

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Q. What are Environmental Ethics and What is Your Role in Saving Nature?

Environmental ethics is a branch of environmental philosophy that studies the ethical relationship between human beings and the environment. This studies has given a new dimension to the conservation of natural resources and thereby protection of the environment.

Definition of Environmental ethics:

Environmental ethics is the discipline in philosophy that studies the moral relationship of human beings to, and also the values and moral status of the environment and its non-human contents. - Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

Environmental ethics means a relationship between human beings and the natural environment. As like as other living beings and non-living things, human beings are a part of the environment. Commonly it is seen that we often ignore the fact that even plants and animals are a part of our lives. Plants and animals are the integral part of the environment, so it cannot be denied their right to live. Since they are an inseparable part of nature and closely associated with our living, that guiding principles of our life and our ethical values should include them. They need to be considered as entities with the right to co-exist with human beings.

Concept:

The main concept of environmental ethics is to allow all the life form to live eco-friendly with human. By destroying nature, any one life cannot live. The food web clearly indicates that human beings, plants, animals, and other natural things are closely linked with each other. All of us are creations of nature and we depend on one another in the environment. The earth is not only for humans. The primary duty of human is to save **right to live and exist all other non-human entities i.e., human's morality** extends to the **non-human world**.

Environmental Ethics as a Field:

Earth Day is a worldwide annual event celebrated on April 22 every year supporting environmental protection. The first **Earth Day** was celebrated in 1970, now it includes globally in more than 193 countries. Today, environmental ethics is a widely discussed topic. The main aspects of Earth Day are ethical principles that guide us to use of natural resources, our duty to take efforts towards environmental protection, and our moral responsibility towards animals and nature.

Issues in Environmental Ethics :

Consumption of Natural Resources:

Natural environment is not a storehouse of resources. It is a reserve of resources that are crucial to the existence of life. Their dishonest depletion is detrimental to our well-being. As for example, we are cutting down forests for making our homes. Such undue use of resources is resulting in their depletion, risking the life of our future generations. This is an environment ethical issue.

Destruction of Forests:

Industries have the responsibility to restore the originality of resources instead of deforestation or destruction of them. Excessive mining processes harm the plant and animal life and also disrupt the ecological balance in that area. Slash-and-burn techniques are used

for clearing land, that leads to the destruction of forests and woodland. It is our duty to restored environment make up as the original one.

Harm to Animals:

As increasing deforestation made by human unethical activities wild animal comes to human settlements. Some animals are killed by men for food and some are used different studies those leads reduction or extinction of animal population. How can we deny the animals their right to live?

Environmental Pollution:

Many human activities like huge construction of roads and buildings for residential and industrial use etc., lead to environmental pollution. Rising of human population are also increasing the demand of space for habitat and of natural resources for construction, communication etc. As a result the carrying capacity of our planet, animal habitats and forest are being destroyed. There by all kind of lives are being threatened to survive. Such unethical human activities lead heavy pollution. Global warming and climate change, deforestation, resources depletion or extinction etc disrupts ecological balance. Now a day, it is common fact that due to unethical activities many metropolitan cities that are clouded more than a month by heavy fog and harmful gasses those are danger to all lives. At present pandemic outbreaks of **Coronavirus** is a result of human unethical activities. Whole world being lockdown or stop, people are bounded in home month after month, large number of lives and properties in the world.

Instrumental Value:

According to Aristotle, "nature has made all things specifically for the sake of man", which means non-human beings only have an instrumental value; they are meant to serve as 'instruments' for human beings. Accordingly, human can use other living beings but not meant for destroying them because it eventually affects human life. Felling of trees is wrong because it eventually causes loss of food sources for humans, and not because it is simply *unethical*.

Intrinsic Value:

According to eco-centrism, there are no existential differences between the human and non-human entities in nature, which means humans are not more valuable than any other component of the environment. Humans as well as plants, animals, and other constituents of nature have an inherent value. Protection of species is our moral responsibility as they have an intrinsic value. Loss of a species spells disrespect to nature's process of speciation. Thus, any action that translates into disregard for the environment is unethical. Philosopher Paul Taylor is of the view that plants have intrinsic value and that they are entitled to respect

Environmental Ethics and Religion: Different religions encouraged the ideas of protecting nature because of the association of natural elements with the Supreme Power that created them. In some religions, certain plants or animals are worshiped considering them as symbols of God. Nature worship is a part of many religious and spiritual practices. These means that all religions laying importance on non-human constituents and human beings needs to realize their *connection* with nature.

Environmental Ethics & Human Values

Environmental ethics is the philosophical discipline that considers the moral and ethical relationship of human beings to the environment. It emerged as a philosophical discipline after 1970s to increase awareness how the growing population of the world impacts on environment through increasing use of technology, industry, pesticides, huge construction etc. It is a moral obligation toward saving the environment.

Human values are unique to each individual because not everyone places the same importance on each element of life. For example, a person living in poverty in an undeveloped country may find it morally acceptable to cut down the forest to make room for a farm where he can grow food for his family. However, a person in a developed country may find this action morally unacceptable because the destruction of forests increases carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere, which can negatively impact the environment.

Our Moral Responsibility:

Our moral responsibility is to preserve nature for our **future generations**. By causing environmental degradation and depletion of resources, we are risking the lives of future generations. Non-renewable resources are fast-depleting. This means, they may not be available for the future generations. So, we are maintaining balance between our needs and the availability of resources, so that the forthcoming generations are also able to benefit from their use.

-x- by J.C. Kalita, dt. 27.04.2020