

## STAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER SPECIES: A STUDY FROM MORAL PERSPECTIVE

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### **ABSTRACT:**

*The expression 'sustainable development' is now very familiar. In order to achieve its goal the scientists, the economists, techno crafts, statesmen all have been trying their best. But the role of a philosopher in this context should never be ignored. Moral philosophers have been trying to manage this situation by framing various policies and as well as different moral theories. Moral philosopher from the Indian points of view also plays an important responsibility in this regard. This paper is an approach how to keep sustainable development in true sense from the moral perspective.*

The term 'environment' comes from a French word 'environ' or 'environner' which means 'around', 'to surround' etc. It is used to describe everything that surrounds an organism. So, environment may be defined as 'the total of the things or circumstances around an organism including human beings.' In other words, 'the circumstances or a condition by which one is surrounded' is also known as environment. In general, the term 'environment' is used in two senses—broad and narrow sense. In broad sense, everything including the human being is called environment. For example: the trees, rivers, valleys, the air, other species etc. and we the human beings are in the environment. But on the other sense i.e., when the word 'environment' is used in a narrower sense; we are just trying to mean to indicate a specific area based environment something like the environment of an university or of a village or of an office etc.

At present the limitation of natural resources make us are very much aware of environment. Any kind of miss use or disproportionate destruction may be the cause of devastation of all species including the human being. It should be mentioned here that evidence proved that the species of the earth had been severally destructed by some natural calamities or some external causes such as the fallen of external heavenly bodies from the universe. In this case we are not responsible for our own destruction. But when we see that in the name of development, the lack

of population control goes hand to hand with endless sequence of technological growth into the inevitable encroachment upon natural forest, species and land for cultivation for the purpose of making new cities of concrete structure, the ecological dis-balance is created. And perhaps, which is wondering to us that it is indicating towards the self generating causes of human being which them-selves make difficult to survive. Problems of such nature may be multiplied.

But we are to note that the magnitude and complexity of these problems are so great that it requires the joint efforts of scientists, techno crafts, economists, statesmen and many others to solve it. A philosopher also can add his mite to this endeavor by helping in framing policies. As we all know that we should not forget to frame policies under the basis of a moral consideration. For example: a decision may be taken to stop a factory, because of its waste generation which causes the air pollution. But a moral philosopher will say that we should not give the order to stop the factory unless the factory workers provided alternative lively hood. Again, in the case of a uranium mining, a moral philosopher will recommend to stop it immediately by thinking seriously the creation of problem for our future generations although it poses a minimal problem today.

The question that arises here is whether we should have any moral obligations towards our future generations or not. If the answer is positive then it is natural to raise another question regarding the obligations towards the other species also. In other words, we may ask the question is it morally legitimate to be the cause of destruction of another species in the name of human development?

Our interest in this paper is to find out the answer of this question from a moral point of view. In this regard it should be mentioned here that moral philosophers already divided themselves into two different camps regarding this point one of which believes in the view of *ethics for the use of environment* and in the view of *ethics for the environment*.

Those who keep believe in the first alternative mentioned that everything except human being are for the sake of human being and for this reason they also consider that we have no moral obligation towards the other species directly. If we show any moral consideration towards other species we have to understand it as an appendix towards the moral obligation for human beings. In support their position they have put forwarded some arguments. One of which is based on Biblical theory of creation.

(a) The biblical story of creation, in Genesis, makes clear the Hebrew view of special place of human beings in the divine plan:

And God said; Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.<sup>1</sup>

And God blessed them, and God said upon them. Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.<sup>2</sup>

(b) Aristotle was also in favor of this view, because he believed that nature is a hierarchy in which those with less reasoning ability exist for the sake of those who have more.

Plants exists for the sake of animals, and brute beasts for the sake of man—domestic animals for his use and food, wild ones (or at any rate most of them) for food and their accessories of life, such as clothing and various tools. Since nature makes nothing purposeless or in vain, it is undeniably true that she has made all animals for the sake of man.<sup>3</sup>

(c) Descartes' consideration was that the whole world is a machine and human beings are the controller of this machine. So we may say that he perhaps believed in the view that we have no moral obligation towards the other species directly.

(d) The Cartesian distinction between mind and body also leads the scientists to believe that the matter is dead and completely separated from the human beings. And the material world is a multitude of different objects assembled into a huge machine. Such a mechanistic world view was held by Isaac Newton who constructed his mechanics on its basis and made it the foundation of classical physics which dominated the scientific world up to the nineteenth century.

(e) Kant believed only those have intrinsic value have the fundamental right to claim the morality. All rational being have intrinsic value. So, they must have the moral right. It should be mentioned here that by rational being Kant did not confined himself human being only. He was always in agreeing to give the moral right, if they have rationality (it may not be human being). Those who have no possession of rationality are far from demanding any kind of moral obligation directly.

But the question is this should we say anything from the moral point of view for our future generations if we can easily realize that our future generations will be abolished by a certain policy which has been going to carry on for the satisfaction of present generations in the name of development. For example: we may quote the awareness of ground water depletion of earth which indicating the scarcity of sweet ground water within fifty years. For this reason some moral philosophers remarked that we have to be aware of every species even the every objects of the earth to maintain the ecological balance in the earth for the survival of human species and other species together. In this connection we should mention here that our ancient conception of environment was so strong that we the Indians got some ideas about the protection of all species by our own heritage.

Ancient Indian concept of environment was based upon in the unity of all life. If we flash back into our past to see what type of attitude had been taking on in connection with our traditional culture, religion, values and philosophy then we can see that our standpoint was very clear and accept the present view of ethics for the environment. The idea of ethics for the environment has been expressed through the following stanza of *Isho-Uponishad*:

*Ishā basyamidang sarbang Yat Kincha Jagatang Jagat |  
Tena Taktena bhungitha ma gridhyā Kasya Sidhanam||<sup>4</sup>*

It signifies that “The whole universe along with its creatures belong to the Lord (nature) and consequently to nature (*Prakṛiti*). Implicit in this philosophy is that none of the creatures is superior to the other and each has its own place and function in nature mosaic. Thus human kind should, in no way have absolute power over nature. Let me one species encroach upon the rights and privileges of the other. Give up avarice and enjoy the beauties of nature.”

If we think at a glance in to our classical literature like *Rigveda* and other similar works then we can find out that they were very ardent and critical investigators of protecting Indian plants and their proper utilization. They also believed in the interrelationship between different kinds of matter, different kinds of plant, different kinds of living beings, matter and plant, matter and living being, plant and living being, and matter and plant and living being. In *Padma Purana* it has been clearly mentioned that the primitive staff of the environment are *Khiti, Ap, Tej, Marut* and *Boyom* i.e. soil, water, fire, wind and sky and if there were no inter relationships among all the above cited five elements, the living beings of the Planet would be on the point of extinction.

Ancient India was terribly concerned about preservation of not only of the plant's life but also of the wild life and maintenance of the bio diversity within all ecosystems and ecological composites. No wonder that our *Risis* prayed "*ihaitu sarvo yah pasur asmin tisthatu yā rayih*"<sup>5</sup>. This mantra states "Let every beast whichever is there of the animal world which comprises wealth (*rayih*), come hither and stay with us". In ancient India all animals were considered as natural wealth, fit for protection and conservation. The *Mahabharata* has repeatedly declared: *Ahimsa Sarva-bhutebhyo dharmebhyo jyāyasī matā*, i.e, "non injury (love) is known to be the highest virtue for all persons".<sup>6</sup>

In conclusion we may say from our own Indian point of view that nature is our mother and every species is equal to the nature as like as for a mother every son are equal. So, every species have moral right and we have a strong obligation towards the other species. We should not compromise any kind of misuse or disproportionate use of natural wealth for the name of artificial economical development.

#### REFERENCES:

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 1:24-8

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 9:1-3

<sup>3</sup> Politics, London, 1916, p-16

<sup>4</sup> 2|2| *Isho Upanishad*.

<sup>5</sup> 1|15|2 *Atharba Veda Samhita*

<sup>6</sup> 265/6 *Mahabharata Santi Parba*.