



Indian Philosophical Approaches On Environmental Ethics

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ABSTRACT

Mastery or dominion has been a common theme in people's interactions with the natural world throughout recorded history. Human behavior on the environment was formerly viewed as ethically neutral. Recently, mankind has finally come to comprehend that their actions in nature have wreaked havoc on the delicate balance of nature. Developing a strong sense of personal environmental ethics is essential if people are to be able to make sound judgments about environmental concerns that aren't destructive to their communities, countries, or the entire planet. Environmental ethics must focus on refining the individual's ideas so as not to put the well-being and security of other living species at risk. Putting the health of an individual at risk or the well-being of a community at risk is a violation of ethics.

Keywords: Environmental Ethics, Philosophy, Nature, Ecosystems, Religion.

I. INTRODUCTION

In Indian philosophy, the environment is seen as a living system in which people are only one of the myriad organisms that make it up. This is a constant effort to comprehend and relate to the larger 'whole' of nature. Adaptation is also heavily emphasized as a guiding concept in human-nonhuman world interactions. Ancient Indian thinkers thought that one of man's essential tasks as an intellectual entity should be the conservation of the environment. These discussions have also made a point of emphasizing the fragility of the environment.

The human-nature interaction is constantly intertwined in Indian philosophy. Interdependence between humans and nature is a constant in Indian culture, religion, value systems, philosophy, and ultimately, in the lives of the Indian people themselves. However, it has been discovered that the connection between man and nature has been damaged in recent times. Industrialization has left polluted waterways, poisoned land, and diminished fauna and drained natural resources as a result of its constant progress. As a result, nature was fully exploited, and the notion of human and natural connection was all but forgotten. As a result, people began to recognize that we need to reconnect with nature in order to achieve a condition of interdependence. Creating a peaceful relationship

between man and environment has also been hindered by science and technology, according to many people.

The scientific revolution that man brought about in order to improve his lot in life ended up becoming the catalyst for his own demise. His disregard for the natural world led him to embrace an attitude of power and control over it. In contrast, Indian philosophical traditions have traditionally held that man and nature are intertwined. We've discovered a reverence for nature in the way people treated it. In order to preserve life on our planet, we must look to nature. In the Vedic period, we can observe that trees, plants, and woods were highly regarded. According to the Rig Veda, nature possesses the ability to regulate the temperature, increase fertility, and enhance human existence in general. This means that if one section of the ecosystem is disturbed, it will cause problems elsewhere. The overall balance of the ecosystem is a result of a harmonious relationship between all of its parts.

II. ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Ethics is a branch of philosophy that instructs us on how to live our lives in a way that benefits all of society. What's right and bad at the ecological level is defined by environmental ethics. It is a moral obligation rather than a legal one. As a result, it is up to the person to uphold environmental ethics. These activities always have the best results since they are done willingly and hence with devotion. As a result, the importance of educating today's kids has increased.



Figure 1: Environmental ethics

The first intellectual platform to advocate for environmental ethics was the religious school of thinking. Respect for rivers, animals, and nature has long been a cornerstone of religious teachings. The second part of the twentieth century saw the emergence of a modern environmental ethics philosophy. Population growth, environmental deterioration, resource depletion, and other issues have brought environmental concerns to the forefront of public discourse. As a result, it

highlighted some questions about environmental ethics in the modern world. Disparity in society, nations, and regions, as well as the fundamental right to get the resources necessary for one's daily subsistence, were among the most difficult issues to address while formulating environmental ethics. Because of this, there have been a variety of environmental ethics viewpoints developed throughout the years. And this also led to the development of a variety of environmental ethics theories. When it comes to environmental ethics, there are essentially three schools of thought:

- **Libertarian view**

Civil liberties are linked to this perspective. An ethics for dealing with human relationships with land animals and plants is vital since civil liberties are based on a commitment to the equal rights of all members of the community. People's social consciousness extends to land and environment as well, and this is a natural progression. Seeing the natural world solely in terms of its value to humans is wrong. Libertarianism holds that all members of the environment, whether human and non-human, have equal rights and freedoms.

- **Ecological view**

Taking an ecological perspective reveals the workings of the ecosystem. Ethics dictate that Earth has its own way of working, growing, and developing. Regardless of the circumstances, nature has its own purifying and recuperation systems for life. The climate shift is said to have occurred within a fairly small area in order to give life a chance to rebound before it is completely destroyed. The Darwinian hypothesis of the survival of the fittest is in direct opposition to this viewpoint. Ecologists say that there are numerous varieties of algae that are resistant to UV radiation, and that life would continue and new species would emerge even if ultraviolet radiation posed a threat to the life on Earth. Change your perspective and perceive yourself as part of a larger system, according to this notion. In retrospect, it was realized that the world may not be able to recover as quickly as originally anticipated when the average global temperature rises. As global temperatures increase three degrees, rain forests will begin to die, releasing enormous volumes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, while algal blooms in seas will fail, taking carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. As a result, it's critical to acknowledge the inherent interconnectedness of all living and non-living things.

- **Conservation ethic**

Ethic of conservation extends instrumental value to natural environment. It focuses solely on the value and use of the environment to humans. Creation of national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, ethical non-renewable energy usage, and

water conservation measures all stem from conservation. Because of this, conservation is only concerned with the well-being of present and future generations. As a result of this ethos, the majority of international treaties are drafted in this manner.

III. IMPORTANCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

The study of human-environment interactions is known as environmental ethics. As previously said, humans must learn to coexist peacefully with nature. Absorption and recycling are two of the numerous mechanisms that keep the ecosystem in balance. In addition, the abuse of resources due to population increase has upset the natural balance. Environmental problems have arisen as a result of advancements in technology and the economy. Increased pollution, loss of biodiversity, and the approaching depletion of crucial resources have all resulted from economic advancement. As a result of the importance of ethics in appraising development activities, such as deforestation, dam construction or mining, it is particularly pertinent. 'Ethics' Humans face a variety of ethical dilemmas when it comes to the environment. When it comes to chopping down trees, one example is whether or not one should continue to do so. How long can we continue to use fossil fuels at their current rate? Is causing the extinction of other species ethical to a certain extent? To ensure that the environment is secure for future generations, we must take care of it now.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS AND OLD TRADITIONS

Our long-standing traditions tell us to live in peace and harmony with the environment and to conserve it, as we are all part of the same creator. We have no right to cause harm to any living thing, whether they are alive or not, because they are also one of the creations created by the almighty. This is something we've been taught since the beginning of our civilization, but as time progressed we disregarded it and believed we were in control of everything and that everything in the world exists to serve us.

The most important goal of society since Vedic times has been to live in harmony with nature. The great sages, saints, and Indian instructors all lived in woods, used Sanskrit, Upanishads, Smritis, and Dharma to express themselves, and eventually passed away in forests. Thus, it may be inferred that all of the heavenly ideas and writings that guided people on how to conduct their lives arose when these great philosophers and saints came into contact with the natural world. Some ancient writings taught that we should honour the land, plants, trees, mother earth, the sky (akasha), air (vayu), water (jal), and animals. It was thought that it was everyone's holy duty to safeguard others. In Hinduism, nature, environmental balance, and conservation are valued highly. To guide people in how to honour the gods, it taught men to respect nature. For this reason, trees, animals, hills,

mountains, rivers are seen as an example of respect to the things in nature that embody that particular value. The basic tenets of Hinduism may be found in many texts, writings that provide a glimpse into Hindu religious philosophy.

- To treat nature with respect and care.
- Animals, trees, and other creatures are part of the web of life, and it is the dharma of highest order to not damage them.
- In Hinduism, the act of abstaining from eating meat was regarded both as behavior and a religious obligation.

We should practise intellectual and verbal prudence, as well as maintaining a neat physical environment. The right to exist belongs to all living things, including humans and non-humans alike. Clearly, this shows that Hinduism maintains the principle of life's sacredness. The religion of Hinduism has a history dating back over 5,000 years and is considered to be divinely inspired. Despite the fact that we have no idea how it originated, we may make reasonable estimates about its gradual evolution from one generation to the next. In order to sustain their growth, men have known from the dawn of time that nature is a necessity that must be connected to God in order for it to be accepted as a practice.

There are several names for various environmental factors because of these variables:

- Lord Surya- Sun,
- Vayu Devta -Lord of Winds,
- Agni devta - Lord of fire,
- Prithvi mata-Mother Earth,
- Vanya Devi-Goddess of Forests, etc.

It was considered sacrilegious to treat trees as if they were gods or goddesses, which is exactly how they should be handled.

Water is mentioned in the Rig Veda, Manusmriti, and Charak Samhitaha as a cleansing and healing agent, as well as a medicinal agent. These instructions are valid in Indian civilization because of the maryada system, which is used to keep things clean and healthy.

There has been an erosion of our ability to live in harmony with the natural world and preserve natural resources in today's civilization. Environmental concerns have been swept under the rug in the race to further industrialise the world. As he grew older, primitive man began to believe he was the master of the universe, and that he could do anything he wanted with it. Before, his ideas on the world he lives in were focused on his connection to everything, and he cared for other species because he was sensitive. Sadly, as society advanced, so did people's sentiments

toward nature. His disregard for environment was so complete that he considered pollution from industry was an inevitable part of life.

V. ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS PHILOSOPHIES

Sustainability sometimes surprises folks who are inexperienced with environmental ethics notions. No matter what area or business a dispute concerning the environment happens in, they are fairly prevalent. Understanding environmental ethics, anthropocentrism, and libertarian extension philosophies can aid since it helps one to appreciate conservation ethics, anthropocentrism, and extension philosophies that favor liberty.

- **Conservationism and Conservation Ethics**

Conservation is the practice of preserving and protecting what is already there in the natural world. A conservation expert is someone who investigates the interactions between environmental conditions, ecological structures, human society, resource utilization, and human health. They are the experts in this field.

Ecology focuses on human regard for the environment and ecosystems, whereas conservation ethics focuses on how much humanity has or hasn't respect for the environment and ecosystems. Working to better human communities and ecosystems while simultaneously conserving important resources for future use is a crucial part of conservation ethics.. This school of thought views nature as a whole, taking into account the interrelationships between humans and the natural world.

- **Anthropocentrism**

Anthropocentrism is the view that humans are the most important species in the cosmos. Humans are seen as superior to all other living things, including plants and natural resources, under this worldview. For individuals, the human/nonhuman connection allows them to use natural variables to their benefit or gain.

Libertarian Extension Philosophies

Libertarian extension ideologies accept the rights of humans and extend these rights to animals and the environment, whereas anthropocentrism claims that only people deserve respect. The libertarian extension provides a more bio centric paradigm in the case of human/nonhuman rights, equating rights between the two entities. Scholars such as Arne Naess and Peter Singer advocate for libertarian extension theories in their academic work. These moral philosophers argue on the importance of animal rights and welfare in their philosophical work.

VI. CONCLUSION

Ecological awareness serves as a barrier against animal abuse. Rather, it requires a safe and sustainable temperament in order to live harmoniously with nature. We're damaging our environment because we don't have enough ecological awareness. In today's world, environmental ethics are crucial. It's inconceivable to imagine a future where humans don't coexist harmoniously with the natural environment. To achieve ecological harmony, we must distinguish between ecological balance and ecological imbalance. Everyone who lives in or near the environment benefits from environmental awareness. All schools of Indian philosophy held that humans and nature are inextricably linked. Therefore, the holy and mysterious power that underlying both the subjective and objective worlds has a deep connection with the worth of life. In Indian philosophy, everything, both alive and non-living, is the outcome of the same crude components being combined together. As a result, it's difficult to draw a line between nature and humans.

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