind, different section of this article searches conceptual resources of biocentrism in our popular proverbs. Therefore, present research come to the conclusion that different indigenous groups and folk people are living and believing biocentrism as their means of belief as well survival of daily life.

Introduction:

This article intends to show how proverbs and ethnic culture contains biocentric ideas in their expressions and wordings. In doing so, present article attempts to spell out the answer to this question: What functions do Bengali proverbs and ethnic culture play in providing knowledge of biocentrism? Section-2 of this article focuses a simple analysis of indigenous knowledge. The second part focuses on Bengali proverbs in as much depth as possible to find out the reflection of biocentrism.

2.0 Biocentric Resources

There are different sorts of ethical theories in environmental ethics, which can be divided into two major segments: the first one is termed as anthropocentrism and the second one as non-anthropocentrism. Non-anthropocentrism searches to find out an answer to this question: Who or what has moral standing? In contrary to non-anthropocentrism, different versions and forms of anthropocentrism uphold a view that only human beings have moral standing. But, as a notion, it has been criticized by many environmentalists. Commonly, the central point of this criticism states that human superiority does not imply that other non-human beings are of no value of life. In criticizing the view, critics also argue that each

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of the non-human beings has intrinsic value. Having intrinsic value requires that we should consider their interest to life.

What has moral standing? In order to understand the term biocentrism, it is essential to find out the answer to this question. Already, we have been shown that anthropocentrism concentrating weigh the value of human beings only. But, the nature and its surroundings have important component of human livings. For example, in some way if we collapse the inhalation of oxygen, human beings will not survive for a moment. Oxygen as a component of nature helps human beings to survive. Without taking care of this component of nature, it is quite impossible to continue the life of human beings. Therefore, the value of human beings is not meaningful without sharing help of other components of nature. As such, it is wise to say that human beings, animals, living and non-living beings of nature have survived themselves interdependently. Everything is related to everything else.

Bio-centric journey has its origin from sentient beings. Those who have sentience, they have right to live.¹ And, therefore, it is morally wrong to wantonly kill or torture or injure them. Right based ethicist Tom Regan² argues the same points in a different way. He argues that all sentient beings are subject-of-life. In favor of subject-of-life, he states:

"[It] involves more than merely being alive and more than merely being conscious. ... individuals are subjects-of-a-life if they have beliefs and desires; perception, memory, and a sense of the future, including their own future; an emotional life together with feelings of pleasure and pain; preference- and welfare-interests; the ability to initiate action in pursuit of their desires and goals; a psychophysical identity over time; and an individual welfare in the sense that their experiential life fares well or ill for them, logically independently of their utility for others and logically independently of their being the object of anyone else's interests."³

¹ Singer, Peter, 1975/1976. *Animal Liberation*. New York : Avon Books

² Regan, Tom, 1983. *The Case for Animal Rights*, USA: University of California Press.

³ Regan 1983, p. 243.

This view is relevant to animal rights. But, the concept of "subject-of-a-life" criterion is the first theoretical basis of biocentrism. However, this is true that Regan has failed to extend this view beyond the sentient being only. He would have been a consistent environmental theorist if he had held that not only animals but also beings those who can satisfy the notion of "subject-of-life" have "inherent value." And, this inherent value would be the only basis of biocentrism, a clue we have found in Regan's animal right philosophy.

This is in our mind that biocentrism is a life-centric view. It brings a view that all living beings have inherent value. Because of their "inherent value" all living organisms should be treated equally. Hence they have an equal right to life. The bio-centric journey or extension of moral values can be shown through the following diagram:

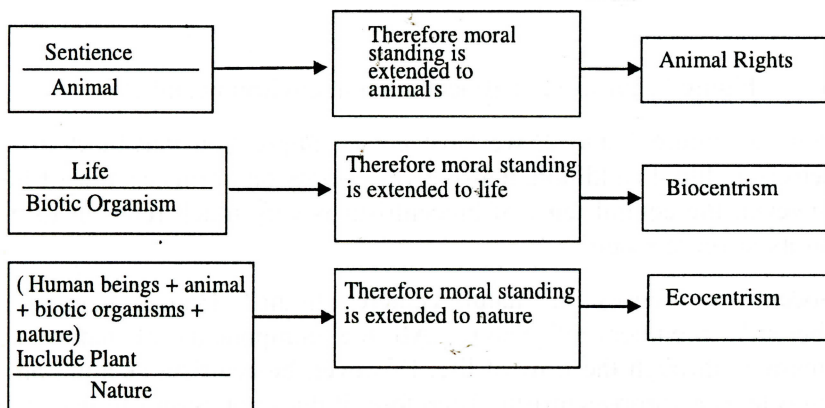


Figure 1: Extension of morality

The stages of expansion of life could be understood more clearly in the following cycle :

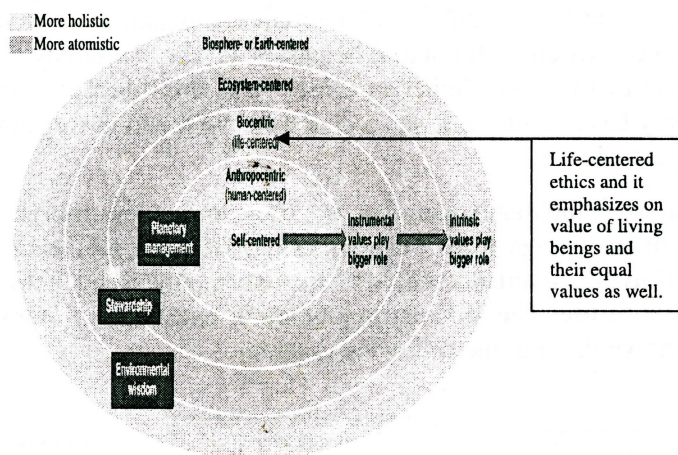


Figure 2: Position of Biocentrism in environmental ethics

From the figure 1 and 2, we have got an impression that biocentrism focuses on life. In addition, it also gives priority on intrinsic value of life. However, the central tenet of biocentrism is very much relevant to life and its intrinsic value.

Biocentrism focuses on "nature-centered living". Human beings are inherently members of Nature. All the components of nature are integrated through the flow of life. However, biocentrism as a notion is opposite to anthropocentrism. Therefore, it does not permit to use other components of Nature for consumption of human beings; rather it considers non-human species as equally valuable in Nature. For example, we should protect natural beings or different species from extinctions. However, this is clear to us that like other species or organisms, human beings are also an integral part of world life cycle.

There are different expressions of biocentrism. In western tradition, Aristotle's virtue ethics is a philosophical basis of biocentrism. He stresses that each of the life has inherent worth. A different version can be found in Schweitzer's modern versions of life. His notion of "reverence for life" is known as a most developed form of biocentrism. Paul Taylor's⁴ view is known as egalitarian biocentrism. It is biocentrism because it

⁴ Taylor, Paul, 1986. *Respect for Nature*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 99-100.

upholds that human are member of earth's community of life as the other things are member of that community of life too. Even the survival of each member depends on its relations to other living organisms. It is egalitarian, because this notion holds that every living being has equal intrinsic value. It also agrees with the view that "all organisms have teleological centers of life in the sense that each is a unique individual pursuing its own good in its own way."⁵ Biocentric pluralism argues that life has different expression, and different expressions have different degrees of values. It also upholds that only human should not be treated as superior over the other living organisms. All organisms should be treated as equal overall to other living organisms. Recently James Lovelock and Lawrence develop a new form of biocentrism.

According to Lovelock, the earth is full of life and they have mutual interaction. The term biocentrism is used in James E Lovelock's book *Gaia: a New Look at Life on Earth*. He proposes a new formation of hypothesis which holds a view that living and non-living organisms of this earth⁶ are closely connected to form a "self-regulatory complex system"⁷. This regulatory process maintains the condition for life on the earth. The same urge already has been found in the Humberto Maturana's notion of autopoiesis.⁸ It also indicates that the earth and its living organisms have an interacting process that has an inter-dependent relationship.

⁵ Taylor, Paul, 1986, p.100.

⁶ Lovelock, J.E., 1982. *Gaia : a New Look at Life on Earth*, Nature, Vol. 295, January 7 : 1.

⁷ "Biocentrism" available in <http://www.seas.harvard.edu/climate/eli/Courses/EP281r/Sources/Gaia/Gaia-hypothesis-wikipedia.pdf>.

⁸ Aristotle was pioneer of this notion. In his philosophy of natural philosophy, Aristotle holds a view that every living being has capacity to develop by its own self.

On the other hand, different expressions of biocentrism can be shown here through the following diagram:

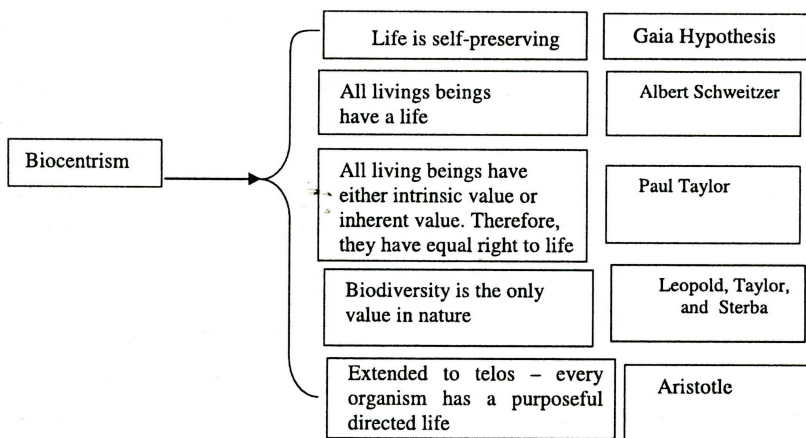


Figure 3: Different versions of biocentrism

The diagram gives us an impression that all living components of nature are equal, having their intrinsic or inherent value and having values implies that they have a right to life. In that sense, biocentrism gives emphasis on biodiversity and it assumes the highest value for living organisms. As a notion, it also holds that all living organisms in the nature are centers of life.

However, as a notion biocentrism has lots of inner force that can be useful for saving the nature from dangerous anthropocentric worldview. Though, we cannot avoid the drawbacks of this notion. Firstly, human beings are treated from outside of natural process. In the same manner, a serious dichotomy between human beings and nature has drawn sharply. When biocentrists emphasize on "life" they consider it equally, but it requires to consider that the difference between "life of human beings" and "life of an ant" is important. In our daily life, while we are walking, ploughing a land, hundred of worms, ants and various kinds of animal life are being killed. But, none of a human right activist or biocentrists ever claims that killing of "life" has occurred in agriculture which is one kind of massacre. As we attribute the term genocide for the killing of the mass people of Bangladesh in 71, in Herzegovina, in the second World War and recently in Iraq, we do not consider the killing as such.

In fact, Nature and natural balance is not considered in biocentrism. In natural system predation and killing are very simple phenomena for

survival of the wild animal. Food cycle and natural process need to continue only because of their mutual existence of life. Suppose, in a forest if number of deer increase rapidly that would create food scarcity, or causes of deforestation there. Therefore, other wild carnivores would target them as a food, thus a balance of animals in the forest may be maintained on the basis of mutual taking of life. Therefore, all the time mutual interdependency is not a kind of solidarity, rather sometimes hostility, conflicting competition, and adversarial as a means of natural state of affairs.

Biocentrism considers ethical values which indicate to preserve the value of environment. Such a view is problematic in the sense that living beings are considered in biocentrism as central focus isolated from the whole environment. Suppose, when we ask a biocentrist which of the value we should have to give priority? Number of biocentrists would have possibly to give emphasis on value of living beings. Hence, it may cause conflicting relationship between living beings and environment. We know there are lots of components such as stone, soil, sand, water, mountain and plants, which are not treated in biocentrism as living beings. The survival and existence of living beings cannot be thought of a moment without helping of the other living and non-living beings. For example, animal's life cannot exist without taking water. So, the claim of Gaia hypothesis is accurately true that there is interactive relationship between living and non-living organisms. In that sense biocentric exposition is a contradictory ecological notion.

However, Irrespective of all sorts of criticism, biocentrism has lot of significance. Firstly, the true versions of biocentrism can be found in Indian religious scriptures, ethnic and indigenous knowledge. Therefore, we may construe a new paradigm of biocentric environmentalism in south Asian context on the basis of their local knowledge and religious belief. Keeping this idea in mind; I have searched two ethnic communities: Oraons and Chakma, and Bengali proverbs as a conceptual source of biocentrism.

2.1 Indigenous Knowledge

Indigenous knowledge is often been treated as an alternative knowledge of modern scientific research. As a pattern of knowledge, indigenous knowledge is local and has specialty to a given society that has particular tradition of culture and convention. Sometimes our scientific knowledge may have failed to facilitate the local problem, or may be harmful to our

health, and environmental integrity. Ellen and Harris mention some comprehensive characteristics of indigenous knowledge. However, local knowledge, folk knowledge, ethno-knowledge and traditional knowledge have often been known as indigenous knowledge. Sometimes, it is also regarded as an approach of people's science.⁹ Among the academics, the importance of this science is gradually increasing. Some exponents succinctly observed such an urge in these following lines:

"Knowledge produced by universities and research institutes around the world is gathered, documented and disseminated in a coherent and systematic way. The same should be done with community-based, local or indigenous knowledge [which] should be included alongside the more usual scientific knowledge."¹⁰

However, indigenous knowledge has great contribution to the development of our main-stream knowledge. In the case of maintaining environmental integrity, indigenous knowledge has enough capacity to reinforce it. Particularly, in our ethnic cult, proverbs and local knowledge bear lot of ecological senses that are helpful to realize the nature.

Recent story of environmental degradation is a very well-concerned phenomenon. Over consumptive attitude, industrialization, excessive use of fossil fuel, and processing of natural resources are the main reasons of this degradation. Most of our indigenous knowledge acknowledges the relationship between nature and humanity. But, our consumptive life style, invention of new techniques for processing natural resources for our use, burning the fuel, and discharging atomic energy are the factors that have separated humanity from nature. Anthropogenic activities over the last few decades have severely affected the relationship between humanity and nature and life-supporting ecosystems. This is why it is essential to go back to the indigenous life style.

This urge can be supported by Vandana Shiva's analysis. In her theory, Shiva mentions that there are three economic policy: nature's economy, sustenance economy, and market economy. Nature's economy and

⁹ Ellen, R. and Harris, H., 1996. "Concepts of Indigenous Environmental Knowledge in Scientific and Development Studies Literature - A Critical Assessment", draft paper East-West Environmental Linkages Network Workshop 3, Canterbury, pp.1, 3.

URL : http://lucy.ukc.ac.uk/Rainforest/SML_files/Occpap/indigknow.occpap_TOC.html.

¹⁰ Brokensha et al. 1993. Indigenous Knowledge and Development Monitor, vol. 1(3).

sustenance economy are the vital economies, but from the development point of view market economy is the priority.¹¹ Through the following diagram, we can show these types of economies practice:

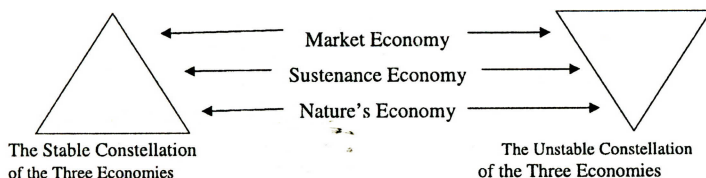


Figure 4 : Different Types of Economy¹²

Shiva views that market economy is the culprit for ecological crisis. According to Shiva, environmental injustice comes to the scenario when market economy is recognized as the basic economy. In the ideology of development, natural products are brought into the market economy as raw material for commodity production. In this case, reductionism becomes the important characteristic, and natural resources are seen as a commodity and means of production. Conservation is reduced to "wilderness" management. Natural resources do not exist anymore because of privatization and patenting.

There is another effective economic system known as sustenance economy, which involves the economy of the two-thirds of the humanity engaged in craft production, peasant agriculture, artisan fishing, and indigenous forest economies. However, the sustenance economy is a place where people work to provide the conditions necessary to maintain their lives.

In terms of ecological sense, the first type of economic policy is despotic. In this economic policy, the efficiency and productivity of industrial agriculture, depletion of soils, exploitation of groundwater, erosion, and extinction of biodiversity are happening in nature.¹³ Moreover, climate crisis could lead to social and political conflicts in society while their natural resources and survival are at stake. On the other hand, sustenance economy is anthropocentric. As a theory, anthropocentrism holds that human beings are the most significant part of this world and that non-human nature exists only to sub-serve human beings. From the value

¹¹ Shiva, Vandana, 2005. *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, pp.13-72.

¹² Shiva, 2005: 52.

¹³ Shiva, 2005: 32

perspective, this notion holds that human beings are the center of all values and all values originate from humans. The rest of the beings, i.e. non-human and objects, have value only in relation to human beings. Some exponents also believe that human beings are the higher creation of this world, the rest of the creatures are the means of their survival. Sustainable economic policy does not consider nature from the perspective of ecological balance. Therefore, the present study likes to reject such kind of economic policy as a source of human-centric worldview.

Indigenous knowledge is consistent with the third type of economy: nature's economy. In this regard, Shiva upholds it as the first economy. Natural resources, through a complex network of ecological processes, provide people's basic need. Nature's economy consists of the production of goods and services by Nature. Such an ecological norm we find in our indigenous knowledge and proverbs. An example can be given here from Shiva's explanation. For example, she explores the living soil in her most recent book, *Soil Not Oil*. She describes how soil has its own way to fertilize itself and how important is the role of earthworms. Earthworms contribute to soil fertility by maintaining soil structure, aeration, and drainage. She quotes Darwin who was amazed at the role of earthworms. The invisible work of earthworms shows an example of the importance of nature with the complexities-in the economy.¹⁴ This view is also prevalent in indigenous knowledge from a different perspective.

However, it may be a question whether indigenous knowledge is effective or not for a course of time. An objection has come from Agarwal. He argues that indigenous knowledge is local and emerges on the basis of local people's beliefs. Sometimes these are constructed on the basis of local people's irrational emotion as well as their common sense. Not only that, indigenous knowledge is also scattered by nature. Agarwal states:

"... indigenous knowledge is inherently scattered and local in character, and gains its vitality from being deeply implicated in people's lives, then the attempt to essentialize, isolate, archive and transfer such knowledge can only seem contradictory."¹⁵

To some extent, proverbs and indigenous knowledge are not only basic but also authentic sources of knowledge. But, in both the perceptions, we

¹⁴ Shiva, 2008, pp. 110-114.

¹⁵ Agarwal, A. 1995. *Indigenous Knowledge and Development*, Monitor, 3(3), 5.

may get some clue of solutions of the problem. In fact, local people's experience has value to construct a new knowledge. Not only that, most of the local knowledges are eco-friendly. This is why, these two means of knowledge have been chosen as the basis of biocentrism.

3.0 In this section, focus have been given on two means of indigenous knowledge and proverbs.

3.1 Biocentrism in Bengali Proverbs

In Bengali culture, proverbs and bachans have a common pithy use. It contains local ways of thought, cultural conditions, local people's belief and response to their nature and neighborhood. Proverbs are found all over the world. Sometimes the knowledge and content of proverbs or adages are all the same, but their meaning, significance and cultural expressions are different in manners. However, almost all the bachans contain some comment about life, nature, and our social life based on common sense or experiences of local people. If we seriously search the inner meaning of a particular proverb, it is not difficult to find out the cultural, social, ethical and religious belief of that particular area. Even, historical, geographical and political background of a particular nation is also found on the proverbs.

In Bengali proverb, social reality is metaphorically expressed by using nature and its objects. In most of the cases, these natural objects or phenomena reflect the concept of life with animistic approach. Even the plants and their medicinal impact on health are also expressed through the proverbs. In one of the proverbs, it has been said that "neem jatha, manush ki morey tatha" (if there is neem tree, there is no event of human death).¹⁶ This proverb reflects a view that the neem tree is very beneficial and should be planted near house. Around the countryside, people have enough consciousness for plantation of neem trees. Planting neem trees at the south-side of a house is a provision of rural people. In Indian system of treatment Ayurveda often called this tree as means of cure of all ills and ailment (in Bengali it is often called "Sarva Roga Nivarini"). However, neem has become a life-sustenance means in Bengali's culture.

We can refer another proverb: "Gacher bakol, mayer anchol"¹⁷. In this proverb bark of trees (gacher bakol) is being compared with the affection

¹⁶ Zamir, Muhammad. 2003. Anthology of Bengali Proverbs and Bachans. Dhaka: Bangla Academy, p. 26.

¹⁷ Zamir. 2003. p.28.

and love of mother (mayer anchol). Naturally the bark of the tree can protect the trees life; similarly, every mother loves her children. In Bengali culture ancala is the marginal side of woman's cloth. Acala has often been referred to as kindness and affection of mother. Here, bark has been compared with ancala. This comparison reflects an idea that mother's affection is a requirement for children's development; similarly bark is the protection of the life of trees. Both the cases the importance of life has taken a place.

We may follow some proverbs which have got significance of meaning in life:

(i) "Jaar achey mati, tarey nahi aati" (if anybody has land/ no body can defeat him)

(ii) "Jodi hobey khatti/ tabey ho mati" (soil has capacity of tolerance).¹⁸

Both the proverbs explore an important significance. Firstly, in Bengali culture land is a symbol of power; it can make people strengthen in any respect. Secondly, soil/land in Bengali culture is the symbol of tolerance: all-enduring and the sources of all life. Trees, grain, vegetables and many essential things are produced there. We harvest crops by ploughing land/soil. Land is also greening the world which maintains the life for all living beings on earth. But, she does not keep herself aloof from us in any reasons from her affectionate contribution.

These adages also suggest that a person should be as tolerant as the soil. In Bengali's life, the 'tolerance' and 'life' are used dynamically. That also reflects its mystical thought of pattern. If we focus on the three main religious beliefs, we will (Tantric/Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam) find tolerance that has historically influenced the people of this region. Veda, particularly the views of Rig-Veda is source of Nature and life. It explained beauty of Nature and life which extremely brings poetic values. Most verses of Rigveda recall the name of Natural elements such as water, earth, air, rain, sun and light. Rita and Varuna represent the law and governor of this cosmos respectively. As a law of the Universe, Rita governs everything in this Universe spontaneously. The universe cannot be manifested without playing that role of Rita. In Veda the deity Varuna is a lord of Rita. He keeps the Universe in order and under His control. The heaven and earth are held together. In Veda, the deity Varuna

¹⁸ Zamir, 2003, pp. 32, 35.

represents as a conscious force of balancing and ordering of the natural forces in environment.

The central point of Buddhist ethics is respect for life. The karma of sentient being can alter the Nature. Karma in Buddhism fosters the relationship between mental and physical activities. In fact, Buddhist karma-based ethics depends on the principle of ahimsa (non-violence) and respect for life. The first principle ahimsa suggests not killing or injuring any form of life, and the second principle is to respect for life. It does not imply only to respect for human beings, but it also refers to the respect for all sorts of manifestation of life on the earth. The most important thing in Buddhism is purification of mind and actions. If one's mind is purified, certainly his/her actions must be purified. Such purification helps one to lead a more peaceful life in relation to Nature.

The central point of Jainism is not so far from Vedic and Buddhist tradition. Ahimsa is common in all of the Indian religious tradition. Life and Nature appears in Jainism with a great tie. In the proclamation of Mahavira: "One who neglects or disregards the existence of earth, air, fire, water and vegetation disregards his own existence which is entwined with them." According to them, all forms of life are mutually interdependent. The term *Parasparopagraho jivanan* refers to interdependency. They hold a view that life is an integrated form as they terms it *Parasparopagraho jivanan*. All components of living earth belong together and they are bound in a mutual relationship.

Hinduism and Jainism also have become the main resources of our thought construction. In the name of *Vokti* (reverence) and mystic propagation of Vaishnavism, *Sohjiya* and sufi traditions in fact reveal the notion of dignity towards creatures. Belief of tolerance can be found in their vegetarian insight. They do not accept meat, fish, and egg in their food-menu. But, they also acknowledge vegetable plants as living things. Vaishnav tradition had got this lesson from the life of Krishna. In the holy *Bhagavadgita* Krishna utters that if anybody entertains Him with love and devotion of vegetarian food, He will take it. It reflects a view that Vaishnavism has received this insight from *Bhagavadgita*. However, the lesson of *Vokti* tradition brings two things: firstly it teaches us to lead our life according to the standard of conduct and morality; secondly it takes into consideration "life of all living beings". However, *vokti* in this area teaches us to live in harmony with the universe. In the inner sense of the above proverbs (i & ii) brings the same sense that is ingrained in

Voktivada. At a time it teaches us to lead a life with tolerance and get importance in life. In fact these two proverbs would be a suitable example of biocentrism which reflects on social and Natural sphere.

The social life is also reflected in many Bengali proverbs. The following proverbs can be mentioned in this regard :¹⁹

- (i) "Ajharo kola bajaroto jai" (If planted in Ashar, a banana plant has a bumper harvest)
- (ii) "Ashini kurostey osta nashtam" (if it rains in Ashwin, it destroys the harvest)
- (iii) "Maghey mukhi, Falguney chukhi/ Chaitey lata/ Baishakhey pata." (One should plant arum during Magh for best results. Planted either in Chaitro or Baisahakh, the plant will have more leaves than vegetables content.)

All these proverbs are related to our agriculture. Through these, people can realize the time-table of their harvesting. The inner meaning of these proverbs also brings a sense that natural seasons and productivity are identical in terms of harvesting crops. In other words, life is determined by Nature. If we cultivate particular crops in odd-season it will not give us proper and satisfactory result. It implies that the strength of life and its reproductive force are determined by Natural system. These proverbs establish an experience based knowledge aroused from mass people within their direct study of Nature.

Present study has used in the questionnaires some significant Bengali proverbs. Here, I have taken 30 people from different groups. At the beginning, I classified these groups into three: each group included ten people both educated and illiterate. The first group consisted of graduates, the second group was below matriculation and third group was illiterate. The following tables show the Bengali proverbs that are used in the questionnaires :²⁰

Table 1: Public response to the proverbs

Education level	profession	Total Number	Equivalent Answer	Percentage
Graduate	School Teacher	10	8	80%
Under matriculation	Land Lord	10	7	70%
illiterate	Farmer	10	9	90%

¹⁹ Zamir, 2003, pp. 222, 223.

²⁰ See index -I

Some proverbs can be mentioned here which represent the "life" and biocentric approach:

(iv) Jotro Jiva Totro Shiva (Where there is life there is Shiva).²¹

Bengal was a part of greater India before 1200 A.D and most of the people were the followers of Vedic or Budha religion. The concept of Shiva and Sakti are much adored in this local area. Shiva is also a symbol of sakti (power).²² On the other hand, Jiva means a living being. Shiva is the cause of mukti (salvation) as well the cause of bondhan (bondage) of this jiva. Sometimes, Shiva plays the role of the creator of jiva. In order to get the kind of Lord Shiva, at first Jiva knows the pattern of his relationship with Shiva. He realizes the prana (life) in his body and Shiva exists within that life. Prana (life) and body are identical. If there is no prana, there is no life or Shiva. Without life, the body is only corps and that body cannot perform any activities even. In the proverb, the name of heavenly deity Shiva and jiva for life has got importance.

(v) "Kaley ful no poya pani, dhanmora adho beej jobani"

In this Bengali proverb, life of crops has got great emphasis. The proverb reflects a view of agro-based agriculture. It means that if we do not irrigate the paddy plant at the time of their growth, it affects production of the rice seeds within their kernels.

(vi) "Jiban jiban anne" (Life brings life/There is no life without life)

This proverb shows connectivity amongst lives - a life, how tiny it may be co-exists with each other, and an integral part of the total life-cycle on earth. One life enhances the other life. If there is no life, and no interdependency, it is quite impossible to think a life.

The conception of life and its connectivity appears in this proverb as the life science already has proved. To the above proverbs a group of people's responses are made through the following table:

²¹ Rahman, Muhammad Habibur, Bachon O Probachon (Sentence and Proverb), Dhaka : Somoy, p. 65.

²² Sivananda, Sri Swami, 2000. Lord Siva and His Worship, Uttar Pradesh, India : The Divine Life Socceity, p. URL : WWW site: <http://www.SivanandaDlshq.org>

Table 2: Public response to the proverbs (iv, v, vi)

Education level	profession	Total Number	Equivalent Answer	Percentage
Graduate	School Teacher	10	9	90%
Under matriculation	Land Lord	10	7	70%
illiterate	Farmer	10	8	80%

Comparison between two sets of proverbs can be shown in the following:

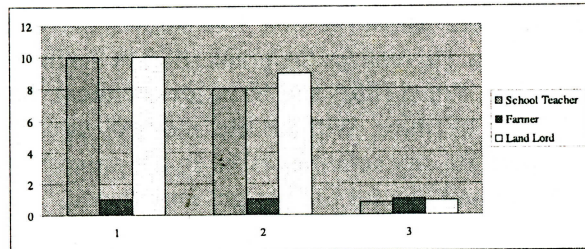


Figure 1 : For Table 1

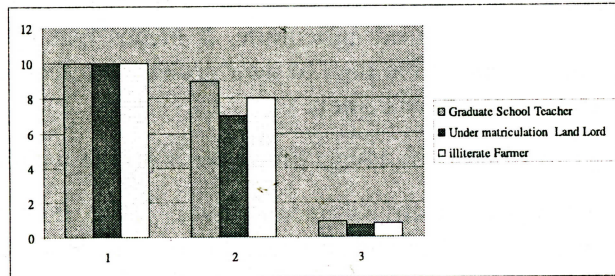


Figure 2 : For Table 2

Figure 1 and 2 shows some data of public response to proverbs. The first table contains some issues of agricultural experiences of common people. In this process, farmer involvement is direct, therefore, the importance of life and agro-learning are affirmed by this group of people. Where land lord and school teacher (here, I took interview of 10 teachers from non-urban areas/ village area) do not keep enough knowledge in this regard. But, in the second table, most proverbs are involved with our spiritual or mystic knowledge. In this regard, school teacher are more familiar with this proverb and their respondent percentage is high compared to the group of people of farmers. It means proverbs have some sensitive responses; accordingly such responses are coming from a particular group of people. For example, knowledge on agricultural seasons and its

correspondent crops are very much essential for farmer. In a similar manner, school teacher are involved with the processes of knowledge.

Now, we will focus on some other Bengali proverbs which reflects a view of blood relationship. In the social life, these relationships affirm in our various scripts and literatures. Blood connection implies a view of mutual dependency and relationship. It is common in our rural life that a neighbor might look after his relatives as well as the children of neighbor. Not only that sharing pain and pleasure, inviting on different ceremonial occasions, exchanging ideas and advice, seeking cooperation in case of danger are very common phenomena in our daily life. In our rituals, customs and belief such neighborhood are also affirmed in the context of Nature. However, in the context of nature, neighborhood implies interdependency of different natural objects. This interdependency is the essence of biocentrism. For example, we can look into the following proverbs:

(i) "khet lakhirey airona, ma lakhirey chairona"²⁴

The proverb reflects a view that nobody should leave his or her land and mother in any circumstance. Land can serve his/her desire for food; on the other hand mother would serve his/her family's well-being. However, the inner meaning of this proverb is related to the significance of relationship. We can mention another one:

(ii) "Macher panitey lau barey/ dheno matitey jhal barey"²⁵

In this proverb, it has been advised that the gourd plants grow better if anyone pours fish-washed water on their roots. Similarly, it is being advised in the second phrase that fermented paddy should be used as fertilizer for the chilly field. However, appropriateness of natural components and their proper way of growth are being emphasized here. To some extent, inter relevancy or interdependency of objects of nature are the key.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

Indigenous knowledge and proverbs both have a particular role in developing a sense and responsibility towards nature and its fellow beings. In proverbs, we have found lots of ideals and advice to preserve the Nature and life of animals. Here, it is necessary to mention that the

²⁴ Zamir. 2003. p.182.

²⁵ Zamir. 2003. p.182.

Bengali and its different ethnic society's social structure is dependent on solidarity and integrity. This approach can be found in our proverbs and also in religious beliefs of the ethnic community. In order to achieve their goal, Bengal people use their proverbs. A common and popular use of proverb is "when you face any problem seek help from your relative, neighbors or others without any embarrassment." However, proverbs represent life, social solidarity, and also reflect public experiences, their customs, conventions and the way of looking at their social and natural surroundings.

This article has shown that through proverbs we reflect our attitudes towards society, nature and people's values. In the context of environmentalism, Bengali proverbs have much significance and important roles to express their biocentric outlook. Some selected proverbs mentioned in this article have conveyed specific values. From this analysis, this article comes to a conclusion that proverbs can play essential role in our real life situation, as such, it can help us make a sense of ecological perception. In construing biocentric ecological sense, some proverbs are more effective than any other normative or pedagogical means. That outcome of proverbs comes from the experience of the local people. On the other hand, the proverbs mentioned in this article are considered as a corner stone of the Bengali culture and social life as well.

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