



## **Environmental Ethics**

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### **Abstract:**

*The word Ethics has come from the Greek word Ethos which means custom or habit. In Bengali Ethics means moral philosophy. So we can say the customs which help man to do the right works and the habits which follow them are called moral ethics. In short we can say moral ethics is such a subject by following which we can understand what should be done and what not, and mould our lifestyle in the right ways. So we can say in general moral ethics is such a subject by practicing which we can easily differentiate between good and evil. Following the above discussion we can explain Environmental Ethics. We know that the Earth is the only planet where we find the existence of life and the span of existence of man on Earth is the shortest. Man is the most intelligent in the animal kingdom as man has the power of thinking and capacity of applying in reality. But at present the existence of man on Earth is at stake and man is inviting his ruin by polluting environment in large scale.*

**Keywords:** Ethics, Lifestyle, Environmental, Existence, Explain.

### **Introduction:**

Mahatma Gandhi, father of nation, rightly said, "Earth provides enough to provide every man's need, but not every man's greed". In reality we have begun to forget that man is also a part of Nature like other non-human entity and from this point arises the importance of Environmental Ethics. The basic principle of Environmental Ethics lies in the concept that every species- human or non-human - who are part of this nature, have equal right to live and survive however small they may be. Man being the most intelligent and thoughtful species should show the responsibility and take proper steps so that every species remain secure and flourish in natural environment. Environmental Ethics teaches us to establish a strong relationship with other species of nature and to ensure their existence on this planet.

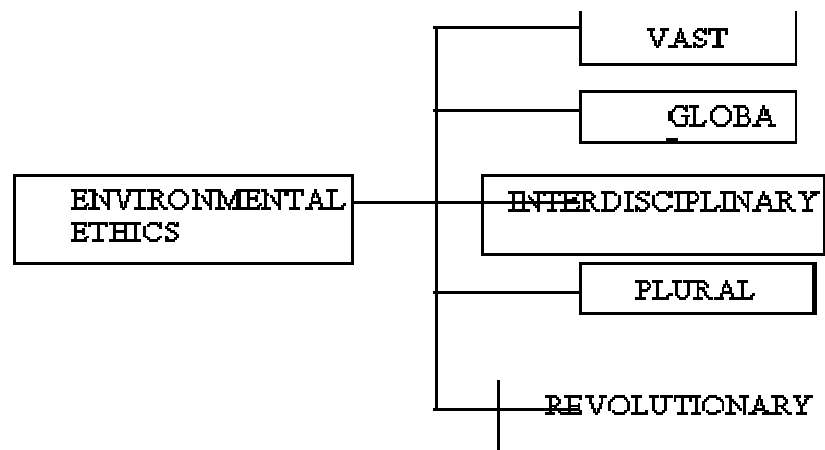
### **Natural questions come out of this Environmental Ethics:**

If nature is the storehouse of all natural ingredients how far it is wise to consume everything from it depriving other non-human species and our future generation! By consuming all natural resources, we are endangering the existence of other species and our own generation to come.

In the name of advancement of civilization, we are setting up new industries, establishing new colonies for human habitations, lifting up underground mineral resources like coal, oil, iron, etc., expanding highways, roads; and to do so we are destroying forests, water bodies, and other natural resources. As a result many species of animals and birds have already extricated and many more on the way to extinction. How far it is ethical to create ecological imbalance? Is it ethical to kill animals and birds to procure food and to get their hides, furs, feathers etc. for commercial purposes?

To get the answers of so many questions, the discussions of Environmental Ethics begins. It is clear that man, being the most intelligent and thoughtful species, should take the responsibility of maintaining ecological balance for the interest of other non-human species and also our future generation

### Characteristics of Environmental Ethics:



First characteristic of Environmental Ethics is its vastness i.e. not only human but also non-human species is the center of discussion.

Second characteristic is that Environmental Ethics is a matter of international discussion; it knows no boundary.

Third characteristic is that it is an interdisciplinary matter i.e. Environmental Ethics is not based on a single issue or region; rather it includes different principles of environment, environmental laws, literature and politics.

Fourth characteristic is that it is plural in nature because Environmental Ethics is the resultant of Anthropocentrism, Egocentrism and Biocentrism.

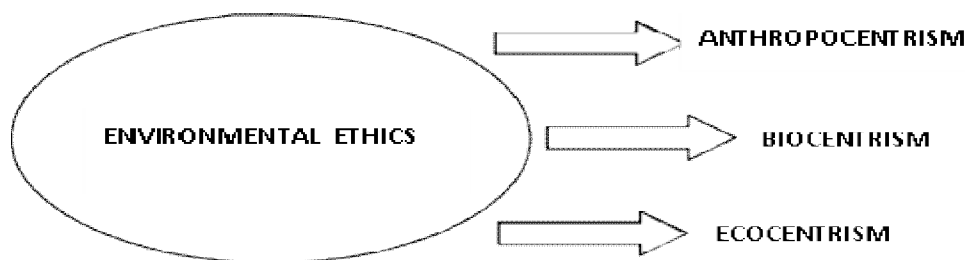
Fifth characteristic is that it is revolutionary in nature because Environmental Ethics criticizes Capitalism and discuss the necessity of coexistence of all species of Nature.

We have already discussed that Environmental Ethics is the resultant of three branches -i)Anthropocentrism, ii) Biocentrism, iii) Eco centrism. Now we can focus on these three branches.

**Anthropocentrism:** According to the followers of this branch people have every right to take favorable decision about Nature and Environment as they are the most intelligent species on this planet.

**Biocentrism:** The followers of this theory have included human and non-human species as their topic of discussion. They believe every species - human or non-human- has right to live and they themselves decide their good or evil.

Egocentrism: The followers of this theory go against the followers of Anthropocentrism. They believe not human but Nature should be the center of discussion. According to them every species has right to live in natural environment and man has no right to disturb their natural habitats and man should show the responsibility of not disturbing environmental balance.



### **Relationship between Environmental Ethics and Environmental Studies:**

Firstly in the discussion of environmental studies, the Biologists and the Ecologists differ with one another. Where the Biologists give importance to the history of evolution of different species, the Ecologist give importance to ecosystem, i.e. the different elements of environment and their mutual action and their mutual action and reaction and their effects on environment. But Environmental Ethics give clear direction how to conserve environment by drawing attention of human beings. In short if Environment studies is the problem, Environmental Ethics is its solution.

Secondly Environmental Ethics gives clear directions to the workers of Environmental Studies on which fields they should work. Environmental ethics speaks that environmental pollution causes climate change and human beings must work together to resist environmental pollution. For example we can say when wildlife management gives importance to resist the species (trees, insects etc.) which adversely effects on human life, Environmental Ethics expands the ideas of wildlife management and teaches us that our Nature or Environment includes both native and non-native species. So not only resistance but also protection is necessary for the interest of every species.

We should deeply realize the reasons of climate change which is a global problem and to take necessary measures to resist this climate change. For this climate change and lack of congenial environment many species have already become extinct and many more are on the way to extinction. So if we can find out the reasons behind climate change and can resist rather solve the reasons, we can save the species which are going to be extinct and create an information bank about the endangered species which is also an important part of wildlife management.

Environmental Ethics, by giving importance to the rights of every species, can decide what to be done by the Biologists and what to be done by the Conservation Biologists. We can say if Environmental Studies be the student, Environmental Ethics is friend, philosopher and guide.

### **Importance of Environmental Ethics:**

From the above discussion we can come to the conclusion that this earth is the natural habitat of every species and every species has equal right to live and flourish of their own. Man, being the most intelligent species, should take the pivotal role to preserve environment. So to discuss the importance of Environmental Ethics we can say:-

It makes us aware that destructive activeness of man on nature endangers non-human as well as human species. It helps us to create human 2 words non-human species and their rights to develop a Cooperative attitude towards them.

It gives us direction how human and non-human species can co-exist in a disciplined manner. It acts as a guardian how to resist environmental pollution and to protect environment.

### Role of Religion, Culture in Environmental Conservation

Without going in detailed discussions we can say every religion teaches us moral values. In English the term "Religion" means 'duty'. If we discuss the essence of every religion, then we can see there is also a clear direction what attitude man should have towards environment to make our environment congenial for every species. It is surprising to note that the problems and to find out their solutions the whole world is busy today, our old scriptures had already given directions many many years ago. If we speak about Hindu religion we can see the oldest scripture 'Rik Veda' originates from trees. In ancient time trees were worshiped as Gods and Goddesses. Wives prayed long lives of their husbands like Peepal trees. Trees were also called Kalpataru. In 13.48 sloka of 'Jajur Veda' it is said - Never kill life. The Buddhist think, "If you destroy environment, you are destroying yourselves".



In Christianity it is said, "It is man's moral duty to protect the beautiful nature". In Islam the teaching is the same. In Aayat 6.38 of the Quran it is said, "Allah is the creator of everything in this planet and so never neglect anything". In Hadis 2320 it is taught that when a Muslim plants a tree or sow crops for cultivation, he is doing the best job for Allah because the fruits of that tree or the crops of his land will provide food to man, animals, birds. Tree is the most important 'Niyamat' of all the 'Niyamats' as Allah has given to mankind for their livelihood on earth.

We notice in utter wonder that thousands and thousands of years ago in Islamic morality the preservation of Environment had become an important subject and it had given importance to i) Preservation of water, ii) Waste management and iii) coexistence with other species of nature. Avoiding the number of examples we can say to protect the existence of man on earth it is very important to protect environment. So it is man's responsibility to protect other non-human species and to take care of them for humans for own interest. We should follow the religions scriptures which teach us to protect environment for collateral existence with other non human species. On the other hand we can say a disciplined and restrained lifestyle is able to accelerate the process of environmental conservation. We should avoid consumerism lifestyle and inculcate a healthy restraint cultural lifestyle for our own sake.



### Islamic Teaching on the Environment

- The five most important principles in Islamic Environmental Ethics are based on the teachings of the Qur'an.
- These five principles are the concepts of Tawhid – (unity), Khalifah – (stewardship or guardianship) and Amana (trust), Akrah – (accountability, and Shar'iah law.



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