

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS IN ISLAM AND HINDUISM

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ABSTRACT

Environmental ethics has become an indispensable topic of debate for scholars and environmentalists. Environmental ethics deems that humans are a part of society as well as other living creatures, which includes plants and animals. These items are a very important part of the world and are considered to be a practical part of human life. Thus, it is necessary that every human being respect and honour this and use morals and ethics when dealing with these creatures.

Environmental needs are important to any society because with the availability of a quality environment, yield is boosted a healthy environment that ensures quality in the lives of humans which underscores the need for preserving the environment at all costs. Environmental needs are of more importance as compared to human needs because they figure the quality of human life and a number of environmental problems like depletion of resources, changing weather patterns and deforestation have been identified to have impact on future generations as compared to the present. In order to maintain social order and balance in the environment we should refrain ourselves from bad habits that are not betterment for the proper running of society. The relationship between humans and religion is very important in environmental ethics because theology of religion give us to better idea about environment. In this process the new evolution and revolution in environmental ethics may occur. For the betterment of human beings and saving of biodiversity, we must consult the entire religions' beliefs, spiritual books and sayings of pious men.

Key words: Ethics, Environment, Islam, Hinduism.

INTRODUCTION

Environment is the surrounding or conditions in which a person, animal or plant lives. In the broader view sun, moon, sea, earth, forest and desert etc together make an environment for the existence of man and all living beings. While in its closer view man's behavior his altitude and his interaction with his surrounding makes his environment. Living in an unclean, congested and polluted place, result in a physically, psychologically and mentally sick environment. A successful man generates his surroundings by his practice and positive thinking to a healthy life style.

The universal declaration of human rights was adopted by the United Nations in 1948, soon after the end of world war second the end of the period in human history when the nation state was the pinnacle of human social organization. We may therefore regard 1948 as the beginning of the era of globalization.

Universal human rights are the ethical counterpart of the emergence of a transnational human community, the global village. Correlative to the newly perceived existence of a worldwide biotic community, the United Nations may soon adopt a universal declaration of environmental ethics. After hundreds of consultations with thousands of organizations representing millions of people, the earth charter commission, co chaired by Maurice Strong and Mikhail Gorbachev, issued a final version of the earth charter in March of 2000, composed by the earth charter drafting committee, led by Steven Rockefeller. The earth charter reaffirms the concept of universal human rights and adds to that reaffirmation an environmental ethic. Its preamble declares that 'we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one earth community a unique community of life.' The very first principle of the earth charter echoes the Leopold land ethic: 'Respect Earth and life in all its diversity. Recognize that all beings are interdependent and every form of life has value regardless of its worth to human beings.' Leopold called such non instrumental value 'value in the philosophical sense, something far broader than mere economic value.' Contemporary environmental philosophers, as brown indicates, call it intrinsic value.

Current environmental crisis cannot be compared with any other problem in the world from the beginning of history to the present time. Undoubtedly, the contemporary environmental crisis is the result of incorrect education and practical ignorance of human and it is one of the most serious challenges ahead. However, human behavior practically shows that were beyond nature and we tend to focus on consumption. Achieving environmental goals only through international commitments is impossible because commitment is of innate nature. For proper utilization of environment, human has to enact laws that look at the nature not only to be

consumed but to sustain life in the 21st century. Human must adjust its behavior to stability of nature to maintain environmental values and change its performance by making changes in its intellectual and belief principals. For this, environmental training requires factors that influence voluntary behavior change. Therefore, learning about the determinants of behavior consistent with the nature of the treatment becomes necessary. The educational institutions, in order to improve the environmental education, need to identify the factors that are influencing the voluntary behavior, thus, research on the determinants of behavior consistent with the natural environment becomes essential.

What exacerbates environmental crises is the lack of environmental education and training and more serious than it is the lack of attention to correct environmental education and attitudes. Much of this turmoil refers to the type of the training that forms people understanding and belief about his surrounding environment so, nowadays, everyone agrees that education is most effective tool and method to deal with future challenges, particularly environmental challenges and achieving the objectives of this type of training leads to the proper use of resources and guarantees sustainable development.

ISLAM

Some aspects of the Islamic perspective on environmental ethics in the light of Quranic verses and Islamic narrations (hadiths) nature in Islamic environmental ethics; virtues related to human treatment of the environment; and vices related to human treatment of the environment.

Ethics emphasizes compassion, mercy and forgiveness toward every one. It is for the people, as humans are the only self-reflective, deliberative moral agents on the earth. The Quran says, “And you’re Lord taught the Bee to build its cell in hills, on trees and in (human) habitats”. The circle of man ethical kindness starts with family but then radiates outward to one’s community. This has even extended to animals and plants in Muslim society. The human quality that encompasses the concept of the ideal ethical value in the Quran is summed up in Taqwa.

The Quran says, “O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)”. The Muslim ummah or community is thus seen as the instrument through which Quranic ideals and commands are translated at the social level.

Environmental ethics is the discipline in philosophy that studies the moral relationship of human beings to the environment and its nonhuman contents. It starts with inter-human concerns for a quality environment and ends up with man's relation to animals, plants, species and ecosystems. Islamic environmental ethics is based on legal foundations which Muslims hold to be formulated by God and is termed as the sources of Shariah; i.e. Quran, Hadith and Fiqah. These legal instructions have been revealed in such a way that the conscience approves and acknowledges them to be correct.

According to Islam environment, environment is God's creation and to protect it is to preserve its values as a sign of the Creator. According to a tradition, Prophet Muhammad taught that "all creatures are like a family of God; and He loves the most those who are the most beneficent to His family." Man's uniqueness is defined by Allah as "Khalifa" on this earth which literally means the guardian or care taker: "And He it is who has made you successors (vicegerent) in the land." Man is distinguished as the only creature on this universe endowed with the intellect. The Quran says, "Man is gifted with intellect and the power of conceptualization". Thus man should utilize his power of intellect for preserving, protecting and promoting his fellow creatures. Islam also blames those people, who do not employ their intellectual faculties of thinking, reasoning and meditating, the Quran describes such people as: "They have hearts where with they understand not, eyes where with they see not and ears where with they hear not they are like cattle-may more misguided, for they are heedless of warning." The interaction between the creatures and the environment in their service to one another represents a symbolic situation supporting the doctrinal belief, in Islam, that it was God who created the interactive system and all of its elements should be nurtured and maintained. The Quranic verse says, "There is no moving creature on earth but its sustenance depends on God: He knows the time and place of its temporary deposit, all is in a clear record." In another verse of the Quran says, "And whatever creature that is in the skies and that is in the earth and the angels bow down to Allah and they do not consider themselves great. They fear their Fosterer above them and do what they are commanded." Thus all living things are partners to man in existence and submission to God, thus man must be merciful toward animals and strive to ensure the preservation of different species.

HINDUISM

Hinduism contains various references to the worship of the divine in nature in its Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, Sutras, and its other sacred texts. Millions of Hindus recite Sanskrit mantras daily to revere their rivers, mountains, trees, animals, and the earth. Although the Chipko (tree-hugging) Movement is the most widely known example of Hindu environmental leadership, there are examples of Hindu action for the environment that are centuries old.

Hinduism is a remarkably diverse religious and cultural phenomenon, with many local and regional manifestations. Within this universe of beliefs, several important themes emerge. The diverse theologies of Hinduism suggest that. The earth can be seen as a sign of the goddess, and must be treated with respect.

The five elements space, air, fire, water, and earth are the foundation of an interconnected web of life. Dharma often translated as “duty” can be reinterpreted to include our responsibility to care for the earth. Simple living is a model for the development of sustainable economies. Our treatment of nature directly affects our karma, and Gandhi also exemplified many of these teachings, and his example continues to inspire contemporary social, religious, and environmental leaders in their efforts to protect the planet.

The messages of environmental conservation contained in the Vedic and Puranic literatures, in the Upanishads, Arthashastra, Charak Samhita, Ramayana and Mahabharata are all based on Hindu religious philosophy. “Non-violence” that is, non-injury to both the living as well the non-living creations of nature such as plants, animals, air, water, land (earth), hill and forest is the core of Hindu religious philosophy which extended up to Jainism and Buddhism. All social and cultural activities in Hinduism have some environmental overtones. Hindus have extended their relationship from social and natural environment treating rivers as their mother goddess, forest as gods, totemic animals as brethren and prey species as mortalities. Traditional Hindus believe that trees can bring peace, prosperity and consolation to mankind, worship of god a green tree is considered to be a sin and sacrilege which can spell disaster for the family and even for the entire village community a traditional Hindu father is specially guided by the moral restrictions of destroying a green tree.

It is believed that even the cutting of branches could make his son invalid. Hindu homes worship peepal tree (*Ficus religiosa*) off widowhood; they worship of god Coconut tree (*Cocos nucifera*) is believed to be a symbol of fecundity and so Hindu women who nurse the desire to get a son worship coconut trees and eat coconut fruits as a divine gift. The primitive Hindu societies of India represented by the tribal’s (aborigines) living in mountains and forests have significantly contributed a protection and preservation of several virgin forest patches in rich in biodiversity. They are called “sacred groves” (Forest of God) and are left untouched by the local people. All interferences into it are a taboo, it is usually dedicated to a deity or mother goddess who is supposed to protect and preside over it and the intruders will be punished. Such sacred groves are found all over India particularly in the Western Ghats and north-eastern Himalayan regions and have become part of the “Biosphere Reserves” of India containing some of the rare and endangered species of plants and animals. They are repository of some valuable “germless” which would be needed by the posterity for sustaining agricultures in future.

Hindu philosophy has always had a humane and dignified view of the sacredness of all life, and that humans are but one link in the symbiotic chain of life and consciousness. Throughout the long history of India, Hindus have shared a fascination with, and respect for, Nature and animals and has rightly been called up as an “environmental friendly religion”. Hindus regarded rivers, mountains, lakes, animals, flora, the mineral world, as well as the stars and planets as manifestation of God and worshipped them. It believes in ecological responsibility and says that the ‘Earth is our mother’. It champions protection of animals, which it considers also have souls, and promotes vegetarianism. It has a strong tradition of non-violence or ahimsa. Evergreen trees were regarded as symbols of eternal life and to cut them down was to invite the wrath of the gods. Groves in forests were looked upon as habitations of the gods. It was under a Banyan tree that the Hindu sages sat in a trance seeking enlightenment. Hinduism believes in the all around sovereignty of the divine.

CONCLUSION

Protection of environment is must because until we don't keep our environmental ethics firm, we cannot do anything paramount to our future generation.

When we talk about Islam, Islam is the second largest religion in the world. Every religion and pious men preaches the importance and safeguard nature. Islam gives us wide concept about nature in Quran and hadith which, explains the value of environment and other things in the world. God says in Quran the earth is introduced as ‘a mother’ for human beings and in another verse God says everything created in the world is glorious and you do not have the idea of their importance and requirement.

Prophet Mohammad (s-a-w) is a role model in universe because he is messenger of God and he provides us very useful knowledge which is universal and can never be diminished. The holy Prophet is quoted as saying ‘preserve the earth because it is your mother’. And he also narrated a lot of hadith about how to safeguard environmental ethics, because Prophet Mohammed is rahmatal lil aalamen.

The religion of Hinduism plays a very important role in environmental ethics. Hindu scriptures also play main role in world for safeguard to environment. When we investigate in Hindu scriptures we are amazed because they give us remarkable knowledge about environment.

Mahatma Gandhi says that I bow my head in reverence to our ancestors for their foresight in investing beautiful manifestations of nature with a religious significance. This means that Mahatma Gandhi is an ideal and role model in Hinduism because he preferred simple living and high thinking and gave new ideas to our society whose

worth is priceless. Thus Hindu supreme personalities and scriptures give us that knowledge which is helpful to our environment and beneficial for the next generation.

Humans are lack of knowledge, shortsightedness, and egoism has given rise to an environmental catastrophe. A very important task therefore is to arouse people consciousness and environmental activism. This should be done on the basic of ancient and modern knowledge.

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