



International Research Journal of Interdisciplinary & Multidisciplinary Studies (IRJIMS)

A Peer-Reviewed Monthly Research Journal

ISSN: 2394-7969 (Online), ISSN: 2394-7950 (Print)

Volume-III, Issue-IV, May 2017, Page No. 39-45

Published by: Scholar Publications, Karimganj, Assam, India, 788711

Website: <http://www.irjims.com>

Environment Protection: An Ethical Approach

Miss Polly Rajkhowa

Research Scholar, Department of Philosophy, Centre for Studies in Philosophy

Abstract

Environment is an essential part of our life, signifies an all pervasive whole where in subsist all natural beings. It is a generic name for both biotic and a-biotic species (living and non-living things). To live a peaceful and healthy life, it is necessary to keep the environment safe and clean as because beautiful and healthy environment is a part and parcel of the wealth and quality of life that we desire for ourselves now and also for our future generation. But, now-a-days, it is seen that our environment is getting worse and disturbing in many ways which effect on all living beings and also ruin the life of everyone gradually for other people and our own mistakes. In order to protect ourselves and the other species which makes the environment complete, we have to contribute every day in our life to preservation of nature. In present day life, environment protection has become an essential one. It is a practice of protecting the natural environment on individuals or governmental levels, for the benefit of both the environment and humans. It is our duty to safe the beautiful earth and also to protect the environment with all its natural bounties form dangers. Environmental ethics occupies an important role in protecting the environment humans place within it. With the help of the study of environmental ethics we can ensure that we are doing our part to keep the environment safe and protected.

Keywords: biotic, a-biotic, preservation, environment, bounties, environmental ethics.

Introduction: The term 'Environment' is very familiar to all of us. It is an environment that encircles the interaction of all living beings, plants, climate, weather, and natural resources that affect human survival and economic activity. Living things do not simply exist in their environment. They constantly interact with it. Organism changes in response to conditions in their environment. A healthy environment is necessary for all beings (living and non-living) to survive. Drinkable water, breathable air, and edible food are essential for life to continue. But, it is seen that our environment is changing constantly, an imbalance occurs so that the beauties or the glory of nature are being lost one after another and environmental destruction is spreading. Today our Mother Earth is facing lot of environmental concerns. The environmental problems like global warming, acid rain, air pollution, waste disposal, deforestation, water pollution, climate change and many more affect every human, animal and nation on this planet. Yet at the same time, we people do not maintain a desirable

standard of living without the consumption of natural resources which causes damage to the environment. So, it is essential to protect the environment where we are living, for that every human being should know their duties towards the mother like environment. It is our duty to clean and safe our surroundings, to preserve the natural resources, to protect the other living entities including plants, mountains, rivers etc. as well. Earth is our home; it's where we live, so we better take care of it. When people protect the environment, they protecting themselves and also their future too.

Effective components of environment: Different factors are responsible for creating imbalance of the environment. Population Growth, Urbanization, Agricultural Development, Industrialization, Deforestation, Electronic Waste, Thermal Power Plant, Modern Productive Technology, some of the potent factors responsible for creating the imbalance.

(i) Population Growth: According to the Census 2001, the population of India has crossed one billion marks. The problem of population growth has become a global phenomenon, which has got its alarming proportion in India. To understand the population-environment dynamics, it may be useful to look at human population not as a homogeneous entity but rather as composed of three groups of people, depending upon their relation with the environment.

(ii) Urbanization: Another problem is urbanization. As the population moves from the villages towards the town and the city, Urban India is descending into chaos facing a lack of water and sanitation, affordable housing, roads, public transport and clean air. While cities are considered 'engines of economic growth', given the fact that they contribute nearly 60% of the national income, they are also inherently unsustainable in environmental terms.

(iii) Agricultural development: At present stage both ecological and social harm are creating by current agricultural practices in developing countries. In recent years, there has been considerable concern about human capacity to produce adequate food to meet both the needs of the growing population, and the increase in purchasing power resulting in higher consumption of animal product. The concern arises from the fatigue of the Green Revolution and the growing damage to the ecological foundations essential for sustainable food security, such as land, water, biodiversity, forests and the atmosphere.

(iv) Industrialization: The industrial Revolution had brought about radical changes in manufacturing, agriculture, animal husbandry and transport among other things. This in turn had created enhanced demand for machine made goods whose raw materials requirements and supply of input resources was abundantly met from resourceful colonies, like India at cheap prices. The large industries that can internalize the entries production process have moved away from urban centers to take advantage of the various subsidies and concessions. With very poor environmental controls being exercised by the authorities, such industries in urban areas have been causing severe environmental problems.

(v) Deforestation: Deforestation is a huge problem at this present stage to harm the environment. Under British rule, the State established monopoly control over forests, reserved large tracts for timber extraction, severely restricted the customary rights of local populations to these resources and encouraged commercially profitable species at the cost of species used by the local population. There was also large-scale forest clearance and felling for railways, ships, bridges, tea and coffee plantations, crop cultivation to increase the Government's land revenue base, and so on. After Independence, State monopoly over forests continued, as did the practice of forestry in the interests of commercial gain, while the local people's rights to non-timber forest produce were further curtailed.

(vi) Electronic Waste (E-waste): E-waste is one of the fastest growing waste streams, with people changing their computers, television sets, and mobile phones more frequently than ever before. According to one estimate, about 20-50 million tons of E-waste is being generated annually worldwide. In India, the figure stands at nearly 4, 00,000 tones a year. E-waste makes up 5% of all municipal solid wastes worldwide, more or less the same amount as general plastic waste, but much hazardous.

(vii) Thermal Power Plants: Power plants either in public or private sector mainly use coal for generation of electricity. Energy in the form of electricity is a basis requirement for all modern developmental activities and can be generated by a variety of methods, materials and mechanisms.

(viii) Modern Productive Technology: Today the modern technologies then exceeding the high rate of rapacious exploitations of natural resources and uncontrolled development by developed countries are responsible for alarming situation of grave environment crisis and ecological disturbances all over the globe. But still today the man equipped with a variety of skills and superior technology has ruined the natural resources without understanding the rebounding repercussions even on his own existence, huge industrial installations every year, introduction of faster mode of transport and sprouting up of large crowded cities. As a population explosion, increased urbanization and unprecedented expansion of science and technology may be said to be the basic causes and responsible for the deterioration of environment.

From the above, we can say that environmental protection is one of the serious problems facing mankind today. Our entire life is dependent on the well-being of all of the species living on earth. Unfortunately, the risk threatening our earth or ecology is not minor. Many species of animals and plants are nearing to distinction. Global warming, freshwater, depletion, biodiversity reduction, deforestation, hole in the ozone layer, population growth, etc...are all examples of such threats. We have to protect environment as because it is a source of natural beauty and nature plays a key role in human health and well-being and also preventing to one's mental illness. If we protect the environment, we protect the humanity which has a moral obligation to the whole world and its creatures. Humans are responsible for taking care of the world and protecting the environment. It is important that people should be aware of not only the problems involved but also of the role to be played

in protecting the environment. Because without it; life as we know, would not exist. There is only one planet earth, where human can enjoy their life. That's why we have to take care of it. Again many natural resources are not renewable and some will take a long time to form. Everyone should know the way as how to behave or treat himself with other living things and others natural entities, relating to the environment. So, it is utmost necessary to protect the environment, to preserve the natural resources of our surroundings.

In philosophy, there is a branch known as ethics under which environmental ethics comes within it, which concerned with the natural environment and humans place within it. It deals with the questions relating to human environmental relations and also the challenges of the 21st century related to every environmental issues. As we all know that ethics is an axiological or valuation theory has become a broad subject and has also various applied domains in present era.

As per Nature.com *“Environmental ethics is a branch of applied philosophy that studies the conceptual foundations of environmental values as well as more concrete issues surrounding societal attitudes, actions, and policies to protect and sustain biodiversity and ecological systems.”*

According to Wikipedia, *“Environmental ethics is the part of environmental philosophy which considers extending the traditional boundaries of ethics from solely including humans to including the non-human world. It exerts influence on a large range of disciplines including environmental law, environmental sociology, eco-theology, ecological economics, ecology and environmental geography.*

With the help of the study of environmental ethics we can ensure that we are doing our part to keep the environment safe and protected. It studies the moral relationship of human beings, and also the value and moral status of, the environment and its non-human contents. It is also concerned with sustenance which means managing, conserving and preserving natural resources. It believes that ecology should be preserved because it is beneficial to humans. The a-biotic entities like rivers, mountains, forests, hills etc are subservient to the cause of man. Moreover, these a-biotic entities are providers of some basic needs and vital breath. Therefore, forests should be preserved because they provide us with fodder medicine and fuel etc. We should also protect the snow-capped, mountains, ragged hills etc. from being harnessed because these provide us with an aesthetic delight.

It asks such questions about human environmental relations like "What do we mean when we talk about nature?" "What is the value of the natural that is non-human environment to us, or in itself?" "How should we respond to environmental challenges such as environmental degradation, pollution and climate change?" "How can we best understand the relationship between the natural world and human technology and development?" and "What is our place in the natural world?" etc...Whenever we people know the answers of all these crucial questions then no doubt we can protect The Mother Earth to some extent. The environmental ethics covers:

- (1) The challenge of environmental ethics to the anthropocentrism (i.e., human-centeredness) embedded in traditional western ethical thinking;
- (2) The early development of the discipline in the 1960s and 1970s;
- (3) The connection of deep ecology, feminist environmental ethics, animism and social ecology to politics;
- (4) The attempt to apply traditional ethical theories, including consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics, to support contemporary environmental concerns;
- (5) The preservation of biodiversity as an ethical goal;
- (6) The broader concerns of some thinkers with wilderness, the built environment and the politics of poverty;
- (7) The ethics of sustainability and climate change, and
- (8) Some directions for possible future developments of the discipline.

Environmental ethics is also concerned with sustenance which means managing, conserving and preserving natural resources. Environmentalists and the theorists on ecology have pointed out different opinions regarding man-nature relationship. It is seen that environmental degradation in terms of exhaustion of natural resources has started ages ago. But people have responded to this degradation only three decades back. In the traditional days, we either have man-centric or nature-centric ethics. The philosophy about social contract theory clearly exemplified this man-nature duality. Now-a-days, we have a theory that can be applied in practice. The early mid and the 20th century ethical thinkers reasserted human-centric ethics. By the end of 20th century, there has been a shift to this tendency and ethicists tried to focus on the man-nature relationship. The man centric theory translated into environmental ethical contact would imply that ecology should be preserved because it is beneficial to humans. The a-biotic entities like rivers, mountains, forests, hills etc are subservient to the cause of man. Moreover, these a-biotic entities are providers of some basic needs and vital breath. Therefore, forests should be preserved because they provide us with fodder medicine and fuel etc. We should also protect the snow-capped, mountains, ragged hills etc. from being harnessed because these provide us with an aesthetic delight. The natural bounties both living and non-living have virtually reached us by the coverage of T.V. channels like National Geographic and Discovery etc and through awareness programs. The environmentalists, the ecologists and the ethicists has taken up the environmental issues with great concerned and had organized discussions, seminars, etc. to highlight the environmental issues.

Environmental ethics point out that man has harnessed nature for his own benefits. Men have been crude enough to exploit the other beings of nature very rudely. The experiments conducted on animals for the medicinal and cosmetic benefits of humans clearly point out to the arrogance of man. The humans are empowered of rational endowments and they consider themselves not only different from non-humans but also consider themselves to be superior to them. And, that's why; the humans treat other beings with disrespect. In other words, it may be said that nature becomes a resource to man and man become the consumer. In the other extreme, the environmental ethics says that nature is to be respected because it

is our duty to do so. Human beings are not the centre stages of ethics. They are members among the other members of biotic community. It says that humans are not different from other members and they are not unequal. This position of environmental ethics makes the whole eco-system morally considerable. Therefore, the environmental ethicist tries to find out a solution to sort out the man-nature division. Therefore, they posited a new norm known as eco-ethics. This eco-ethics is brings about a fellowship or natural alliance between two different entities, man and nature.

The new ethics which can be termed as environmental ethics or eco-ethics is futuristic in its approach. They force that the friendship between man and nature will be everlasting. The basic needs of fresh air, water and food would remain always and therefore, the humans are should be committed to preserve nature and sustain it. Therefore, environmental ethics believes the friendliness relationship between man and nature. To do this, the ethicists believed that one has to practice the right kind of values and ethics. The right kind of value or ethics would include dispositions and conducts of natural respect. This can be practiced through prudence and love which are expressions of solidity and friendliness. This is a universalistic approach, not a relativistic one. The practice of environmental ethics makes us committed to nature, to our present and future generations and it establishes a sustainable man-nature fellowship.

Thus we find that environmental ethics has played an important role to environment protection and how to preserve the natural resources. It talks about equality, not discriminating one from another. It believes that humans are the part of society as well as other living creatures, which includes plants and animals. These items are a very important part of the world and are considered to be a functional part of human life as well. Therefore, it is essential that every human being respect and honor this and use morals and ethics when dealing with these creatures. It is provided so that people can have a better understanding of the world around them and also know how to take care of it properly so that the world can be a better place. Environmental ethics also builds on scientific understanding by bringing human values, moral principles, and improved decision making into conversation with science. This is important because the ethics of the environment are of major concern these days.

Conclusion: An environment helps to grow and developed all the living and non-living entities surrounding it. But, which effect on all living beings and also ruin the life of everyone gradually for other people and our own mistakes. And the best way to protect the environment is conservation. Conservation is the philosophy and the policy of managing the environment to assure adequate supplies of natural resources for future as well as present generation. Everyone should know the way as how to behave or treat himself with other living things and others natural entities, relating to the environment. In the above discussion, it is clear that when we talk about environment or preservation of environment, it is always related with many things. But, ultimately the decision must come from the human heart. So, I think the key point or the solution to protect the environment is genuine sense of universal responsibility which is based on love, compassion and clear awareness.

References:

Books:

1. Attfied, Robin. *The Ethics of Environmental Concern*
2. Taylor W. Paul. *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics.*
3. De. Silva, Padmasiri. *Environmental Philosophy and Ethics in Buddhism*
4. Jemison. *Ethics and Environment: An Introduction*

Articles:

1. J. Ciani, Anthony. *Environment Protection: The Enemy of Green*
2. Mitra, Ankita. *Essay on Environmental Pollution: Causes, Effects and Solution*