

Eco-Doctrinal Dissonance, Epistemic Myopia, and the Oligarchocene: Explaining the Gap Between Scriptural Ecologism and Environmental Practice in India

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Abstract

The paper examines the paradox of environmental disequilibrium in India despite rich eco-ethical injunctions within Hindu scriptural traditions. Drawing upon close readings of texts such as the Isha Upanishad, Bhagavad Gita, Atharvaveda, Upanishadic renunciatory traditions, Dharmasūtras, and Manusmriti, the paper argues that these traditions do articulate ecological and ethical insights but somehow, they do not quite seem to consolidate into binding socio-material norms—a condition that can be termed as eco-doctrinal dissonance. This dissonance is further compounded by epistemic ecological myopia, wherethrough the masses lack a full-scale systemic understanding of ecological processes and downstream effects, that generally serve to obscure the consequences of environmentally harmful practices. The paper situates these contradictions within the framework of the oligarchocene, underscoring how contemporary politico-economic structures instrumentalize religion through mechanisms of temptation, coercion, spectacle, and consumerist mobilization. The net result is a form of performative religiosity that remains scripturally anchored yet ecologically diffuse, ethically fragmented, and materially ineffective. In essence, the paper argues that India's ecological crisis emerges not so much from the absence of environmental ethics as from the fragmentation of ethical consciousness across symbolic, institutional, epistemic, and economic domains.

This study employs a qualitative interpretative methodology based on close textual reading and comparative hermeneutic analysis of select Hindu scriptures. Drawing on ecocriticism, environmental sociology, and political ecology, it attempts to examine the gap between scriptural ecological imagination and contemporary environmental realities in India. Rather than trying to establish historical causes of this crisis or measuring environmental behaviour or treating these texts as manuals for environmental governance, the paper leans more towards offering a conceptual explanation for the limited success achieved in turning scriptural environmental values into ecological practice. Therefore, the scope is limited to explaining the gap, and it does not attempt to establish any specific correlation between scriptural injunctions and environmental outcomes.

Keywords: eco-doctrinal dissonance; epistemic ecological myopia; oligarchocene; Hindu environmental ethics; ritual economy; downstream externalities; performative religiosity

Introduction

India's environmental crisis poses a striking conceptual conundrum. A civilization that sacralizes rivers, forests, mountains, animals, and the Earth itself simultaneously experiences severe

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ecological degradation--polluted rivers, toxic urban air, biodiversity collapse, groundwater depletion, extractive urbanization, plastic saturation, and unsustainable developmental expansion. The question that arises is: why is it that in India all the scriptural injunctions and edicts appear to have failed to translate into effective ecological responsibility? The paradox has often been framed as contradiction between traditional ecological wisdom and modern environmental crisis (Gadgil and Guha). Of course, these formulations do draw attention to some important aspects of the problem; yet, they tend to slip into oversimplification.

Scholars of religion and ecology have long sought for ecological resources within Hindu traditions. Lance Nelson, an American scholar of Hindu religion and ecological thought, argues that Hindu thought contains powerful conceptual foundations for ecological responsibility, particularly through its emphasis on interconnectedness, restraint, and the sacredness of life (Nelson). Likewise, Christopher Key Chapple, in a similar rummaging of religions, has identified ahimsā (non-violence), aparigraha (non-possession), and self-restraint as ethical principles capable of generating ecologically sustainable modes of existence (Chapple). Vasudha Narayanan, a leading scholar of Hinduism focusing on lived experience of religious practices, demonstrates how rivers, forests, mountains, animals, and landscapes are integrated into sacred geographies that cultivate relationships of reverence toward the natural world (Narayanan). Likewise, Vandana Shiva, drawing more on political economy, has repeatedly drawn attention to indigenous and religious traditions that resist extractive developmental models and affirm ecological reciprocity (Shiva, *Earth Democracy*).

However, contemporary realities often appear to challenge such celebratory accounts of scriptural ecologism. The Ganga and Yamuna, for instance, continue to receive huge quantities of sewage and pollutants despite their sacred status. Pilgrimage events also generate substantial ecological burdens in the form of waste accumulation, resource consumption, and infrastructural expansion. Urban regions that preserve traditions of tree worship and sacred groves simultaneously experience rapid deforestation and ecological fragmentation. Such contradictions do suggest that the existence of eco-ethical resources alone cannot adequately explain environmental conduct.

At this juncture, a possible objection merits consideration, though. One may reasonably question whether ancient scriptures were ever intended to function as environmental governance manuals in the modern sense. Such an expectation would obviously be historically anachronistic. Texts such as the *Upanishads*, *Bhagavad Gita*, and *Dharmasūtras* did emerge within specific socio-historical contexts that long predated industrialization, fossil-fuel economies, mass consumerism, and contemporary environmental crises. The present argument, therefore, does not intend to suggest that these texts should be evaluated in the light of modern policy expectations or judged for failing to provide technical solutions to climate change, biodiversity loss, or pollution. Instead, the question is whether the ethical orientations they bring about—non-violence, restraint, compassion, moderation, and reverence for life—have acquired sufficient normative or binding force to shape environmental behaviour in a society that continues to regard them as repositories of moral authority. The issue, thus, is not policy adequacy but ethical force and efficacy.

A further qualification is also equally necessary here. The present analysis does not assume that environmental attitudes, ecological vulnerabilities, or religious practices are distributed uniformly across Indian society. Ecological experience is, of course, profoundly shaped by caste, class, gender, region, occupation, and access to resources. As Ramachandra Guha and Madhav Gadgil have demonstrated, environmental conflicts in India frequently arise from unequal access to natural resources and different developmental priorities rather than from abstract disagreements about conservation (Gadgil and Guha). What Guha has famously

termed the “environmentalism of the poor” reminds us that ecological protection often emerges from material dependence upon forests, rivers, grazing lands, and commons rather than from explicitly proclaimed environmental ideologies (Guha). A forest-dependent Adivasi community facing displacement, a subsistence farmer suffering groundwater scarcity, an urban woman afflicted with water insecurity, and an affluent metropolitan consumer revelling in resource-intensive lifestyles are situated in different ecological locations. Consequently, the concepts developed in this paper are not intended as universal descriptions of all social actors but as analytical frameworks for understanding broad structural tendencies that operate unevenly across social formations.

In the light of such paradoxes, the paper argues that India’s environmental crisis cannot be adequately explained either through romantic civilizational glorification or through cynical dismissals of religion as mere hypocrisy. Rather, the crisis emerges from a structural contradiction between ethical imagination and socio-material practice. In other words, the argument is that the issue is not so much of the absence of ecological consciousness within Hindu traditions as the structural nature of that consciousness: plural, symbolic, and weakly normative. Scriptural traditions do not seem to offer a unified ecological ethic but rather a field of competing moral logics, enabling both reverence and exploitation. This condition can be conceptualized as eco-doctrinal dissonance.

To account for the unabated persistence of environmentally harmful practices, the paper adds two additional dimensions: epistemic ecological myopia—the narrow understanding of ecological systems among practitioners—and downstream externalities, which serve to obliterate the consequences of environmental harm. These are even further focalized through oligarchocene, a framework developed by Jason W. Moore and Raj Patel, which foregrounds the role of concentrated power in shaping ecological outcomes.

The paper, thus, seeks to establish that ecological irresponsibility in India emerges not from the absence of eco-ethical resources but from the fragmentation of ethical consciousness across symbolic, institutional, epistemic, and economic domains.

Eco-Doctrinal Dissonance: Scriptural Ethics and Ethical Fragmentation

Ontology forms the core of a religious tradition. Arguably, there are strands of ontological unity and ethical indeterminacy woven across scriptures in India. The very opening verse of the *Isha Upanishad*—*īśāvāsyamidamsarvam*—articulates a clear ontology of total immanence. All existence is permeated by the divine, collapsing distinctions between human and non-human life. The injunction that follows, *tenatyaktenabhuñjīthāḥ*, further advocates the idea of enjoyment through renunciation, extolling the ethic of restraint.

Yet this ethical vision remains a mere philosophically articulated idea without much of institutionally manifested force. The text does not seem to lay down any concrete mechanisms for translating renunciation into collective ecological regulation. The principle is therefore passed down primarily as a moral abstraction, capable of being so construed as to comfortably coexist with accumulation, developmentalism, and ecological exploitation. Its enforceability dissipates in the heat of what is often termed as practicality of things.

A similar tension appears in the *Bṛihadaranyaka Upanishad*’s famous “Three *Da*’s”—*damyata* (self-restraint), *datta* (giving), and *dayadhvam* (compassion)—which are presented as universal correctives to human excess (*Bṛhad-āranyaka Upaniṣad* 5.2.3; Radhakrishnan). The ethical implications are unmistakable: acquisitive desire is to be disciplined through restraint, generosity, and compassion. Yet these remain simply as moral ideals rather than some enforceable socio-ecological principles.

The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* similarly grounds education itself in ethical accountability. Students

are instructed: “Speak the truth. Practice *dharma*.” Ethical giving is elaborated through the injunction: “Give with faith... with modesty... with fear... with understanding” (Taittirīya Upaniṣad 1.11.1; Radhakrishnan). Again, while ethical responsibility is undoubtedly emphasized, the practice is diffusely left to the pupils’ own discretion in which case there appears a high likelihood of their getting carried away with the force of prevailing ethos.

Another core idea is interdependence of all life forms. The *Bhagavad Gita* (3.14; Radhakrishnan) itself presents an early model of ecological interdependence: beings arise from food, food from rain, and rain from sacrifice (*yajña*). While the passage recognizes cyclical interdependence, it ultimately grounds ecological balance in ritual causality rather than material ecology. If ritual is what constitutes the essence of religion, its force as a guiding principle of life seems to wane over time. Furthermore, the doctrine of action without attachment to results (2.47; Radhakrishnan), while philosophically directed against egoism, can in practice weaken concern for long-term ecological consequences. The framework may, if inadvertently, allow action to become detached from systemic accountability. Its amenability to be misconstrued or cleverly retrofitted to suit one’s wishes without any obvious breach of ethical code is what makes it lose effect in the routine affairs. Thus, the *Gita* simultaneously affirms interdependence while displacing ecological responsibility into ritualistic show-off and metaphysical cavilling over matters divine.

Reverence for nature is yet another principle that sets *Hindu* scriptures apart. The *Atharvaveda* famously declares: *mātābhūmiḥputro ’ham pṛthivyāḥ* (“Earth is my mother; I am her son”) (Atharvaveda 12.1.12). This formulation establishes a relational ethic of reverence and filial bond or *mātr-ṛṇa* (a bond of debt towards mother). However, like many other scriptural ecological insights, it lacks normative specificity about extraction of resources, pollution, resource limits, or ecological governance. This produces what may be termed sacralization without real action or regulation, where symbolic reverence fails to translate into material action of conservation and preservation (Eck).

The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* likewise lays down austerity (*tapas*), generosity (*dāna*), integrity (*ārjava*), non-injury (*ahiṃsā*), and truthfulness (*satyavacana*) as the true sacrificial gifts of human existence (Chāndogya Upaniṣad 3.17.4; Radhakrishnan). Sacrifice itself is thus ethically internalized. Yet these ethical formulations continue to function primarily as ideals of individual volition rather than collective responsibility.

Interestingly, the *Mahabharata* proclaims *ahiṃsā paramo dharmah* (“non-violence is the highest dharma”) (The Mahabharata 13.117.37), yet it leads up to catastrophic warfare. Ethical principles therefore appear contextually negotiable, subordinated to competing imperatives such as duty, sovereignty, and political necessity. This de-prioritization of eco-ethical concerns depending on other exigencies also contributes greatly towards weakening the normative force of such ethos. Principles such as non-violence and restraint (which are otherwise extolled as virtues) merely trail on as moral ideals while remaining selectively suspendable or even expendable when the conditions of power, expediency, ritual necessity, or developmental logic so demand.

Another instance of this occurs in *Patañjali’s Yoga Sūtras* that seem to resist such context-sensitive observance of these ideals by universalizing ethical restraint. The *yamas*—*ahiṃsā*, *satya*, *asteya*, *brahmacharya*, and *aparigraha*—constitute a *mahāvratā* (“great vow”) unrestricted by caste, profession, place, time, or circumstance (Bryant 532–39). Such universalization is conceptually extraordinary. Yet even these ethical absolutes remain socially marginal when confronted with dominant developmental and consumerist logics.

Almost similarly, the renunciatory *Upanishads* offer critiques of possession and sensory excess. The *Jābāla Upaniṣad*, for instance, permits renunciation immediately upon the emergence

of detachment (*vairāgya*) (Olivelle, *Samnyāsa Upaniṣads* 143); so does *Nārada Parivṛājaka Upaniṣad*. It advances a radical ethic of non-possession, reducing legitimate ownership to bodily necessity alone (Olivelle 177–99). On the contrary, the practices seem to give a big lie to all these ideals ensconced in the canonical texts. The ascetic traditions seem to merely drone on about *ahimsā*, *satya*, *asteya*, *śauca*, and *indriya-nigraha* as indispensable virtues. Non-violence becomes formalized through the “gift of safety” (*abhaya*) toward all living beings (Olivelle 95). These traditions collectively articulate a profound critique of acquisitive civilization. Yet renunciation remains socially exceptional rather than normatively universal.

A major criticism of the *Manusmṛiti* oft-made is that it hierarchises the society into segregated insular communities. Nevertheless, it does define the “tenfold law” (*dharma*) through virtues such as contentment, self-control, truthfulness, non-stealing, purification, and restraint (Manu 6.92). Simultaneously, however, it tends to envision hierarchical cosmologies and instrumentalized relations among human beings. The self-contradiction itself drains off much of its bindingness and legitimacy. The notion that life forms exist as food for others introduces an anthropocentric and utilitarian orientation that coexists uneasily with eco-centric insights. The *Dharmasūtras* similarly reveal internal plurality. Gautama prohibits harming living beings (Gautama 9.73), Āpastamba advocates “amity with all creatures,” and Baudhāyana emphasizes abstention from injuring living beings (Olivelle, *Dharmasūtras*). Yet these ethical formulations remain embedded within stratified social orders and ritual systems. Consequently, Hindu scriptural traditions preserve not a singular ecological ethic but a field of competing moral logics, enabling both reverence and exploitation.

Traditionally, thus, the Hindu philosophical archive is undeniably rich in eco-ethical imagery and moral injunctions. Rivers are worshipped as mothers, forests are sacralized, mountains are mythologized, and non-human life is integrated into cosmological and ritual systems. Ethical principles such as *ahimsā* (non-injury), *aparigraha* (non-possession), *dāna* (generosity), *dama* (restraint), *satya* (truthfulness), and *indriya-nigraha* (control of the senses) recur across scriptural traditions. Yet ecological symbolism and ecological behaviour are often not found to be identical. Reverence does not, by default, lead to conservation, nor does sacralization necessarily lead to ecologically responsible practices. The contradiction becomes sorely palpable in the case of rivers. The Ganga, which has been venerated as a goddess and purifier of sins for ages, continues to be contaminated by untreated sewage and industrial waste. According to data cited by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), more than 6,600 million litres per day (MLD) of wastewater enter the river system through major drains, while untreated and partially treated sewage remains the principal source of pollution (“Status of STPs in Ganga Basin States”). A similar fate befalls other rivers as well. In much the same way, The *Mahakumbh* of 2026 reportedly attracted about 660 million pilgrims and spewed nearly 150,000 metric tonnes of solid waste during its forty-five-day span (“Cultural Heritage and Environmental Conservation”). CPCB monitoring further found faecal coliform levels at some locations going up to 1,400 times the permissible bathing standard in the Ganga and 660 times the standard in the Yamuna (“High Levels of Fecal Bacteria in Sangam Waters”). Such cases point out how sacralization can also insidiously lead to desecration. In broadly similar fashion, temple-centred religious economies also put strain on local eco-systems. Major pilgrimage centres such as *Tirupati*, *Vaishno Devi*, and *Shirdi* attract millions of visitors annually, and escalate demands on transportation, energy, water, food supply chains, and waste-management systems. Devotion thus ends up necessitating resource-intensive infrastructures that often do not go well with the scriptural ideals of restraint (*aparigraha*) and renunciation (*tyāga*).

Likewise, pilgrimage-driven infrastructural expansion has spawned ecological consequences in fragile environments. The Char Dham highway project, involving approximately 889

kilometres of road widening in Uttarakhand, has been associated with forest loss, unscientific hill cutting, increased landslide vulnerability, and large-scale ecological disturbance in the Himalayan region (“Environmental Cost of the Char Dham Project”). A recent study identified 811 landslides along more than 800 kilometres of pilgrimage routes, with over 80 percent occurring within one hundred metres of the highway corridor (“Big Landslide Rise on Char Dham Route”). Here, the expansion of religious tourism becomes intertwined with environmental degradation despite the sacred status of the landscape itself. The intertwining poses a very complex challenge when patriotism and performative religiosity are often pitted against environmentalism.

Urban ecological decline is yet another dimension of the same paradox. Cities that continue to celebrate sacred trees, groves, and nature worship have witnessed severe losses of ecological commons. In Bengaluru Urban, a recent government survey found encroachments affecting 730 out of 837 lakes. This shows how rapid urban development frequently overrides ecological concerns (“Encroachments Gobble Up 730 of 837 Lakes”). The result is a peculiar coexistence of symbolic ecological reverence with material processes of habitat destruction, biodiversity decline, and environmental degradation.

Surprisingly, a civilization whose philosophical traditions consistently warn against greed, excess, attachment, and accumulation is simultaneously witnessing--luxury booms, debt-fuelled consumption, ecological collapse, and hyper-consumerism.

Epistemic Ecological Myopia

Epistemic limitations also constitute one of the constraining factors in eco-friendly practices in India. Most actors operate with a narrow understanding of ecological systems. Awareness of cumulative impacts, atmospheric feedback loops, biodiversity collapse, groundwater depletion, toxicity chains, carrying capacity, and systemic interdependence remains alarmingly limited. As a result, actions that might appear locally meaningful or symbolically beneficial end up producing systemic ecological harm. Ritual immersion practices, plastic offerings, chemical dyes, pilgrimage waste, extractive consumption, groundwater overuse, and unsustainable developmental aspirations may coexist psychologically with sincere religious devotion because ecological consequences remain only partially intelligible. This condition may be termed epistemic ecological myopia. A sore reminder of this came when India was reported as the world’s fifth-most polluted country in 2024, with PM2.5 levels around ten times the WHO recommended limit. (IQAir Report,2024)

Environmental sociology has time and again identified such gaps between knowledge and action (Giddens). In fact, what is often lost sight of is that ecological systems operate relationally, cumulatively, and often invisibly, whereas everyday ethical reasoning tends to remain immediate, localized, and symbolically mediated. Thus, rivers may simultaneously function as sacred entities and waste channels. Symbolic purity coexists with material pollution because ritual consciousness and ecological consciousness do not necessarily overlap. The contradiction is therefore not reducible to hypocrisy alone. Rather, it reflects cognitive fragmentation that masks the consequences and allows only a partial view of the entire process.

What epistemic myopia inescapably leads onto is the environmental harm that is often temporally delayed, spatially dispersed, and socially diffused. The consequences of pollution, extraction, waste accumulation, and ecological degradation frequently become visible only after significant delay or at considerable distance from the original site of action. This creates weak ethical feedback loops. Polluters rarely experience the full effects of their actions. Waste disappears downstream. Toxicity becomes atmospheric abstraction. Groundwater depletion unfolds gradually. Industrial pollution disproportionately affects marginalized communities

located far from elite consumption zones. So, the entire range of repercussion is never experienced immediately.

Ulrich Beck's theory of the "risk society" is relevant here. Modern ecological risks are distributed, invisible, and difficult to localize, thereby complicating ethical response (Beck 21-23). The distance from and neglect of downstream effects therefore intensifies eco-doctrinal dissonance by preventing actors from perceiving the systemic consequences of localized practices. The ethical imagination remains immediate while ecological systems remain cumulative and far too deeply embedded in nature's interconnectedness for human ken.

The Oligarchocene

The idea of oligarchocene may prove to be of considerable help in making sense of much of the contemporary ecological scene in India. Simply put, it takes off the burden of guilt from the masses that hardly play any direct and decisive role in causing the planetary level environmental crisis. Conversely, it shifts analytical attention from humanity in general toward concentrated structures of political and economic power (Moore; Patel and Moore). What a select few cause cannot by any stretch of logic be attributed to all. Quite unsurprisingly, these select few do not even seem to scruple to wield the blind force of religion in serving their own interests. Demonstrably, religion is turned into an instrument of duping the unsuspecting masses whose participation in environment-vitiating practices is cleverly coaxed. As a consequence, contemporary religiosity comes to be deeply entangled with consumer capitalism, spectacle, tourism, and aspirational identity formation.

Typically, religious practice becomes aligned with pilgrimage economies, temple tourism, devotional consumer goods, infrastructural expansion, spectacle-oriented festivals, mediated religious branding, and status-oriented religiosity. Besides, these systems generate powerful incentives toward resource-intensive forms of devotion. Thus, even spirituality becomes susceptible to conspicuous consumption and performative religiosity.

Another dimension of this practice is the coercion experienced by the ordinary masses through market forces, precarious labour conditions, infrastructural lock-ins, developmental dependency, political mobilization, and normative pressure. These mechanisms often tend to normalize ecologically destructive practices while constraining viable alternatives. One cannot but be drawn in. Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony becomes especially relevant here. Elite interests become naturalized as "development," "progress," or "national pride," producing a semblance of popular consent for ecologically destructive projects--pilgrimage corridors, extractive tourism, riverfront "beautification," highway expansion, and large-scale religious infrastructure projects which often acquire sacred legitimacy while generating significant ecological costs.

The oligarchocene thus selectively amplify those aspects of religion compatible with accumulation while marginalizing scriptural traditions of restraint, non-possession, and renunciation. The masses themselves become vulnerable to oligarchic temptation and coercion through aspirational consumerism, mediated religiosity, status anxiety, and developmental desire.

Another dimension of this process is the coercion experienced by ordinary people through market forces, precarious labour conditions, infrastructural lock-ins, developmental dependency, political mobilization, and normative pressure. These mechanisms normalize ecologically destructive practices while constraining viable alternatives. Participation thus often appears less as a matter of free choice than of structural compulsion. In this context, Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony becomes especially relevant. Elite interests are naturalized as "development," "progress," or "national pride," producing a semblance of popular consent

for ecologically destructive projects—pilgrimage corridors, extractive tourism, riverfront “beautification,” highway expansion, and large-scale religious infrastructure initiatives. Such projects frequently acquire sacred legitimacy while generating significant ecological costs. The concentration of wealth and ecological impact is striking: the richest 1 percent now possess more wealth than the bottom 95 percent of humanity and account for roughly 16 percent of global carbon emissions, a level comparable to that of the poorest two-thirds of the world’s population. (Oxfam International)

The Oligarchocene thus amplifies those dimensions of religion that are compatible with accumulation, consumption, and developmentalism while marginalizing scriptural and ethical traditions of restraint, non-possession, simplicity, and renunciation. Ordinary people, in turn, become vulnerable to both oligarchic coercion and temptation through unwitting consumerism, mediated religiosity, status anxiety, and developmental desire. Consequently, ecological degradation cannot be understood merely as the outcome of individual choices; it is reproduced through hegemonic cultural formations that align religious imagination and popular aspiration with oligarchic interests. Recent evidence suggests that the wealthiest 10 percent are responsible for approximately two-thirds of observed global warming since 1990, clearly highlighting the disproportionate ecological consequences of elite-driven consumption and investment patterns. (Schöngart et al.)

Performative Religiosity and Ecological Displacement

The combined effect of eco-doctrinal dissonance, epistemic ecological myopia, downstream externalization, and oligarchocene structures produces a form of performative religiosity that remains scripturally anchored yet ecologically detrimental and diffuse. Ecological ethics get symbolically celebrated while materially flouted.

This contradiction becomes visible across contemporary India—sacred rivers simultaneously functioning as waste channels; tree worship coexisting with urban deforestation; cow reverence alongside plastic ingestion and industrial dairy systems; pilgrimage devotion generating massive waste accumulation; and the supposedly purity-inducing ritual practices producing material impurity. These contradictions do not necessarily emerge from conscious bad faith. Rather, they reflect fragmented ethical consciousness operating within unequal politico-economic structures.

Therefore, environmental harm is neither strongly prohibited, nor fully understood, nor immediately experienced, but instead normalized and often incentivized. This nexus of weak normative consolidation, ecological illiteracy, invisible consequences, and oligarchic manipulation collectively decapitates effective ecological response.

Conclusion

As it has been argued in the foregoing sections, India’s ecological crisis is not fundamentally a failure of values but a failure of normative consolidation, epistemic depth, institutional embodiment, and structural alignment. Hindu scriptural traditions undeniably preserve rich ecological and anti-extractive ethical resources centred upon restraint, compassion, non-violence, renunciation, and moral accountability. Yet these ethical insights remain diffuse, symbolic, plural, and weakly enforceable.

When combined with epistemic ecological myopia, downstream externalization, and oligarchocene structures of temptation and coercion, scriptural ethics lose their regulatory force over material life. Addressing this crisis therefore requires more than civilizational nostalgia or symbolic reverence. It requires the translation of ethical insight into ecological literacy, institutional accountability, enforceable norms, and materially transformative

socio-political frameworks capable of resisting extractive developmentalism. Only then can scriptural reverence move beyond mere rhetoric and symbolic sanctification toward ecological responsibility.

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