



## ETHICAL EXPLANATION TO ENVIRONMENTALISM

Dr Rajeev Saxena\*      Dr Gopal Krishna Sharma\*\*

\*Financial Advisor, MP Govt. Public Health, and Family Welfare Department.

\*\*Professor and Head, School of Studies, Dept. of Political Science Vikram University, Ujjain.

### Abstract

*Environmental degradation and then the awaken ethical appeal to resolve these issues is the pulse of time. Anthropocentric and eco-centric claims and their impact on society are core concerns for Green Political Theory. Environmental ethics is the transformation of traditional ethics to political theory in shape of Green political theory.*

**Key words:** *Environmentalism, Values, Utilitarianism, Life Sustenance.*

### Introduction

Recently up stood stream of great debate of Green idea has stirred the minds of humans. The ethical foundation of right and wrong, while interpreting the environment, at the same time, added more colours. The degrading environment and threat to human existence vis-a-vis the concern of planet provided an additional momentum to the ethical foundation of environmental issues and the moral basis of Green political theory in shape of activities.

The environmentalism which "argues for a managerial approach to environmental problems, secure the belief that they can be solved without fundamental change in present values or patterns of production and consumption.<sup>1</sup> But this view has been critically attacked by ecologists who are of opinion that present value patterns of distribution and consumption is detrimental and unethical to whole existence. Marxist explanation of history and political economy has proved it earlier. The later poses the bogey of questions before the values and beliefs.

Economics decides the ethics, it is a well-established dictum of Marxian politico-economical theory, here in the environmentalism as a mode of Green political action, the factors of production distribution and consumption underline the inherited sense of mastery over nature - a slave like look at nature, and it, really has taken place. "In affluent countries the post-war period was a prospect for everyone, as the fruits of technology were being harvested and nature was being exploited thoughtlessly 'Nature is made for man'<sup>2</sup>. It is apparently clear that slave has no subjection of right or wrong treatment or any expectation of ethical life. This attitude has lead us to scarcity and massive devastation of nature resources and off course of ourselves as well.

### The Deliberative Explanation

The aid of science and technology can manage the affairs both ways. The technology is an objective tool. Its use depends on the user. The developed countries or the north block have squeezed the nature on the figurative statement of development of planet, but when the question of ethical examination comes on the board, no excuse is there with them. The developing countries are also trying to copy the 'north' but poor fellows do not know that they themselves are getting trapped in a vicious circle of unethical loops for which their coming generation will never give them escape. The materialistic look and conspicuous consumption have flagged the issue of management of environment and ultimately the ethical basis of saving existence.

"The basic underlying causes of this crisis are mistaken values and attitudes - the attitudes that we can exploit nature without any restriction, that the production of goods is more important than the people who use them, that nature will provide unlimited resources, that we have no obligation to future generation to conserve resources."<sup>3</sup>

Environmentalism has fixed two poles one is human and other is technological management of nature. The ethics of environmentalism has thus a balance of right and wrong just for preservation of present mode of production and consumption. But when at the same time the threats to living species including every living being, depletion of ozone layers, disruption in food chains and toxication of land, water and air, etc. appear, the ethical cry for saving the planet from the group of environmentalists arise, but they themselves know that their own attitudes are responsible for this devastation. Market or price driven technological initiatives induce a vicious circle of capitalistic environmentalism which further destruct nature. This requires the trans-valuation of these enshrined values.

In fact "the most important part of the environment philosophy is a humane value system which recognizes the ties that of the commonality of interest between humans and the other species that inhabitate the earth, as well as the intervening fate of all humans in the fact of increasingly severe resource crunches".<sup>4</sup>The natural right of life incorporates healthy



environment management for safety and security from state. It is the essence of contract theory of state. "A pollution free environment is regarded as one of the basic rights of the people throughout the world" <sup>5</sup> but it is not limited to human species, every living being wants an environmental space for its sustenance and beyond that every creature/creation requires its own space. The word pollution encompasses all detriments of life. In wider sense it is removing all wrong action from natural stream of evolution. The minimum requirement of space environmental space is an enshrined natural right – the infallible right of animate as well as inanimate world. In fact "environmental space is a right based approach that conceptualizes sustainable development in terms of access for all to a fair share in the limited environmental resources on which healthy quality of life depends. It implies eliminating at least international inequalities in aggregate resource consumption as well as intergenerational distributions<sup>6</sup>.

Thus here it is around that from the point of view of environmentalism the ethical dictums are - Common good life to all but a subjection of present values,(consumption values) at the same time the hidden principle of saving the others (including nature and non human living) and also respecting the future generations due gets bleak in eye of environmentalism. The inter-generation equality is superimposed on intra-generation distribution and consumption. The environmental space is a philosophical axiom of ethical structure which should have been in the tenants of environmentalism.

Anthropocentric utilitarian values and economic return values are two schism in environmentalism. But unfortunately both are subjected to present values and thus present generation. These two approaches can form the other highly important aspects of environmentalist ethics - which can also be championed by shallow ecologists but in fact this is not the true presentation of whole scenario. The true environmentalism will have to contain the characteristics of deep ecology. Deep ecology is not against the machine or harnessing nature but it certainly is against the human greed. The greed in unwanted in deep-ecology" A few traces of greed may creep in environmentalism and certainly they creep in which is advocated by environmentalists in name of preserving the present value system, and this is ethical, but In fact it is not right. The contract between the environmentalism and ecologism has to be searched in value structure of present and present with future. "The deep ecologist believes in bio-spherical egalitarianism -in principle <sup>7</sup> and it is not biosphere only, it is ecosphere in true sense<sup>8</sup>".

The anthropocentric utilitarianism may be a substitute name for the ethics of environmentalism,, but it is not the true situation. The moment of ethics must move from human to non human world and even beyond that in time, space and dimension. The environment space not only exists between generations or two countries "North" and "South" but it also exists as an all pervading ethical principle. The reason of this permeability is equality and fair share, the environmental justice. The basic idea behind environmental space in simple: for each individual it is possible to articulate a maximum rate of consumption of environmental resources ' a fair share of the maximum available within global limits; while recognising the existence of a minimum determined by need and human dignity.<sup>9</sup>

Thus it is clear that the environmental ethics is an extension of traditional ethics. It requires extension from human world to beyond human world. It encompasses the right or wrong place and fair share of every constituent on this planet. The ethics which should have cover the all living and non-living world up to the limit of cosmos is to kept in centre.

The green political theory has analysed both the streams i.e. environmentalism and ecologism. The environmentalists if have belief on machine and technology to reduce the environmental problems of degradation but keeping the present values intact, on the other hand the ecologists advocate the radical change in relation between human and non-human world and in our mode of social and political life <sup>10</sup>. The later view underlines the political theory to be discussed where as the former has stronger element to be included in the discussion.

The green political theory which is concerned for survival has an ethical bearing of environmental management strategies, but the ultimate question is related with values of conservation and continuation, input environmental ethics is reshaping the "good" and "bad" from the view point of life and living.

The environmental ethics, in an empirical way is thus anthropocentric but in an ideal sense it must be ecological and eco-centric. As it touches the ideal sphere, it loses its independent identity and remains no more, and then it becomes an ontological preposition which examines:

1. Environmental problems
2. Remedies to environmental issues.
3. The flourishing of human and non-human life on earth.



4. Non-exploitation of natural resources except satisfying vital needs in a simple way.
5. Significant change in political and socio-economic vision <sup>11</sup>.

It, thus, is clear that examination of world by ideal environmental ethics, decidedly leads to eco-philosophy – the environmental ethics which would provide a justification for our ontological perceptions of ecosphere.

The additional benefit of defining environmental ethics is to find a platform in shallow and deep ecological stands, because where as the former has specific but blurred picture of ecological ethics the later extends the ethical structure beyond human to even whole existence and finally again going back to environmentalism it is found that "Dominance over nature, natural environment as a resource for humans, natural and economic growth for growing human population, belief in ample resources reserves, high technological progress and solutions, consumerism and national centralized community guide to a working model of environmental ethics but under subjection of deep ecological concerns which have faith in "harmony with nature, intrinsic value of eco-particles eco-sphere equity and equality, sample needs and ultimately a limit to man's endeavour over nature for cause of survival <sup>12</sup>.

### **Conclusion**

The environmental ethics though is managerial approach to life and resources and if every subsequent time requires it, it ultimately leads to the holistic vision of transference of balanced gamut to future. The environmental ethics is thus a reality of anthropocentric utilitarianism vis-a-vis anthropocentric kantism but it sees towards eco-centric ideals in an indirect way by virtue of its own ontological concerns.

### **References**

1. Andrew Dobson, *Green Political thought*, <sup>3rd</sup> ed (London : Routledge, 2000) pp. 2-35.
2. SK. Chahal, *Environment and the Moral life*, APH Publishers, New Delhi-1994, p.1.
3. *Ibid* pp. 2-3.
4. Biswajeet Mukherjee (ed) *Environmental Awakening*, Shikha Books, Kolkata, 2005, p.17.
5. *Ibid* p. 10.
6. Julian Agyeman and others (ed) *just sustainabilities*, Earth Scan Publication Ltd. London, 2003, p. 25.
7. SK Chahal, *op. cit* p. 23.
8. *Ibid* p. 24.
9. Julian Agyeman and others (ed) *op cit* p. 22.
10. Andrew Dobson, *op. cit*, pp. 2-35.
11. Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology, living as if nature mattered*, Pere grine Smith Books, Salt Lake City 1985.
12. SK. Chahal *op. cit* p.22.