

IMPORTANCE OF ENVIRONMENT ALETHICS AND ITS APPROACHES IN OUR PRESENT SOCIETY

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Introduction

The ecological crisis is a visible expression of a deeper crisis involving our mental and spiritual well-being. The outcome hinges on our thought processes and actions. The signs of this environmental turmoil are so clear that it's imperative that we work towards environmental preservation. Reshaping our interaction with the natural world is a critical challenge that demands our immediate attention. As the state of environmental ecosystems deteriorates, worsening the environmental crisis, people have come to realize that relying solely on economic and legal solutions won't suffice in addressing environmental pollution and ecological disruptions. This realization has led us to the conclusion that we must cultivate a proper mindset towards nature and forge a new moral connection with the environment to automatically foster a love and respect for it, which in turn will enable us to tackle environmental pollution and ecological imbalances effectively. In light of this, environmental ethics and its methodologies are crucial for a smooth-running life and for achieving harmony between humanity and the natural world around us.

OBJECTIVES:

Environmental Ethics:

Environmental ethics is a branch of philosophy that explores the moral and ethical interactions between humans and the environment, focusing on the ethical foundations of environmental preservation. This field has emerged as a response to growing awareness of how human activities, driven by the expanding global population and the increasing use of chemicals, technology, and industry, are impacting the environment and leading to consequences such as pollution and habitat destruction. Its goal is to provide ethical reasoning and moral inspiration for the global effort to protect the environment. Environmental ethics sets out the moral and ethical duties humans have towards the natural world, examines the ethical relationship between humans and nature, and discusses the decisions needed regarding the environment:

- ☐ should we destroy the main forests to meet human needs?
- ☐ is it acceptable to intentionally lead to the extinction of other species?
- ☐ should people be pressured to adopt a simpler lifestyle to safeguard and maintain the environment?

Therefore, environmental ethics does not offer a specific set of international environmental laws but rather seeks to address how humans should interact with their surroundings, how to use the Earth's resources, and how to treat different species, among other concerns. The Norwegian Philosopher Arne Naess is considered one of the pioneers of the environmental movement. In his seminal work "The Shallow and the Deep: Long Range Ecology Movement," published in 1973, he identified the environmental issues at hand. Naess emphasized the intrinsic value and inherent worth of the environment. He believed that every creature, be it human or animal, has an equal right to life and flourishing. He referred to this as "ecosophy," which he defined as "ecosophy is a philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium." Naess opposed the notion

that humans are more valuable than other creatures because of their soul, intelligence, or consciousness. He argued that nature exists for the benefit of all species, not just for human use, and that each species has a right to exist independently of its usefulness to humans.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION:

The scale and immediate need for today's environmental issues, collectively termed the environmental crisis, form the basis of environmental ethics. This involves a critical re-evaluation of human attitudes and values concerning nature. There are three primary approaches to environmental ethics. They are – "Anthropocentrism," "Bio-centrism," and "Eco-centrism."

"Anthropocentrism" in environmental ethics gives moral importance only to humans, considering all non-human natural entities and nature as mere resources for human use.

This perspective views humans as distinct from nature and as superior, believing that human life has inherent value to nature. "Bio-centrism" believes that every living being is deserving of moral consideration, as they are patients to whom we ought to show care. Therefore, we have a responsibility towards all kinds of life. Albert Schweitzer (1923) expressed this view: "The core of moral actions is to preserve and honor life, and the core of immoral actions is to harm and destroy life. All living creatures have the capacity to live, and those with this capacity are valuable, interconnected, and equal."

Thus, it is a moral duty to respect and assist all forms of life. Based on the exploitative and destructive behavior often directed at nature, it's argued that such negative attitudes stem from an "anthropocentric" perspective. Hence, it's argued we need a fundamentally new approach to how we interact with nature. More science and technology alone will not solve the ecological crisis until we adopt a new religion or revise our current one.

The influence of our value systems on our interactions with nature has been recognized by many environmental ethicists, especially adherents of the Deep ecology movement. Deep ecology argues that the natural world is a delicate balance of complex interrelationships, where the survival of one organism depends on the survival of others within ecosystems.

"Eco-centrism" refers to the comprehensive belief that the entire ecological system, including both living and non-living elements of the environment, is morally valuable. This ecological centric perspective encourages us to broaden our moral considerations to encompass everything non-human, including entities not classified as animals, like flora and fauna.

DEEPECOLOGY:

Environmental ethics serves as the foundation for social policies that are designed to safeguard the environment and address environmental deterioration. This highlights the importance of ecological awareness among individuals. Ecological awareness is a developing mindset that promotes concepts such as tolerance and interdependence. It also guides us towards a sustainable future by fostering a harmonious relationship with nature. By fostering ecological balance, ecological awareness establishes a connection with the environment. Failure to do so may result in ecological imbalance. It can be argued that we are all interconnected within the environment, and any disruption in this interconnectedness can have

far-reaching consequences. Furthermore, nature acts as a nurturing environment for all living beings, allowing each to thrive according to their inherent nature.

Arne Naess, the proponent of "Deep Ecology," proposed a theory that emphasizes the high degree of symbiosis present in mature ecosystems, highlighting the interdependence that benefits all life forms. Naess outlined several principles of deep ecology, including the intrinsic value of all life forms, the importance of richness and diversity for well-being, the responsibility to preserve this richness and diversity, the excessive impact of humans on the world, the necessity for reduced human impact for the flourishing of life diversity, and the need for fundamental changes in ideological, political, economic, and technological structures. This six-fold deep ecology platform underscores the significance of recognizing the interdependence of all ecosystems and viewing the environment as a valuable entity in itself, a concept often referred to as "eco-holism."

Aldo Leopold, the American philosopher, recognized the necessity of eco-centric environmental ethics over fifty years ago. This ethical framework focuses on the relationship between humans, the land, animals, and plants. According to Leopold, an action is deemed right if it contributes to preserving the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. Conversely, it is considered wrong if it has the opposite effect. Therefore, eco-centric ethics challenges the traditional man-in-environment perspective in favor of a holistic, interconnected view. Each organism plays a vital role in the ecosystem and influences it in a unique way.

CONCLUSIONS

Ecological consciousness is essential in preventing cruelty to all creatures and maintaining a safe and sustainable temperament for coexisting with nature. The lack of ecological consciousness leads to environmental pollution. The significance of environmental ethics in today's society cannot be overstated. Living in harmony with nature is crucial for human life in this eco-centric universe. Understanding the difference between ecological balance and imbalance is necessary for creating a viable environment. Environmental ethics and ecological consciousness contribute to the well-being of all living beings and nature. As the philosophical concept of "Utilitarianism" suggests, the balance of pleasure and pain should be equally considered, aiming for the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Human beings, along with other forms of life, are interconnected and part of the food chain, shaping our environment.

¹ Arne Naess, the Deep Ecology Movement, P.8 Rawat Publications, New Delhi

² Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethics in Practice: An Anthology" (Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1997) P.635

³ Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac, Oxford University Press, 1949, pp.224-225

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