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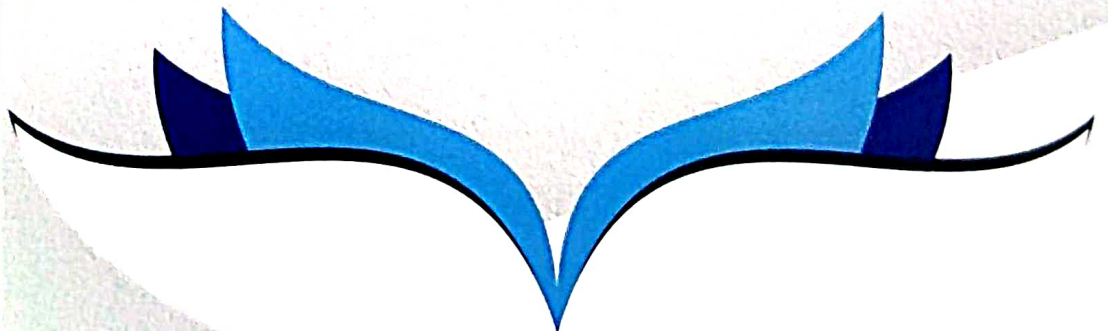
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|| Index ||

- 01) Role of co-operative bodies in agricultural marketing and storage:
SMT. SHOBHA AGRAWAL, Dr. S. K. AGRAWAL, Raipur (C.G.) || 10
- 02) Achievement Motivation among Competitive Examination Oriented Students
Mr. Subhash Sahebrao Devre, Aurangabad || 13
- 03) Silence of Women in the Poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra
Dr. Sarika Dubey, Palwal || 17
- 04) A Comparative Study Of Scientific Aptitude Of Rural And Urban ...
Dr. V. B. Khandate, Bramhapuri || 24
- 05) PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN AMITAV GHOSH'S THE GLASS PALACE AND THE HUNGRY TIDE
Mr. PRASHANT P. MANE, Dr. CHHAYA R. DAPKE, Karad. || 27
- 06) CONSUMER MOVEMENT AND NGOs
Dr. Ragini Rajendra Padhye, Dist. Beed. || 31
- 07) INCLUSIVE EDUCATION - An Empirical Study on Teachers' Perceptions
Madhu Parasher, Dr . Vandana Gaswami, Dr. Parsanjeet Kumar || 34
- 08) Emerging Environmental Ethics: A Philosophical perspective
Dr. Sanjay Patil, Nanded || 39
- 09) HISTORIC AND CULTURAL ELEMENTS IN NIRAD CHAUDHURI'S THE
Dr. Raheel K. Quraishi, Nagpur || 42
- 10) Global warming and agricultural production in India
Prof. Shirmale Mahebubpasha Babumiya, Osmanabad || 45
- 11) A study of adjustment levels among college students in relation to gender and
Mr. Ram Gangadhar Wajire, Aurangabad || 48
- 12) The Changing background of Indian Higher Education in Employment
Rohidas Godse || 51
- 13) STUDIES ON LARVIVORUS FISH DIVERSITY IN BENNETURA RIVER,
D. P. Lawand, A. D. Babare, R.C. Sarvade, Jalgaon. || 54

Emerging Environmental Ethics: A Philosophical perspective

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The biggest problem that the humanity faces today is the 'problem of environment'. The problem is complicated and has multiple aspects. This problem seems to be taking a very serious form right from the local to the global level and has encroached on every field of life. It includes pollution of every kind, deforestation, green house effect, desertification, despoliation of species of flora and fauna, acid rain, despoliation of the ozone layer and the much talked about global warming. All these have endangered all the living beings on this earth. The rapid changes in our environment are destroying the very life sustaining systems of nature. The major reasons behind the problem are-particular religions ideology (Jew, Christian), growth in population, excessive use of technology and ignorance about cause effect relation or causation in nature.

The fundamental causes of this problem are our defective tendencies and values. These include our beliefs that there is no limit on our utilization of nature/natural resources for our own pleasures, that production is more important than the consumers; that nature will endlessly provide us with resources, that it is not our responsibility to preserve the resources for future generations and that a remedy/alternative to technology is more technology. All these are at the root of the problem. Once we accept this, we have to reevaluate our values. we will have to make changes in our tendencies.

as regards nature, population growth, use of technology and man's place in nature. If self-destruction is to be avoided, we have to bring into practice the principle that man and nature are one and we have to develop proper environmental tendencies. We will also have to realize that nature has her own inherent value. For the re-evaluation of values it is necessary to make fundamental changes in our social, constitutional, political and economic systems a fundamental change in our life-style follows naturally. In the traditional ethical perspective, only man is taken to be a moral component. He is the center point and ethics is built around him. This has to be changed radically and the moral focus has to shift from man to other non-human beings and to nature i.e. environment. Environmental Ethics seems to arise from this position and we can properly understand environmental problems through this.

From the point of view of Environmental ethics, Anthropocentrism means, thinking about the good of man only, excluding the good of non-humans or interpreting the world only with a reference to man. In short anthropocentrism means the view that ethics is the field of humans only, it is neither possible nor proper to include non-humans in moral considerations. This anthropocentric view of traditional ethics seems to be at the root of environmental problems. While considering environmental problems, this view is useless or it has limitations. It is necessary to understand these problems basically and to study them from the philosophical and ethical perspective. Environmental Ethics is required for this.

In the last few decades traditional ethics has developed and a branch of ethics called 'Applied Ethics' has emerged. Today, man's life is becoming more and more complex. Due to the progress of information and technology, newer goods/means catering to material pleasures of man are developed daily. Research in medical technology has led us to artificial

insemination, tube babies, longevity of life etc. unforeseen and varied problems as regards economic, political, social relations have cropped up. Along with these, environmental problems have also taken a very serious form. All these complex relations and situations have given rise to ethical and other practical issues that were not found in the past. It is possible to understand and resolve these problems with the help of the theories about 'good' and 'Shubha' etc from the traditional moral philosophy. or, if these traditional theories are not useful enough, new ethical theories are to be formed in order to solve the contemporary problems. Applied ethics is the science that faces the modern times and confronts the contemporary problems.

In short, in the later half of the 20th century, science and technology developed on a huge scale and became universalized This gave rise to many problems that touch various aspects of a human life. Traditional theories and concepts do not help in a deep study of these problems, therefore, advise is required in every field, Experts help from various branches of knowledge is needed to solve the problems created out of the use of professional and sew technology. The branches that have come up out the need are Bio-Medical Ethics, Professional Ethics, Environmental Ethics etc. and all these together are called as "Applied Ethics'.

Thus there are three sub-divisions of applied ethics.

1. Bio/Medical Ethics
2. Professional Ethics
3. Environmental Ethics

The main function of environmental ethics is so refuse the traditional moral views as regards nature and to present a new environmental morality and related philosophy. This way, the function of environmental ethics is to point out the limitations of the traditional morality about nature and the philosophy that supplements this morality, and to show that such philosophies are responsible for the

deteriorated environmental conditions With this consideration, environmental ethics can be defined as follows:

"Environmental ethics is the study of the normative principles of the relation between man and nature." It means that, what should be the relation of man to nature is a value-oriented question. The answer depends on man's tendency about nature and also on his view about himself. In short whenever we talk about environmental ethics, we are trying to address environmental problems philosophically. Therefore 'environmental ethics is a set of philosophical principles, values or rules that tell us how to interact with the environment.'

While studying the normative issues and principles about the relation between man and nature, two basic positions are clearly noticed. As per this position, there is nothing special called as environmental in fundamental ethics, If we think this way, it is important is protect bio-diversified lands, to avoid pollution etc. because 'good' or 'welfare' of man can be achieved through these. There are essential for the very existence of man. This clearly shows that our morality is anthropocentric, it does not say that nature has its own value. Environmentally healthy customs are given for man's tendencies and for his healthy mental condition. If at all nature is prescribed with any value, it is only an instrumental value that helps man.

If we consider from another position, there is ecocentric ethics as well in which life is taken to be a respected and developing value. Thus, customs that are harmful to environment are taken to be wrong customs. Because, they not only affect the long-term human interests but they also harm the inherently valuable ecosystems. Health and lives of flora and fauna that have their own 'good' are destroyed. Inherently valuable diversity is reduced. Objective beauty deteriorates and similar effects occur. If we think from this points of view, man

is not the center point of ethics, he is one of the many other living beings.

An important point that comes up from the above consideration is whether there is a value only to an individual being or whether species of living beings, ecosystems, total flora and fauna or the biosphere has a value. (As per 'Gaia' postulate the biosphere is considered to be one live unit.)

Once we decide what comes under ethical consideration from nature, the question that arises is- how to think about those things. This is not an easy question, though it appears to be easy from the above discussion. It is a difficult and complex question.

At present, we require some ethical basis to think seriously about environmental problems. Some philosophers have accepted and defended the anthropocentric view. Some have suggested a totally new view like 'Deep Environmentalism' which has nature at its center. Both these views have many merits and this makes the subject rather difficult. Many things depend not just on ethical or philosophical points but on man's relation with nature.

The challenge that environmental ethics poses from a philosophical point view is to carefully observe the nature of ethics and our duties about of others. Generally in ethical considerations we think about our ethical relations very narrowly, it means that the scope (of ethical considerations) is limited to our contemporary fellow beings and to all human beings only. (Future generations are not included in this scope.)

In short, environmentally moral positions cannot to properly fitted the tradition ethical or philosophical frame-work. This shows that not just expansion of the traditional ethical concepts in relation with modern conditions, but something more is required. Actually it is noticed that environmental ethics has totally new bases, Old concepts were based on the thought that a man or a group of men has certain

duties towards other men or groups because the others also have an inherent value. The new environmental ethics holds that "not just human beings have an inherent value but he has duties to perform as regards the non human and even non-living things like the ecosystem, rivers, mountains etc.

This scope of ethical thoughts calls you to include all the human beings on this earth, future generations and life other than human and the total natural world in it. Some environmentalists hold that non-human beings are more important from an ethical points of view, rather than the point of view of man's interests and needs. And they also hold that in order to accept this more fundamental position, we have to accept a totally new point of view as regards the place of man in the whole system. In short changes in our principles are required on a philosophical level.

So far we have seen in short how Environmental ethics can evolve based on two positions, namely, anthropocentrism and ecocentrism. Many philosophers have, in their own ways, put forth their thoughts about problems in environmental ethics. Though each one of these depends environmental responsibility, there are other differences of opinions and of positions. The above study reveals the traditional ethics are developing gradually to face the environmental challenges.

