



The Hindu has no authority over creatures of the earth. God (Brahman) is the efficient cause and nature, Prakrti, is the material cause of the universe. However, this division is non-dualistic in nature. They are one in the same, or perhaps better stated, they are the one in the many and the many in the one.

Despite western assertion that Hinduism is polytheistic in nature, this sort of polytheism is actually monotheistic in nature. While the Divine is manifest in many, the many are all and no less than, but not equal to the Divine.

While Hindus are not given the sort of authority over nature and creation that Judeo-Christian God grants, they are subject to a higher and more authoritative responsibility for creation. The most important aspect of this is the doctrine of ahimsa, non-violence. Faith in this doctrine is comprehensive, Yajnavalkya Smirti warns, "the wicked person who kills animals which are protected has to live in hell fire for the days equal to the number of hairs on the body of that animal."

This doctrine's most important aspect pertains to the belief that the Supreme Being incarnates in to forms of various species.

The Hindu belief in samsara, the cycle of life, death, and rebirth encompasses reincarnation into

forms other than human. It is believed that one lives 84,000 lifetimes before one becomes a man. Each species is in this process of samsara until one attains moksha, liberation. The Hindu religious goal of moksha is not salvation, and does not require forgiveness, but detachment from the material world. Though one might argue that such a goal in essence rejects the natural world as having value, the Hindu goal is to liberate one from the self, from the illusion of the material world as being separate and individual.

A second doctrinal Hindu source for treatment of all life and nature is found in the Rig Veda. The Rig Veda regarded trees and plants as possessing divine healing properties, and it is still popularly believed that every tree has a Vriksha-devata, a tree deity. They are ritually worshiped with prayer, offerings, and the sacred thread ceremony. The Vriksha-devata are not worshiped as gods, but as manifestations of the Divine. Tree planting is considered a religious duty.

Modern Hindu Ecological Movements:

The Chipko Movement- in March of 1973 in Gopeshwar, India, villagers formed a human chain and hugged trees marked to be cut down for the development of a sports equipment factory. Since then, the Chipko Andolan (movement to hug trees) as grown as a Hindu ecological movement.

<http://hollys7.tripod.com/religionandecology/id4.html>