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Research Article

Need And Awareness Of Environmental Ethics: An Overview.

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Abstract

In modern era of science and technology, we see visible and great changes in our surroundings. The life styles of the people so changed that their activity adversely affects our environment. Industrialization, Urbanization, as well as many anthropogenic activities affects the environments physical, chemical as well as biological components adversely. These effects can include changes in air water soil and ecosystems.

Environmental ethics is the branch of philosophy that explores the moral relationship between human and the natural world. It involves the systematizing and recommending concepts of right and wrong about the environment. Environmental ethics investigates the questions like "What is the best way for the people to live?" "What actions are right and wrong in particular circumstances?" etc. it examines the values and principles that guide the interactions of man with the environment and seeks to understand the responsibilities of human beings towards the planet and resources.

The need and awareness of environmental ethics has become more important in recent years due to various environmental issues as Pollution, Climate change, Deforestations, Biodiversity loss, Resource depletion as well as oil spills in the ocean. The awareness of environmental ethics leads to Sustainable practices, Conservation of natural resources, Protection of endangered species, reduction of waste and pollution and promotion of eco-friendly policies. Increasing awareness of environmental ethics bring significant changes in individuals, communities and societies to adopt more sustainable and environmentally conscious practices leading to a more equitable and thriving planet.

The present paper deals about the overview of need and awareness of environmental ethics.

Keywords : Environment, Environmental ethics, Environmentally conscious, Sustainable practices.

INTRODUCTION

Environment is the sum total of all biotic (living) and abiotic (non-living) factors that surrounds and potentially influence the survival and development of an organism. Simply environment is the surroundings of an individual. Different types of environment includes the natural environment, built environment, physical environment, social environment, economic environment, cultural environment, political environment, biological environment, micro- environment as well s macro- environment. Understanding these environment s help us recognize the complex relationshipbetween human and natural systems. According to Environment Protection Act (1986), "Environment is the sum total of water, air and land, inter relationships among themselves and also with the human beings, other living organism and property."

Ethics is a system of moral principles and values that guide human behavior, decision making and interactions. It can be a framework for judging what is good and bad, right and wrong. It guides the reasoning that one makes before acting; understanding the consequences of one's action. It is the branch of philosophy which addresses questions of morality. Ethics is highly important to science because the scientific inquires merit ethical assessment. According to Webster Dictionary, "Ethics is the science of moral duties or it is the science of ideal human character."

Environmental Ethics is the branch of ethics that deals the relationship between human and environment. It is the discipline that studies the moral consideration of human beings and also the value and moral status of the natural environment and its Non-human content. Morality refers to the concept of human ethics related with 'right or wrong', used in three contexts namely individual conscience, principles and judgments. These three collectively constitute the moral values. Morality is a collection of beliefs as to what constitutes a good life. Morals reflect a cultural predominant feeling on ethical issues. Environmental Ethics is a topic of applied ethics which examine the moral basis

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of environmental responsibility. It focuses on the moral foundation of environment responsibility and how far this responsibility extends. More specifically, it refers to the value that mankind places on protecting, conserving and efficiently using resources that the earth provides.

Environmental Ethics emerged as a new sub-discipline of practical philosophy that deals with the ethical problems concerning environmental protection and conservation. It aims at providing ethical justification and moral motivation for the cause of global environmental protection. On the one hand, at the level of ideas, Environmental Ethics challenges the dominant and deep-rooted anthropocentrism of modern mainstreams ethics and extends the object of our duty to future generation and non-human beings as well and on the other hand at the practical level, Environmental Ethics criticizes the materialistic and consumerist attitude of modern capitalism and demands for the healthy and green- lifestyle, that is harmonious with nature.

Our Earth is facing many environmental problems as pollution, deforestation, global warming, ozone depletion, greenhouse effect, acid rains, global climatic changes desertification, soil erosion, biodiversity loss, etc. These problems have become a big threat for the future of all living beings. Human is very responsible for this threat. Various human activities that exploit the natural resources negatively affect our healthy environment. For a safe and healthy tomorrow people need to change their behavior and stop all the harmful activities against the nature. Otherwise, our future generations face big trouble. Human must be aware about keeping the environment clean and safe. Environmental ethics will be able to guide to the efforts made in this regard. Harmony between the human and nature will be provided by environmental ethics education because by means of environmental ethics people will be able to understand the real value of the nature. With the help of mass media, NGOs and the individual efforts, environmental awareness can be given through environmental ethics education to the individuals of every level of the community.

CONCEPT OF ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

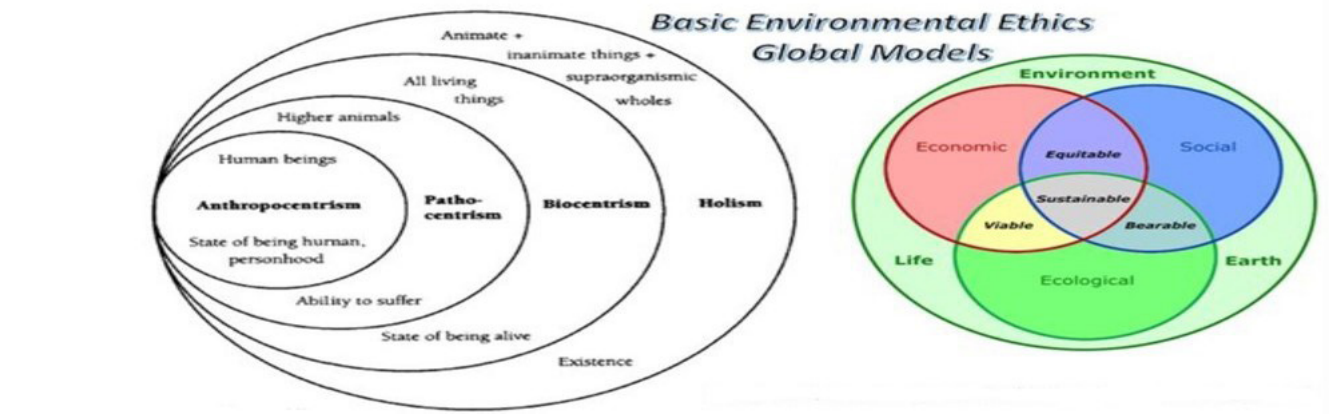
Environmental ethics is a branch of applied philosophy that studies the conceptual foundations of environmental values as well as more concrete issues surrounding societal attitudes, actions, and policies to protect and sustain biodiversity and ecological systems for future generations. It examines the values and principles that guide human relationships with nature and responsibilities, and advocates for sustainable and responsible behavior. Environmental ethics also considers how human actions and values impact the environment, and how to protect and sustain biodiversity and ecological systems. It has been part of human thought since before the advent of agriculture. It became more prominent during the industrial revolution, and environmental changes and extreme weather events have raised important issues about environmental justice.

Various key concepts of environmental ethics are as follows: (**figure-1**)

1. Anthropocentrism: Human centered perspective prioritizing human needs and interests.
2. Biocentrism: Life centered perspective, valuing all living beings and their well being.
3. Ecocentrism: Ecosystem centered perspective, prioritizing the health and integrity of ecosystems.
4. Deep ecology: Emphasizes the intrinsic values of non-human life and the need for radical changes in human behavior.
5. Shallow ecology: Focuses on human interests and resource management.
6. Environmental justice: Addresses disproportionate environmental impacts on marginalized communities.
7. Sustainability: Seeks to balance human needs with environmental protection for future generations.
8. Stewardship: Recognizes human responsibility to care for and protect the natural world.

Environmental ethics encourages us to consider the ethical implications of our actions on the environment and to adopt more sustainable and environmentally conscious practices.

Figure 1. Concept of Environmental Ethics.



NEED OF ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

The survival of human species on the planet earth depends upon the protection of its natural environment. Unlimited exploitation of natural beauty causes irreparable damage to the ecosystem and consequently, adversely affects not only the flora and fauna, but also human life. Over the years we have learnt from experiences that degradation of environment is the root cause of several disasters occurring in different parts of globe. Even a common man, now feels the brunt of these developments in the form of human hazards. Due to wide range of pollutants there can be more harmful effects in the near future affecting man and his welfare due to continuous degradation of environment.

Scientists describe occurrence of certain natural disaster due to the human folly, global warming has been caused by excessive emission of smoke by local gases which in turn have melted our Polar Regions as well as icebergs and glaciers. These combined with deforestation, causes flood in the rivers and rise in oceans levels which has submerged many islands and huge tracks of inhabited lands.

So, today there is a need to develop environmental ethics among the individuals of our society so we can live in healthy and safe environment.

Our actions are based on the values we nurture and the dominant values influencing contemporary societies. The greed, which is reflected in our consumerist life style, the will for domination, which are manifested in the power of economic globalization, and the fear, which gets expressed as violence. "An Environmental Ethics is basically a human ethics based on social justice for all without discrimination of caste, creed, race, colour, sex, ideology, religion or nation" – UNESCO. There are two opposed schools of thought regarding the attitudes of people toward the use of natural resources and environmental problems- the Frontier Ethics and Sustainable Development Ethics.

Frontier Ethics is the belief that earth's resources are meant for human consumption and the economic growth is more important than conservation of nature. Contrary to this is the idea of Sustainable Development Ethics. People believe that resources are limited, humans are a part of nature and do not have a right to control nature. So, we have to use them carefully and judiciously.

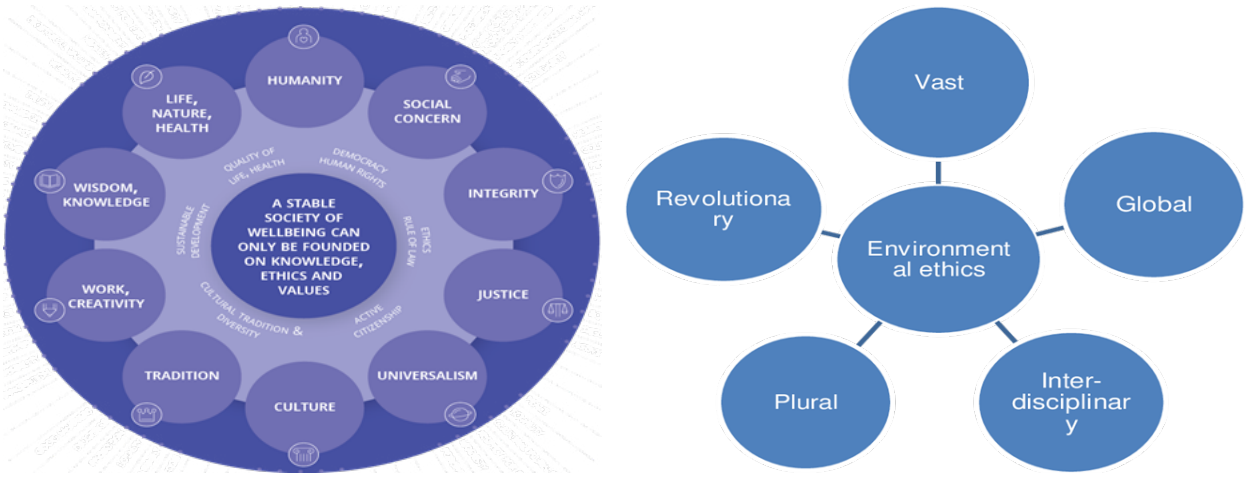
The need of environmental ethics has aroused as a result of the following three factors (**Figure-2**)

(1) New Effects on Nature: The modern technological advancements and civilization has been affecting nature greatly; therefore, we should not only analyze the ethical consequences of human actions but also appropriate safety measures should be taken, so that our environment remain safe for the future generetions.

(2) New Knowledge about Nature: A few decades ago, only a small section of people realized that human's activities could be altering the global environment. Now, with the advancements in modern science, environment and technology we know very well about how humans have changed and are changing the global environment in ways not previously understood. Thus, new knowledge and better understanding of nature is raising new ethical issues.

(3) Expanding Moral Concerns: Perhaps the most important question in environmental ethics is whether human extends his moral values to nonhumans. Do other species have rights as well? Do we have a moral obligation to leave the environment in good condition for our descendents? Or we have liberty to use environmental resources to the point of depletion within our life time? These expanded concerns lead to a need of environmental ethics.

Figure 2. Need of Environmental Ethics



There are different parameters related to environmental ethics. One main parameter is Ecological Consciousness. Ecological Consciousness means the awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the interconnectedness of all living beings and the

natural world. It involves recognizing the intricate relationships between humans, other species, and the environment, and acknowledging the impact of human actions on the planet.. It is essential in order to live happily with nature. It also shows us a sustainable future. Ecological Consciousness implies a balance of man with nature. The lack of ecological consciousness leads to imbalance and imbalance leads to different kinds of pollution and disease upon the environment. Ecological balance can be maintained only when we become conscious towards nature for welfare of all beings. That is why ecological consciousness is very important for ecological balance. Now a day we face ecological imbalance during whole day activity. It is due to lack of our ecological consciousness because we are not aware about our duties to this eco-centric universe. We become so selfish that we forget others' happiness and peace. As a result, we create ecological imbalance in nature. Over population is another factor of ecological imbalance. This creates imbalance or pollution in earth, water, fire, air and other components of our surrounding. Thus ecological consciousness is very necessary for the welfare of mankind and society. Everyone should be aware about his own environment.

Now-a-days, it is seen that ethics is missing everywhere from human life. This is the main concern of environment problems in present society. Every society is facing environmental problems that sometimes become disastrous. When people will not aware about their environmental problems then it endangers human race. Therefore, time has come to realize the need of safe and healthy nature. Our culture and rituals somehow teaches us to respect our nature, natural resources and surrounding as well. In Greece, Pre-Socratic philosophers considered nature as the ultimate reality. For instance, Anaximenes said that air is the origin of the world. Heraclitus, said fire is the origin of the world. Thales said that water is the origin of the world. From ancient times in India tree, river, earth, snake etc. were worshiped as God and Goddess. (**Figure-3**)

Hence, time has come to realize the importance of nature in our day-to-day life. Otherwise, it will not be possible for all the living beings to survive.

Figure 3. People worshiping the nature.



AWARENESS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Public awareness is one important factor to protect our environment; each and every individual should realize the value of natural and man-made environment. An individual should be made aware of right-wrong, good-evil, ought to ought-not

regarding environment. Seminar, conference may take major role on protecting environment. Two earth conferences Rio earth conference (1992) & Johannesburg summit (2002) emphasize the need of public awareness in the mind of people. Government laws are not sufficient for protection of environment.

Education can take a major role in conservation and protection of environment. Need and awareness of environment ethics should be included in curriculum from primary to higher educational institutions. Government should allot more funds to arrange seminar, quiz, conference etc. through the students for strong awareness. Extracurricular activities that include drama, street drama, cinema, documentary and public meeting can take initiative role to be aware about ethical values of environmental.

Non-government organizations and some voluntary organizations have been doing some works at national and international level. Different agencies like CSE (Centre of Science and Environment), BNHS (Bombay Natural Historical Society), WWF (World Wildlife Fund for Nature), CEE (Centre for Environmental Education), have been doing a lot of activity for protection and conservation of nature.

Raising awareness of environmental ethics is crucial for inspiring individual and collective action to protect the planet. Here are some ways to promote awareness:

1. Education: Integrate environmental ethics into school curricula and educational programs.
2. Media coverage: Encourage media outlets to report on environmental issues and ethical implications.
3. Public events: Organize conferences, workshops, and community events focused on environmental ethics.
4. Social media campaigns: Utilize social media platforms to share information and engage audiences.
5. Collaborations: Partner with influencers, thought leaders, and organizations to amplify the message.
6. Personal stories: Share personal experiences and connections with nature to illustrate ethical principles.
7. Policy discussions: Engage in policy debates and advocate for environmentally ethical decision-making.
8. Art and culture: Leverage art, literature, and culture to convey environmental ethics messages.
9. Community involvement: Encourage community-led initiatives and participatory decision-making.
10. Interdisciplinary approaches: Combine insights from science, philosophy, and other fields to foster comprehensive understanding.

By raising awareness of environmental ethics, we can cultivate a culture of responsibility, empathy, and stewardship for the natural world.

Government initiative is very important to get a green and clean environment. Government should impose some strict laws in order to protect and conserve our environment. It is seen that some unethical activities; such as unlimited destruction of forest, earth fill up at pond and lake, cut off big trees, unlimited use of petrol and diesel in vehicle and industries have become a threat to good environment. Government can stop these types of immoral practices with the help of law for the greater interest for public.

CONCLUSION

In order to save the earth and environment, humans should be very aware about their anthropogenic activities and environmental ethics are utmost need for survival at global level. We should need and aware about effective environmental ethics so that each and every one can emotionally obey and follow them.

Each and every individual would realize that modern human civilization cannot survive without a clean and green environment. Environmental pollution creates some moral evils of man and women in society. These are despair, anxiety, disease, suicide and emotion. Some natural evils, such as earthquake, flood, tsunami etc. are increasing due to destruction of environment. Imbalanced relation of man and nature leads to man- animal conflict. Human civilization doesn't last long if we don't remain aware about our environment. Regarding need and awareness of environmental ethics, a popular Indian quote is remarkable Mata Bhoomi: Putroham Prithivyah.

Competing Interests

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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