

Periodic Research

Role of Virtues and Ethics in Environment Conservation



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Abstract

The preservation of natural environments is obviously of great human utility as a source of valued things. But the sustenance of natural ecosystems and their inhabitants, on the basis of their intrinsic worth, does not yet have an effective theoretical defense against human specialism, the continual expansion of capitalistic systems, and the present dependence of humans on human-made physical and social environments. The intrinsic worth of natural ecosystems has been explained by proponents of deep ecology and maintained within traditional indigenous cultures, but such advocacy seems thus far to operate in a cognitive dimension separate from the rest of Western moral reasoning. Virtue ethics looks more promising because the moral ground is higher and provides a perspective from which we can value natural beings in a way totally apart from their use to us. We can value them and teach our children to value them as an expression and extension of what is best in our character. Indeed, our own flourishing may require an appreciation of, and respect for, natural being in ways that treat such beings with the utmost moral and aesthetic seriousness.

Keyword Environmental Education, Conservation, Values Education, Techno-centric, Eco-centric, Human-Nature relation.

Introduction

The most general values of human development and flourishing would be served by granting personhood to ecosystems and natural beings. Science may aid in determining or predicting the result of these types of actions but it cannot answer the questions of what course of action we ought to take. They can only be answered ethically. The environment belongs to each one of us and our actions affect the environment. When it is degraded, it affects our health, well being and our future. Thus, we should inculcate the following values in our attitude and behavior towards environment.

The Five Universal Values are

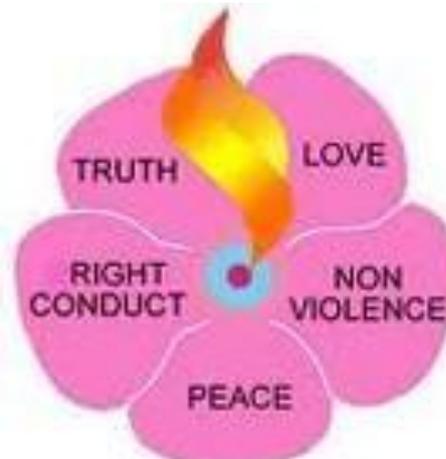


Figure 1: Showing the Five Universal Values

According to Sages as well as Einstein's observation, "Nature is like a Vibrating Vena" with perfect rhythm and live waves. Nature or Prakriti is that which surrounds us all. The following points highlights the relationship between value building and environment awareness.

Key Elements of this concept

- One must recognize 'Man in Nature' rather 'Nature for Man'
- One must show love, compassion, tolerance and justice towards nature.

Periodic Research

- One Should not exploit nature without nurturing it. Our cultural customs and rituals in many ways teach us how to respecting it.
- One should learn that the human civilization is the part of the earth and various phenomenon are interconnected and linked with special bonds of harmony. If this harmony is disturbed anywhere, there will be an ecological imbalance leading to catastrophic results.
- One should develop the principles of self-restraint, self discipline ,reduction of wants, freedom from greed and severity in our attitude. Such values will help us in attaining the goal of sustainable development and environment conservation.
- Ecosystems and their inhabitants are living beings, like human beings , and they are entitled to the same rights that human beings are supposed to have.
- The interests of natural beings, is dependent on the forbearance and assistance of humans. This independence of natural beings is analogous to the independence of a human child, in distinction from the dependence of fetuses, who require the support of particular individuals.
- Many human beings have compassionate sentiments for natural beings and they suffer when natural beings are injured and are satisfied and pleased when they flourish. If compassion as a motive is also a reason to curtail the suffering, and promote the flourishing, of humans, then the same holds for natural beings.

- There is good reason to believe that natural beings suffer when they are injured or destroyed and this similarity to human life is an important qualification for admission to the realm of persons because the one secular basis for universal human rights is the capacity to suffer.

• **Spectrum of techno-centric & eco-centric perspectives**

	<i>Technocentric</i>	<i>Ecocentric</i>
Earth view	Mechanistic/Reductionist	Holistic/Gaianist
Understanding of the earth	Scientific investigation/Environmental management	Scientific investigation as well as sensory, emotional, spiritual ways of knowing
Resource depletion and pollution	Technical solutions	Changes in lifestyles
Development issues	Limiting human number/Developing industrial technology	Reducing consumption in rich countries to allow poor countries to have their fair share of resources

Impact Analysis Model

This model explains the impact of human activities and lack of practicing value based education (Figure 2). This impact is studied on both abiotic and biotic factors i.e. plants, animals and other organisms on this planet. The chart below indicated the role and impact of different elements of environment, there interrelationship and impact.

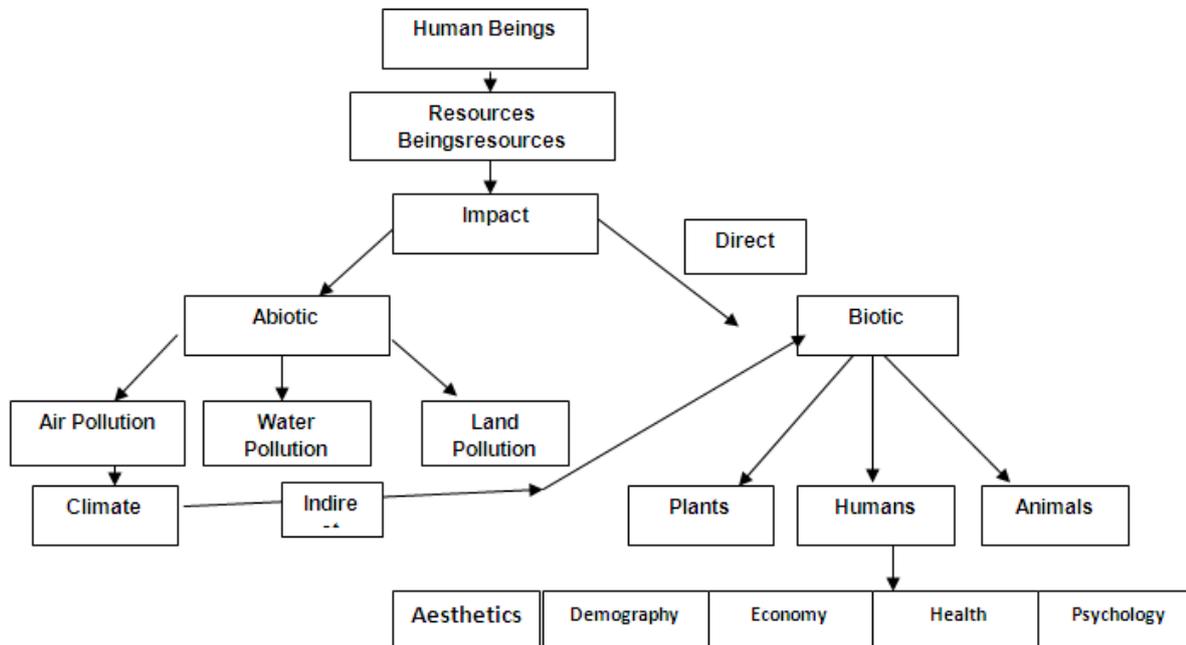


Figure 2: Impact Analysis Model

Aspects of Environment Management

Technological Aspect

It involves the use of technical measures for conservation e.g.

- Fuel-efficient designs of automobile engines
- Recycling of water etc

Environmental Degradation

Sr	Category	Value
1.	Total Geographical Area	328.7
2.	Area Subject to Water and Wind Erosion Area Degraded through Special Problems	141.3
3.	Water Logged Area	8.5
4.	Alkali Soil	3.6
5.	Acid Soil	4.5
6.	Saline Soil including Coastal Sandy areas	5.5
7.	Ravines & Gullies	4.0
8.	Area subject to Shifting Cultivation	4.9
9.	Riverine & Torrents	2.7

Level of Air Pollution in the Metro Cities
Name of the Metro City Levels of Air Pollution (micrograms/m)

Level of Air Pollution in the Metro Cities				
Sr	Name of the Metro city	Levels of Air Pollution (micrograms/m)		
		SO2	Nox	SPM
1.	Ahmedabad	5.4-110.9	3.6-70.0	72.4-575.4
2.	Bhopal	8.1-22.0	12.2-32.4	85.0-393.3
3.	Calcutta	6.0-122.0	6.0-73.1	77.3-833.3
4.	Chennai	2.4-161.6	1.8-55.5	26.6-351.4
5.	Coimbatore	0-8.9	0.3-19.1	2.5-133.0
6.	Delhi	10.1-85.1	20.1-104.5	145.3-929.8
7.	Hyderabad	5.1-70.7	7.5-124.13	59.3-458.0
8.	Indore	2.6-10.2	4.4-17.4	77.0-812.0
9.	Jaipur	6.1-53.7	4.0-64.3	81.6-570.1
10.	Kanpur	8.2-22.4	7.7-63.0	233.7-809.2
11.	Kochi	3.2-54.3	1.7-137.0	10.5-271.1
12.	Lucknow	23.2-37.4	23.0-34.4	382.6-672.7
13.	Mumbai	6.1-111.7	5.4-115.8	60.6-473.2
14.	Nagpur	4.3-18.8	3.2-43.2	38.2-403.2
15.	Patna	12.7-46.4	8.5-55.7	132.0-1307.0
16.	Pune	17.1-29.0	10.1-34.0	112.0-166.5
17.	Surat	22.4-304.0	10.0-135.7	81.7-1215.3
18.	Varanasi	18.3-27.1	10.6-28.8	155.0-349.0
19.	Visakhapatnam	5.5-80.8	5.1-92.0	46.7-482.7
	NAAQ/Standards	15.0-80.0	15.0-80.0	70.0-360.0

Economic Aspect

It includes the use of market based instruments e.g.

- Tradable pollution discharge permits
- Proper pricing of resources etc

Ethical Aspect

Knowingly or unknowingly we are greedily consuming our resources, spoiling them at the same time and polluting our surroundings with enormous

quantities of wastes. As mentioned in the figure 3 below, few value towards eco friendly behavior.

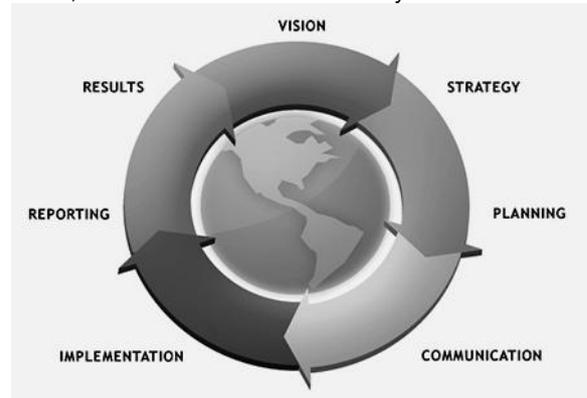


Figure 3: Essential Value towards eco-friendly behavior

There are many ethical decisions that human beings make with respect to the environment. For example:

- Should we continue to clear-cut forests for the sake of human consumption?
- Should we continue to propagate?
- Should we continue to make gasoline-powered vehicles?
- What environmental obligations do we need to keep for future generations?^{[1][2]}
- Is it right for humans to knowingly cause the extinction of a species for the convenience of humanity?

If an ecosystem had the status of a person, then depriving it of life or assaulting its inhabitants would be in principle no different from crimes of murder or assault committed against human beings. One can imagine a situation in which killing members of an endangered species would be a far more serious crime than it is in most places at present, but this does not capture what is distinctive about personhood. Even if deliberately killing natural beings were a capital crime, as things now stand, so long as such beings are not persons, the reason for the punishment would rest on something different from their inherent rights.

Need of Hour

Value based education system which aims at sustainable development. Sustainable development (SD) is a pattern of [resource](#) use, that aims to meet human needs while preserving the [environment](#) so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for generations to come. These are a few essential values required to strengthen the eco centric approach towards nature and its components.

Cooperation

Cooperation is highly valued. The value placed on cooperation is strongly rooted in the past, when cooperation was necessary for the survival of family and group and surrounding.

Group Harmony

Emphasis is placed on the group and the importance of maintaining harmony within the group.

They stress the importance of personal orientation (community harmony).

Patience

To have the patience and ability to wait quietly is considered a good quality among Indians. Patience might not be valued by others who may have been taught "Never to allow grass to grow under one's feet."

Generosity

Generosity and sharing are greatly valued. Most The respected towards flora and fauna and all living and non living things.

Careful Observation

Most Indians have sharp observational skills and note fine details. Likewise, nonverbal messages and signals, such as facial expressions, gestures, or different tones of voice, are easily perceived.

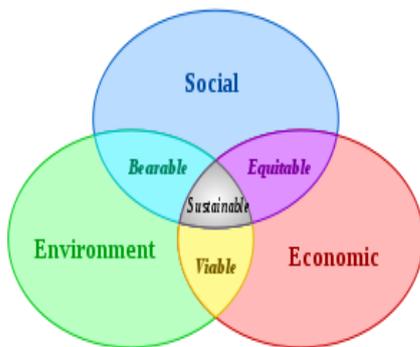


Figure 4: Scheme of sustainable development: at the confluence of three constituent parts.

Indians tend to convey and perceive ideas and feelings through behavior etc. Theoretically, the long-term result of [environmental degradation](#) is the inability to sustain human life. Such degradation on a global scale could imply [extinction](#) for humanity.

Conclusion

Consumption of renewable resources	State of environment	Sustainability
More than nature's ability to replenish	Environmental degradation	Not sustainable
Equal to nature's ability to replenish	Environmental equilibrium	Steady state economy
Less than nature's ability to replenish	Environmental renewal	Environmentally sustainable

Table 1: Showing the different Consumption levels and Sustainability

It is very clear from the above table that as the consumption levels differ in sustainability state of environment is also dependent on it. Science may aid in determining or predicting the result of these types of actions but it cannot answer the questions of what course of action we ought to take. They can only be answered ethically. Ethics is the philosophical study of moral values. Environmental ethics is the application of ethical study to the environmental concerns. Role of value education in environment.



You have to decide whether development means affluence or whether development means peace, prosperity and happiness.

Sunderlal Bahuguna

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