**ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS**

The most important problem from which the entire world is suffering recent period is the problem of environment. It is said that domination is one of our century’s most fruitful concepts for understanding human-human and human-nature relationship.**1** The problem of domination was explored in depth by Max Horkheimer & Theodor Adarno. They exposed the Greece-Roman roots of individualisms, science and the domination of nature that reached or crescendo in the eighteenth centaury’s Age of Enlightment. In the light of modernity in which science, technology and capitalism increasingly improve on human condition, Horkheimer and Theodor emphasized modern ship’s dehumanizing tendencies, its destruction of the environment, its potential for totalitarian politics and its inability to control technology.**2**

Today we can not avoid the human-nature relationship. Man’s collective and immediate material dealings with nature bring him into a dialectical relation with it, into a dynamic and potentially developing interaction with it. 3 According to Friedrich Engels “when we reflect on nature, or the history of mankind or our own intellectual activity, The first picture presented to us is of an endless maze of relations and interactions.” Man depends on nature for vital substances (such as food, water, air) and processes (such as photosynthesis) and nature in turn is affected by man’s activities such the use of fire and the domestication of plants and animals.**4** For Marx man accepted nature as (1) his direct means of life and (2) the material, the object and the instrument of his life activity.”Man lives on nature and man is a part of nature.”**5**

Though there is an invaluable relationship of man and nature,” today we are faced with an environmental crisis of massive proportions.” **6** From ecological view point “environmental refers not to a particular object but to the integral system of the physical world in which an organism is a part to affect and to be affected.”**7** The word environmental crisis refers to the critical condition or to the failure of the life supporting system of the earth. “The crisis of the environment involves not merely isolated and particular problems ………… It involves a threat to life on this planet and quality of this life.”**8** The environmental crisis are dependent on various caused. The problems which arise in the relationship of environment and man are called ecological problems. In other words, ecological problems mean such problem which arises as a practical consequence of man’s dealing with nature.

Before proceeding to the ecological problems we should know “what ecology means”. Though we use the word ‘ecology’ of the study of environment our ancestors “ did not use this particular word ‘ecology’ for the study of environment as it is understood today.” **9** It is said that the beginnings of the exact investigation of nature were first developed by the Greeks of the Alexandrian period, and later on, in the Middle Ages were further developed by the Arabs.” **10** “Our ancestors had to have been students of environment ………..conscious observation of their surrounding can be traced to ancient civilizations especially in matters of agriculture, but more formal and systematic study began in the their & fourth centuries B.C. Among the early natural historians was Aristotle and most notably, his student and successors as head of the lyceums, Theophrastus.” **11**

The term ‘ecology’ is a combination of two Greek words ‘’oikos’ which means ‘house’ and ‘logo’ which means ‘the study of’. Therefore, ecology literally means “ a study of houses or environments.” It is important to note here that Hanns Reiter is regarded a the first who formed the term ‘ecology’ from the two Greek words which are mentioned above. According to Haeckel “ecology means –the study of all complex interrelations referred to by Daswin, as the conditions of the struggle for existence.”

A Macfaden, the British ecologist stated that “ecology concerns itself with the interrelationships of living organisims, plants or animal and their environments ; these are studied with a view to discovering the principles which govern the relationships.” Odum defined ecology as “the study of the structure and function of nature.” “Ecology attempts to provide us information about regulatory mechanisms which operate at the population, community and ecosystem level. These regulatory mechanisms are responsible for a state of homeostasisin the community or ecosystem level, just as certain body regulatory mechanisms are responsible for keeping or state of homoeostasis in individuals.” **12**

Some philosophers considered ecology as a science. Arny Naes stated that ecology is a science.”concerned first of all with relationships between entitles as an essential component of what these entitles are in themselves. These includes both internal and external relations.” **13** Odum also considered ecology as a science largely with the level beyond the individual organism, that is, with populations, communities, ecosystems and the biosphere.”The science of ecology sometimes considered as ‘biology’ …….. “the principal component of what is commonly referred to as Natural History.”**14** In this way philosophers and ecologist tries to explain the basis notions of ecology. Though many ecologist accepted ecology as a science but “ecology should not bethought of as a universal science.”**15** The scope of ecology can’t be summarized only as a science. On the other stand “the placement of ecology within the framework of natural sciences favours the shallow ecological movement.”**16**

In modern period ecology is understood in a quite different way. The development of primitive societies into class societies and eventually into capitalist society has produced as transformation in man’s relation to nature. Marx and Engels stated that capitalists transform the earth into “object of huckstering.”**17** Depending on the world spread view of capitalism in modern period, ecology is understood in a different way. Ecology is considered (in the present usage) as an expression of a certain type of relationship between human beings and nature – a relationship which stresses the integrity of local and regional ecosystem. Ecology stresses the site specificity of the interchange between human material activity and nature. It opposes both the abstract valuation of nature made by capital and also the idea of central planning of production and centralist approaches to global issues generally. **18**

It should be mentioned the ecological problems or the environmental crises are dependent on various causes. These causes includes the misuse of technology to pollute, excessive proliferation of the human species, ignorance of the casual relationships in nature and so on.**19** In this context we may mention the guiding principle of action which is followed by everyone after the World War II, that is “Nature is made for man.” After the World War II modern technology is spreaded everywhere. Man is influenced by the utilitarian attitude. Man looks for a comfortable life and technology and industries made it possible. On the others hand the tendency of the knowing the secrecy of nature made the development of industries. Industries saves labour, time and give us a good production. Man dependent on industries and modern technologies in such a way that they are using natural resources thoughtlessly. They continuously going to use natural resources without thinking for the future generations. As a result there are problems or crisis arises in environment. Today “the biosphere of man’s inheritance and technosphere of his creation are out of balance and indeed into a deep conflict.”**20** The conflict arises because of the dominant world view. The dominant world view involves “Dominance over nature, natural environment as a resource for humans, material and economic growth for growing human population, belief in ample resource reserves, high technological progress and solutions, consumer, national centralized community.”**21**

We may say that ecological problems is the result of our egoism to be the master of nature. We have the environment problems because we are concerned with the man to man ethics. The imbalance which we find in nature is the result of our negligence and lackadaisical attitude .**22** If we study further then we will see that the ecological problem results –

1. Resource shortage or the finiteness of the renewable resources- oil, water, coal etc.
2. The finiteness of the carrying capacity of the world regarding absorb waste and pollution.
3. The finiteness of areas in the world.
4. The problem of pollution.
5. The problem of population.
6. The problem of destruction of wilderness and species.
7. The finiteness of the planet.

The basis under lying causes of this crisis are mistaken values and attitudes – the attitudes that we can exploit nature without any restrictions, that the production of good is more important than the people who use them, that nature will provide unlimited resources, that we have no obligation to future generations to conserve resources and that the answer to technology is more technology.**23**  Though we concerned with man-nature relationship, we are taking anthropocentric attitude. Today we are taking utilitarian approach. WE accepted nature as valuable because of its usefulness. But we give less importance to cosmocentric approach. We should not forget that nature has its own value. The cosmocentric value of nature should not be neglected. We should concerned with both anthropocentric and cosmocentric attitude. We should not forget that nature has an intrinsic value which should be preserved without looking for our benefits.

For solving the problem of value and attitude - “we need basic changes in man’s attitude towards nature, towards population growth, towards use of technology and perhaps man’s place in nature.”**24** It is already mentioned that man and nature has invaluable interdependent relationships. Therefore we should aware of that man is a part of nature. We need a contribution from each other. In this respect we should develop our ecological attitude.

Basic solutions of the ecological problems needs transvaluation of values. It requires “fundamental changes in the social, legal, political and economic institutions which embody our values.”**25** In an ecological movements it is said that” preservation of the natural and whole biological environment, with humans as an integrated part, is a necessary condition for the development of the life quality of mankind and its maintenance in the future.”**26** Trans valuation of value may change our life-style for this we should follow an ecosophical life-style which is”simple in means, rich in ends.” **27** To adjust such an ecosophical life we need an ethical basis. Environmental crisis needs an ethical solution. This ethical basis would be provided by an environmental ethics.**28**

Now we have arrived at the junction of environmental ethics. It is said that whenever there is problem there is philosophy. But philosophy could not be the first to be there with man to help and treat him when he faces complex and complicated problems. Kant says that philosophy is an attitude of human mind, a natural inclination of humanity that can’t be repressed in the light of unsolved problems and unanswered questions.29 We can’t avoid the importance of philosophy in our life. Philosophy has its various branches and among them ethics is most important one. Ethics is concerned with ‘rights or ‘good’ of human social action. In other words ethics concerned with “what we should do.” We have already mentioned that today we are in a very crucial moment if environmental problems. Though we take ecological attitude to solve such problems but we can not be able to do so only through ecology. We need environmental ethics or we need an ethical view. Environmental ethics is a result of the problems of man-mature relationships. It is concerned with a set of principles, values or norms relation to the ways in which we interact with our environment. **30**

Aldo Leopold mentioned two types of ethics which is concerned with-

1. Man with man.
2. Man with nature.

He mentioned ‘sand-Ethics’ which is the affect of the man-nature ethics. According to him man always use sand or nature only it is a commodity belonging to us.”**31** We always concerned with anthropocentric attitude of nature. Today, “there is need for man to change his role as a conqueror of land community to a plain member and citizen of it.” **32** Environmental crisis expends on the land ethics. We may therefore say that environmental ethics is based on above problems. Because the time has arrived to look or behave nature on the basis of morality.

Environmental ethics is sometimes considered as a totally new subject. According to S.K. Chahal “environmental ethics may be thought of as unprecedented and claiming a totally new philosophical reorientation.” But if environmental ethics is not completely separated from old ethical view. John Passmore argues that the western Judeo Christian tradition can be a necessary ground for the environmental ethics to take root. In western moral and religious traditions there are seeds that can be brought to flower in favour of Nature.**33** We may say that environmental ethics is neither completely new or nor is it a continuation of traditional ethics. It has concerned with both.34

We know that our ancestors also concerned with nature. They treated it from the religious aspects. The base of their environmental awareness lies in religion. Religion has a great influence in our life till today. We may bring a relationship between religion and environmental ethics. If we ground environmental ethics in religion then we should take three ways-

1. Nature is the creation of God.
2. God is immanent in nature.
3. Nature as the house of God.

We require a religious matrix which maintains man’s position as an ecologically dominant being.35

Environmental ethics is a branch of applied ethics. Applied ethics is a systematic effort to understand and to resolve more problems that arise in some domain of practical life. In other words, applied ethics is the application of the discipline of critical thought to specific of moral concern. It is concerned with how we apply our moral principles. As a branch of applied ethics environmental ethics is concerned with those moral values which are defined in terms of the relationship between nature and man.

Applied ethics is an extension of traditional ethics. As a branch of applied ethics, environmental ethics can be considered as an extension of traditional ethics. Therefore, technological, utilitarianism – all approaches of traditional ethics can be applied for environmental ethics. But both are different in few respects.

Traditional ethics is very old. It always concerned with man-man ethics. We know that moral actions needs- moral does or agent and moral object. In traditional ethics man is considered both the moral agent and the moral object. Therefore, traditional ethics only concerned with human beings. The utilitarian approach of traditional ethics stated that action is moral which brings maximum happiness of the maximum number. Traditional ethics says that “we should look for happiness” and “Nature is made for man.” As a result of such traditional ethical view the conflict between technology and environment arises. Traditional ethics allows that man is the master of nature. It always insists an anthropocentric view of nature. Traditional ethics believes that nature has value because of our usefulness.

In this way traditional way looks for man-man ethics but it will raises lots of problems in nature.

In contrast to traditional ethics as a branch of applied ethics environment ethics is concerned with man-nature relationship. It takes man as moral doer and nature as moral object. So, it takes cosmocentric approaches of nature. Environmental ethics stated that “nature has an intrinsic value”. We should aware of this intrinsic value instead of use value of nature. Environmental ethics accepted act utilitarianism. It believes that the consequences of our action should lead to good result. It discusses various problems which is arises because of the negligence of man. Environmental ethics evaluated the ethical views in respect of nature.

Thus, we have seen that traditional ethics and environmental ethics is different mainly their attitude of taking anthropocentric & cosmocentric value of nature. From above discussion we have seen the necessity of environmental ethics. Here we may raise a question why ecology is not enough to solve environmental problems ?

In this chapter we have discussed that today we are facing environmental problems in various ways. These problems should be solved within a short period because these problems can destroy our world. It threats our life. Now “we are faced with scarcity of natural resources.”**36** Environmental problems are not only particular nation’s problem but it includes the whole world. Therefore, we need global awareness to environmental problems. Today the time has arrived that to change our anthropocentric value of nature. We have to take a new attitude of behaving with nature. For this we may have sequence to change our life-style. We should being a new attitude towards ecological, political and our individual life. Today “we require a trans valuation of values.”**37** We have to start an ecological movement. But ecologist not completely succeeded in doing so. The main reason of the failure of the ecologist is that we are still looking for our benefits in every field. The greed of economic benefits prevents us to be conscious of environmental problems. We think that we should only enjoy a modern happy life without looking for others. If we do not change our social responsibility then ecologist can not be fulfilled in their aim. The another problem of failure of ecological movement is the imbalance between ecological movements. There are two types of ecologists- Deep ecologists and the shallow ecologists. “The shallow ecological movement often gives us recommendations for reform but the deep ecologist on the contrary is more interested in changing our attitude and our values.”**38** Therefore, we need ecophilosophy rather than ecology. We need firm relation between environment and man. We should have to change our materialistic attitude. We need a new justification that “can be provided by environmental ethic.”**39**

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