# AN ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE ON ECOLOGY

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*In contemporary times, the scenario of the environmental crisis has created serious doubts about the future of the Natural Environment. Most scientists have begun to believe that if the current human behavior towards nature continues to exist, the hope for sustainable life will be lost entirely. Considering this, it is necessary for man to modify and correct his behavior towards nature. Though ethics has historically been centered on relationships between human beings it is now getting focused on man- nature interaction. It requires modification of human behavior in order to correct the impacts of human activities on Nature. To attain this, both ethics and ecology are needed simultaneously. Ecological studies help us to develop an understanding of Natural systems and associated laws and regulations. In contrast, ethical studies give us a sense of defining what right and wrong behaviors towards the Natural systems, flora, and fauna is. This article attempts to discuss some links between ethical concerns and ecology for nature conservation.*

**Key Words**: Ethics, Environment, Ecology, Interaction, Ecosystem, Equilibrium.

## INTRODUCTION

Recent available researches clearly indicate that the changed lifestyle of man has resulted in various local, regional, and global problems ranging from global climatic changes, pollution, desertification, disasters, and changes in the biogeochemical cycles. Considering the

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horizontal and vertical extent of damages, which have been caused to nature, there is an emergent need to integrate ecology not only with ethics but with other scientific fields as well. The deterministic school of thought believes that Nature governs and shapes the life of human beings. In contrast, the possibilistic school of thought believes that nature provides opportunities to man. With the advent of technology, the present man is exploring those possibilities and shaping the environment. This changed scenario is visibly showing an increase in the power of man to modify his natural environment and has led to a profound change in man-nature interaction. The idea that humans can explore the possibilities provided by nature is getting more support than the deterministic view.

Man's power has increased due to advancement in knowledge and its application, which has led to a rise in different forms of technological innovations, causing a change in the traditional man-nature relationship. As a result of this, the need has arisen to look into the man's changed position concerning the natural environment. This complete transformation in man nature relations began with the starting of the 16$^{th}$ century Industrial

Revolution in Europe, grew in the 20$^{th}$ century and came to be known as the period of modernity, directly related to man's changed behavior towards nature. One of the outcomes of modernity was also the separation of science and religion. The separation of science and religion has led to the dissociation of ethics and virtues from the scientific discussion. Materialistic values have become more dominant in understanding man- nature interaction. Based on this view, nature has been reduced to a material object which can be easily modified and manipulated.

It is important to remember that the industrial revolution has led to a

growth in sciences, which has helped to understand the natural environment and its complexity. However, at the same time, the dominant place has been given to human beings, which could become possible only with various technological inventions. As a result of this, man has perceived and treating nature as an object without any moral, ethical responsibility towards it. In other words, modern science and technology observe no limits in the exploitation of natural resources.

It can be observed that humans have always dreamt of their dominance over nature, and the industrial revolution provided man a starting point for realizing the same. In current times, technological advancement can be seen as man's growing dominance over nature, which is also justified by various developmental projects being taken up even in areas with grave geographical constraints. As a result, it can be concluded that what is responsible for today's ecological crisis is man's perception of nature only as an entity and its rampage behavior towards exploiting natural resources.

Mohaghegh-Damad (2001) believes that the modern scientific concept has led to removing spirituality from the natural environment and opened the doors for overexploitation. Therefore, it must be realized that technology cannot provide any solution for the ecological crisis; rather, technology has caused them to emerge. Instead, the solution should be looked into the revised and well-knit man-nature relationship. The idea of Schumacher (Schumacher, 1989) believes that humans should restrict themselves from dominating nature in any way because, in any case, the only man is going to be the loser. It seems that Schumacher is debating the consequences of man's dominance over nature only in the case when humans are acting without any responsibility. He also says that even when a man is dominating nature, but if he acts responsibly and with

wisdom, better opportunities are provided for improvement and growth. The above-discussed opinions have indicated a need for a universal standard reference, and ethics is the area that can provide this reference (Dalfovo, 1996).

What is required is the equipment of the ecological studies with ethical aspects. Ecological studies opine that humans are only one of the species existing in nature and form a small part of the ecosystems, biogeochemical cycles wherein the biotic and the biotic components are interacting with each other. All components of the natural systems support the functioning, and any alteration or disturbance in any part can endanger the equilibrium of the entire cycle (Christopher son, 1997). For example, in a patch of forest, herbivores feed on the autotrophs. Normally, one hectare of forest land can fulfill the need for a specific number of animals. However, if the number of animals exceeds the capacity of the forest land available, then there can be an imbalance. In such a situation, a new balance will be attained by the ecosystem by reducing the number of animals or reduction in the no. of autotrophs. In other words, the natural systems maintain the balance on their own by reaching equilibrium between plant-animal populations.

Nevertheless, man can disturb the natural processes by altering any of the components. After a point of time, it is possible that the first-class community of forests is replaced by the second-or third-class community and ultimately may lead to problems like desertification or land degradation. From all these alterations, it might be possible that new relationships and new equilibrium gets emerged among the various ecosystem components. These may further prove to be negative for other ecosystems and species, including humans. In such a scenario, if humans continue to behave the way they have been doing in the past decades, man will no longer sustain his position in

nature, and the further generations may be at stake. For these reasons, humans need to redefine their role in the natural environment.

As discussed, in all the ecosystems, several factors are accountable for maintaining the equilibrium of natural systems. However, humans have the power to undermine those regulatory mechanisms concerning their logic, wisdom, and freedom. Man has additional capabilities, and that is the reason that makes a man a different component of the ecosystem. Man has studied other bridles in ethics, found in their inner self, and spheres like ecology. Also, environmental ethics comes under bioethics, and environmental ethicists try to define the man-nature interaction in terms of what is right and what is not towards nature. (Benson, 2002). Ethics helps man voluntarily limit selfishness and urge him to respect all other species of nature by recognizing their right to life and freedom.

Though ecological science has significantly contributed to the development of environmental ethics, still clarification about the same is required for the conservation of resources. Conservation of the environment could happen only by adopting the universal ethics of balance and harmony, respect for all species of nature, and an agreement on resource conservation (Dalfovo, 1997). The objective of developing the relationship between ethics and ecology is to enhance people's friendly behavior towards nature.

Nevertheless, various approaches for the integration of ecology and ethics concerning man-nature relation still needs to be explored (Adolph son, 2004).

## CONCLUSION

It is evident now that before preserving the natural environment, the

link between man and natural environment needs to be understood, the laws of working natural systems, and their respective processes. There is no doubt that we need to understand the natural environment before natural environment preservation.

This has answered the question of what, the knowledge about the natural environment. However, another critical question is, how? After attaining the knowledge of what, it is significant to know how to implement that knowledge towards conservation. Knowing what not enough is, what might require is some guiding principles to govern the behavior of man towards nature and in dealing non-human world. In the modern age, limitation of human desires and wisdom for ethical, responsible man environment interaction is the need of the hour. Ethics can only help in developing a responsible attitude and respect for natural laws and regulations. It is also required to establish such environmental ethics that strengthens the inner intentions for preserving the sustainability of the environment. This can be attained only by knowing both the natural environment and man's inner self.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

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