"When one tags at a single thing in nature, He finds it attached to the rest of the world." - John Muir

Man alone is responsible for environmental degradation. Other life forms live symbiotically and in harmony with nature. There is a need to bring in change in man's attitude and values. Hence, the need for the study of environmental ethics.

Today, the world is facing a global ecological crisis. The whole world is deeply concerned about the issues of ecology and environment. The continuous degradation of the environment is a matter of serious concern. The pollution levels in the environment have already crossed all limits and are increasing unabated, which is not only dangerous for human beings but for all other life forms air, water and soil. The dangerous effect of this has started manifesting in-the form of climate change and melting glaciers. This increased pollution level is also responsible for global warming, water scarcity, erratic rains, droughts, floods, etc.

It is the stark truth that environment – both physical and social – is getting degraded increasingly because of the anthropocentric approach of the human being. Exploitation of the environment has increased because of over population and consumerism of human beings. Falsehood and false notions include distrust, superiority and inferiority complexes are the main causes of human attitude towards environmental degradation.

Today's man is just trying to meet his needs, where he corrupts the whole natural ecosystem to fulfill his wants that are filled with greed. Due to the advancement of science and multi-faceted uses of technology, the living environment has faced destructive challenges of the healthy eco-system.
Excessive urbanization and industrialization by man are destroying the beauty of the natural environment. Now, the human being needs to understand the status of today's environment and causes of its degradation. He should search for pragmatic solutions for this seriously aggravating problem. So the need of the hour is environmental ethics.

2.1. Concept of Environmental Ethics

Environmental ethics may be said to be a branch of philosophy. It considers the moral relations between human beings and their natural environment. As a field of study, it assumes that humans have certain responsibilities towards the natural world. It makes the human being aware of helping people to understand this duty. It also suggests that human beings must act responsibly as their action can have impact on the natural world. Historically, the main focus of environmental ethics has been ‘wild’ end of the natural artificial spectrum: on wilderness areas, wild ecosystem and organism and bio-diversity. 16

As a branch of applied philosophy, environmental ethics studies the conceptual foundations of environmental values. It also discusses issues surrounding societal attitudes, actions, policies to protect, sustaining biodiversity and ecological systems. For some ethicists and scientists, the attitudes of respecting species and ecosystems for their own sake is important from the ecological point of view. This view flows out of an understanding of the structure and function of the ecological and evolutionary systems and processes. With newer scientific fields devoted to environmental protection, it also includes conservation biology and sustainability science. So environmental ethics is often described as a

16 A.K. Shrivastava – Environmental ethics, APH publishing corporation New Delhi 2004, P.166
'normative' science. Such a science carries a commitment to the protection of species and ecosystems.

Environmental ethics is also operational ethics, which includes recommendations for practical environmental actions as well as expressions of principles. Environmental ethics, illustrates both biodiversity and ecological systems as a field of study. It is also a broader, value-based perspective on a complex web of issues at the junction of science and society. To understand the concepts of environmental ethics, we can explore a range of topics and questions.

- What responsibilities and duties does man have to wild species and ecosystems?
- Does man have some liabilities towards his present and future generations?
- How does the recognition of rapid, global environmental changes challenge man's traditional understanding of these obligations?
- What does it mean to be "sustainable" and why do many of us believe that achieving sustainability is an ethical imperative for science and society in this century?

These questions, and others like them, are explored in environmental ethics. These questions highlight the intersection of environmental ethics, ecology, and conservation science. To understand the concept of environmental ethics we need to clarify some basic concepts – such as what is ethics, what is an environment and their relation.

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"Ethics is as old as philosophy – and older". 18 Ethics is defined as the study of what is right or wrong or good in human conduct. It aims at evaluation of human actions. It has a great deal to offer to the critical study of mankind's responsibility to nature. Man evolves from, and remains a member of the community. Man is a natural being and thus remains subject to nature's laws. So if morality is to be understood and justified at all, it must be viewed in the context of the system of the community. In short, morality, moral principles and moral instructions, are intelligible. To make to more intelligible human conduct is viewed holistically, systematically, from the point of view of an integrated community.

Ethics seeks to define fundamentally what is right and what is wrong, regardless or cultural differences. The term ethics has been derived from the Greek word Ethics", which literally means the character and this is connected with custom or habit. Similar is the moral philosophy which means same and derived from 'mores' which means habit or custom. 19 Therefore, ethics can be defined as a system of cultural values motivating people's behavior at all levels, i.e. individual, institutional, social regional and international. Traditionally, all societies have had strong cultural connection with nature. All religions have therefore much to say about the relationship between mankind and the earth.

a. Definitions of Ethics

The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy states that the word 'ethics' is commonly used interchangeably with 'morality' and sometimes it is used

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18 E. Arumugam - Principles of Environmental Ethics, Sarup Book Publisher, New Delhi, 2008. P.1
more narrowly to mean the moral principles of a particular tradition, group or individual. "20

"Ethics is a science of human characters manifesting itself in good or bad conduct."21

According to John S. Mackenzie, "Ethics discusses men's habit and customs or in other words their characters, the principles on which they habitually act and considers what it is that constitutes the rightness or wrongness of those principles, the good or evil of those habits."22

The term 'ethics' is also applied to any system or theory of moral values and principles. How should we live? Shall we aim at knowledge, or at happiness, virtue or the creation of beautiful objects? If we choose happiness, will it be our own or the happiness of all? Is it right to be dishonest for a good cause? Can we justify living in opulence while people are starving elsewhere in the world?

Ethics is a broad way of thinking. It asks about what constitute a good life and how we can live such a life. If address questions of right and wrong, making good decisions, and the character or attributes necessary to live a good life. Applied ethics addresses these issues with a special emphasis on how they can be lived in a practical manner. Environmental ethics applies ethical thinking to the natural world and the relationship between human beings and the earth. Environmental ethics is a key feature of environmental studies. However, it has applications in many other fields, such as human society grapples for a more meaningful way with pollution, resource degradation, the threat of extinction, and global climate disruption etc.

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21 *Prof. A.C. Mitra – The Elements of Morals, Cotton Press, Calcutta, 1912. P.1
22 *Prof. A.C. Mitra – The Elements of Morals, Cotton Press, Calcutta, 1912. P.1
If conscripted to fight in a war that we do not support, should we disobey the orders? First of all what obligations do we have with other creatures with whom we share this planet? At the same time what moral obligations can we discharge to the generations of human beings who will come after us? Ethics deals with such questions at all levels. Its subjects consist of the fundamental issues of practical decisions making. Its major concern include the nature of ultimate values and the standards by which human actions can be judged right or wrong.

b. What is environment?

Plants, animals and human beings are always influenced by the physical environment of a certain region. The physical environment is always controlled by the natural conditions of land, water and air. There is a relation between the physical and biological environment which includes humans, animals, plants and other organisms. So any change in the physical environment automatically brings a change in the biological environment.

The literal meaning of environment is the surroundings of an organism, a community or an object. The environment is known for its variety, distinct yet different at every place. What one sees in the Himalayas is so

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different from that seen in the Thar Desert. One patch of the environment is just right for growing rice while some other for wheat.

An environment means a surroundings, which can be defined as the sum total of all living and non-living components. The environment creates favorable conditions for the growth and existence of all living organisms. Due to tremendous progress of man in various fields of science and technology in the world, there is a wide impact on the environment. These human activities affect the environment in which he lives. Though these changes in the environment may be beneficial or harmful for many other species, most of the time they are harmful only. Hence, a need to maintain environmental standards is essential.

Environment needs to be conceived in its totality. A holistic approach is necessary with emphasis is on sustainable development. If an really wants to know the ethical value of environment, then he needs to ethically analyze almost every action of his. The following questions give an idea of some ethical issues which are related to the environment.

- Is it right to pollute air?
- Does man have a moral concern for the value of other species?
- How do intentional inequity, social inequity and gender inequity cause environmental degradation?
- Is man aware of the earth's limited resources? Does man have awareness of the right of the future generations over the resources of the earth?

Nature, in its widest sense, can mean the totality of all things that would have appeared in the inventory of the universe. Nature consists of all the elements of matter. It also means the hills, mountains, rivers, trees etc. Nature is like a living and growing organisms suffused with life and
intelligence. So nature is a cluster of everything found in the universe as a whole.

Defining nature becomes an even more complex task when we include the human species as part of it. Sometimes man is seen in contrast with nature, on the other hand, he is taken as a part of nature. The difference is not just linguistic. To set man against nature is to emphasize his distinctiveness such as rationality, creativity and freedom, whereas nature lacks these attributes.

Nature has provided many resources to man which can be utilized to make his life comfortable. Some of them are available in limited quantities. They may get exhausted, if used extensively. Such resources are called non-renewable resources. Resources like wind, water sun, etc. can also be utilized. They are available in a cyclic order. These are called renewable resources.

On the basis of origin, all natural resources can gain be classified into biotic and a-biotic resources. While air, water and soil are a-biotic resources, biotic resources created by man are manmade resources. Although these resources are available in nature in some or the other form, man has made use of them and developed them as resources with the help of technology.

The earth has faced many changes in its climate from the very beginning. Earlier our planet was very hot. Slowly, through Ice Age, the temperature dropped and it became colder. Plants and animals adapted themselves to the changes due to which some migrated to different places while others became extinct. Plants which adapted to live in cooker regions migrated to warmer places by the process of seed dispersal. Animals also exhibited a similar pattern in their movement.
The word 'nature' and 'environment' are synonymous, an equivocation common in literature. Such vagueness can be seen Passmore's Man's Responsibility – Brennan's Thinking about nature and Plum wood's Feminism and the Mastery of Nature.

Nature has at least three primary meanings –

- Nature is everything apart from artificial, which is the approximate sense of the word 'wilderness'.
- Nature connotes everything in the universe apart from the supernatural.
- Ecological system can be considered to have nature, in the sense of nature.

Environment philosophers claim that the environment is that part of nature in which humans interact with influence over. The four earth systems – lithosphere, hydrosphere and biosphere constitute the environment and comprise the animate non-human component as well as the inanimate component of natural systems that are living. Man is part and parcel of nature, which emphasizes the continuity of the human, animals, organic and inorganic worlds. It suggests that human behavior may be amendable to the same kind of investigations that are effective in studying other domains of nature.

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24 * Edited by David R Keller, Environment Ethics- The Big Question, A John Wiley and Sons Ltd Publication, 2010. P 2
c. Biotic Concept of Nature – Gaia Hypothesis

Gaia theory was named after the Greek Goddess of Earth, the nourishes of all things. The idea was conceived in the mind of Lovelock and first published in book form in 1979: ‘Gaia, A New Look of Life on earth’. Lovelock states that the physical condition of the earth, the atmosphere is kept suitable for life by the presence of life itself. He gives the example that one particular micro-organism living on the continental flats along the world’s coasts is largely responsible for the ozone balance of the upper atmosphere, the absence of which would make life on earth possible.

In the opinion of our modern biologist point of view nature is perceived as ecosystem which includes biotic and a biotic environment. Biotic includes food animals plants and their interaction among each other. A biotic environment includes soil river mountain etc.

Ecology may be defined broadly as the science of the interconnections between living organism and their environment, including both the physical and the biotic environment and emphasizing inter-species as well as intra-species relation.\textsuperscript{26}

The Gaia Hypothesis deals with the concept of biological homeostasis. It claims the resident life forms of a host planet coupled with their environment. They act like a single self-regulating system. He suggested

\textsuperscript{26}Williams, A. Reiners And Jeffery A.-Philosophical Foundations For The Practices Of Ecology – Lockwood Cambridge University Press 2010.\textsuperscript{P 13}
'Gaia', the old Greek name for 'mother earth'. Gaia philosophy was named after Gaia a Greek goddess of the earth. Lovelock himself makes one suggestion – Gaia’s unconscious aim, he maintains is to keep conditions on earth comfortable for continuance of life on earth. This theory holds that:- 27

- Nature is the complex is the complex entity which involves the earth biosphere, atmosphere, oceans, soil, etc.
- Nature is referred as a alive earth.
- Life on earth was able to actively regulate the global environment so as maintain conditions comfortable for life. It believed in 'let nature take care of itself.'

Jaines Lovelock, maintained a view that the entire complex earth system behaves in a self-regulating manner characteristic of something alive, that it has capacity to manage and maintain critical components of the earth's life support system in perfect balance.

**d. Philosophical attitude to Nature**

The question whether it is intrinsically wrong to be cruel to animals and other creatures has great importance. Some philosophers insist that cruelty to animals is wrong only on the empirical hypothesis that encourages cruelty to human beings. If cruelty to animals is intrinsically wrong, then it is very clear how men should behave towards nature. Man's relationship with nature ought to be governed by moral considerations which are not reducible to a concern for purely human interest. We need ecology to discover what biotic community means as an

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organizational mode, then we can reflect philosophically to discover the value there. 28

Philosophical movement has always encouraged man to revert to the beliefs that nature is sacred. We are, in fact, right in condemning as superstitious the belief that trees, rivers and volcanoes can be swayed by arguments. We are right in believing that we have found in science ways of understanding their behavior. We are also right in regarding civilization as important and thus far in attempting to transform nature. It is not by giving up our hand-won tradition of rationally that we shall save ourselves.

We can, however, ask ourselves properly what general conditions any philosophy of nature must fulfill. How will it justify the scientific themes of the ecological movement, as distinct from its reactionary, mystical, overtones? Any satisfactory philosophy of nature we can then say, must recognize that:

- The natural processes go on in their own way.
- When man acts or reacts with nature, he does not simply modify a particular quality of a particular substance. What he does, rather, is interact with a system of interactions thus setting in process newer interactions. Just for that reason, there is always a risk that his actions will have consequences which he may not have predicated.
- In our attempt to understand nature, the discovery of physics-type general laws have very limited importance. The complaint that biology and sociology are inferior because they know no such laws can be reversed and formulated as an argument against an undue emphasis on Platonic Cartesians analysis of 'understanding'.

The laws involved are often trite and ill-formulated, serving only as boundaries to what is possible.

The philosopher has to learn to live with the ‘strangeness’ of nature. For instance, the fact that natural processes are entirely indifferent to our existence and welfare, is not positively indifferent. The processes are also incapable of caring about us. It is a complex in a way that rules out the possibility of our wholly mastering and transforming them. For that, we do need a ‘new metaphysics’ which is genuinely not anthropocentric and which takes change and complexity with the seriousness they deserve.

Of course, such a philosophy of nature would be, by any means, entirely new. Its foundation has, been laid in the various forms of naturalism. Naturalism is a theory that accept ‘nature’ as the sum total of reality, the term ‘nature’ has been used in philosophy from the physical world as observable by men to the total system of spatiotemporal phenomena. We should think of nature only as something of which man forms a part, and is not alien to him because he is a full member of it. It is perfectly true that like any other species man can survive only at the cost of other species. But man can see what is happening. He can observe the disappearance of the competing species; he can consider what the effects of that disappearance will be. He can, at least in principle, preserve a species and modify his own behaviour so that it will be less-destructive.

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e. Types of Nature — Natural and Social

Natural Environment

The natural environment surrounds all living and non-living things occurring naturally on the Earth. It is an environment that surrounds the interaction of all living species. The concept of the natural environment can be distinguished by components:

- **Complete ecological units** that function as natural systems without massive human intervention, including all vegetation, microorganisms, soil, rocks, atmosphere, and natural phenomena that occur within their boundaries.

- **Universal natural resources and physical phenomena** that include air, water, and climate, as well as energy, radiation, electric charge, and magnetism, not originating from human activity.

- **Built Environment** is contrasted with the natural environment, which comprises the areas and components that are strongly influenced by human beings. A geographical area is regarded as a natural environment.

It is difficult to find absolutely natural environment. More precisely, we can consider the different aspects of an environment, and see that their degree of naturalness is not uniform. If, for instance, we take an agricultural field, and consider the mineralogic composition and the structure of its soil, we will find that whereas the former is quite similar to that of an undisturbed forest soil, the latter is quite different.

Social Environment

The social environment refers to the immediate physical and social setting in which people live. It includes the culture that the individual is educated or lives in, and the people and institutions with whom he
interacts. The interaction may be in person through communication media. It is one-way, and may not imply equality of social status. Therefore, the social environment is a broader concept than that of social class or social circle. People in the same social environment often develop a sense of social solidarity. They often tend to trust and help one another. They will often think in similar styles and patterns even when their conclusions differ.

Man has used natural resources to enrich his life. In this process, he has brought about many changes in the natural environment. Human settlements, roads, farmlands, dams and many other things are man-made components included in our cultural environment. Thus these man-made components are now the parts of the deeply social nature of the individual environment. Emile Durkheim took a wider view of the social environment. He argues that it contained internalised norms and representations of social forces or social facts.

A social system is a part of an environment to its members. The social environment presents six distinguishable aspects, these are: the traditional or customary, the civil and economic, the moral, the aesthetic, the religious and the scientific. It imposes laws and norms on its members. The system dispenses gains and losses as salaries and taxes; prestige or shame, etc. It uses social tokens like money which one can exchange for goods, like food. The members of the social environment are also known as citizens who are parts of the social environment. Similarly, a community is an environment within an environment.

2.2. Ecosystem and Ecology

An ecosystem is also called as environment. It is a natural unit consisting of all plants, animals and microorganisms in an area functioning together with all of the non-living physical factors of the environment.

Ecology is a field of study, which is concerned with the relationship between the environment and living organisms. It involves a reciprocal relationship between an organism and its environment. It also exists with the relationships between people and other organisms such as plants, animals, and the natural environment.

The central idea of the ecosystem concept is that living organisms are continually engaged in a highly interrelated set of relationships with every other element. They constitute the environment in which they exist. Eugene Odum who is one of the founders of the science of ecology, has stated that an ecosystem would be the unit that encompasses the community of organisms in a given area interacting with the surrounding physical environment, and thereby allowing a flow of energy that will eventually lead to a clearly defined trophic structure, biotic diversity, and material cycles.

A biological diversity of an ecosystem may contribute to greater resilience of an ecosystem. This is because there are more species present
at a location to respond to change. Thus they absorb or reduce its effects. This reduces the effect before the ecosystem’s structure is fundamentally changed to a different state. This is not universally the case. There is no proven relationship between the species diversity of an ecosystem, but its ability to provide goods and services on a sustainable level is more than significant.

**a. Root Meaning of Ecology**

An ecosystem is the basic and functional unit of ecology. The term ‘ecosystem’ was proposed in 1935 by British ecologist Arthur Tansley, which provided a unified framework within which to study both plant and animal communities together, their interactions with inorganic nature, and their interrelations with human communities also.32

The term ecology used by a German biologist, Ernst Haeckel, for the first time in 1869 was defined as, “the total relations of animals to both its organic and inorganic environment.” 33

The term ecology comes from two Greek words, ‘oikos’, meaning home and ‘logos’ meaning understanding. Ernst Haeckel, a nineteenth century German who invented the term, describes ecology as ‘the domestic side of organic life’. 34

Haeckel (1869) coined the term, ‘Oekologie’ from which the modern ecology has been derived which he defined as, “Comprising the relation

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of the animal to its organic as well as relations with the neighboring plants and animals.”

The word ‘trophic’ means ‘to feed’. The term ‘trophic structure’ refers to feeding relationships. In its simplest form, an ecosystem can be defined as a self-sustained community of plants and animals existing in its own environment.

The term ecosystem relates to a manmade surrounding such as the human influenced ecosystem. Any situation which depicts a relationship between living organisms and their environment constitutes an ecosystem. There are but a few areas on the earth which exist free of human touch today, although some far out wild lands do exist, far away from human intervention.

Sometimes ecologists commonly divide an organism’s surroundings or environment into two types:

- **A-Biotic Environment and Biotic Environment**

The biotic environment pertains to all the living organisms and their life processes. The physical environment or the biotic components is composed of sunlight's, atmosphere, water and soil or rock, which affect the living organism and all are in turn affected by them. The greatest

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number of limiting factors influencing plants or animal growth, abundance and distribution are biotic in nature.\textsuperscript{36}

The a-biotic components refer to the non-living: chemical and physical factors in the environment that affect the living things. These include sunlight, temperature, water, atmospheric gases, and wind as well as soil and physiographic factors such as nature of land surface, quality and intensity of light, or salinity level of water.

Nature plays an important role in maintaining the vital balance among these components of the non-living environment. It supports the sustenance of life on earth. Environment can be defined as the natural world comprising air, water, land, plants, animals and all the living organisms on earth. These living and non-living components are operated through a self-regulating mechanism.

According to this mechanism, a change is brought by one component and it is counterbalanced by some other component. Thus the natural environment is never static. There is always a tendency to achieve a balance in environment. So ecology is the study of various relationships between the living, the non-living and the various living organisms.

b. Components of Environment and their Interactions

The scientific study of the environment helps us to understand the four

\textsuperscript{36} *Dr Aaradhana Salperkar, Dr. Kadambari Sharma – Encyclopedia Of Ecology And Environment, Bhartiya Khadi Gramoyog Vikas Abhidaran New Delhi 2007. P 20,29
basic elements. Chemicals on the earth are distributed across four major environmental components called conceptual spheres - atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere and biosphere. While such a classification of nature is arbitrary, it helps in organizing and extending our knowledge of the distribution and flow of chemicals.

The **Atmosphere** may be considered as a transport component that moves substances from atmosphere sources to receptors. It is the whole mass of air surrounding the earth, composed largely of oxygen and nitrogen.\(^{37}\) Its storage capacity for matter is small compared to the other spheres. So it has an immense capability for redistributing matter spatially.

The **Hydrosphere** may be further classified into two subcomponents: - A conveyor and a river system that collects the substances within the water shed and delivers them to the second hydrologic subcomponent oceans.

The **Lithosphere** is the solid shell of inorganic materials on the surface of the earth. It is composed of soil particles. The soil layer is also referred to as the pedosphere which is a mixture of inorganic and organic solid matter, air, water and microorganisms. Under the soil, the biochemical reactions by microorganisms are responsible for most of the chemical changes of matter. They are mainly storage components for the deposited matter.

The **Biosphere** is the thin shell of organic matter on the surface of earth comprising all the living things. It is the portion of Earth and its atmosphere that can support life.\(^{38}\) It occupies the least volume of all of the spheres but it is the cause of a majority of flow of matter through nature. Weathering through the hydrological cycle, blowing wind, and volcanic releases are some of the other mobilizing agents.

\(^{37}\) Dr. Shanty Ganesh- Dictionary Of Environment, Pacific Book International Delhi P 29

\(^{38}\) Dr. Shanty Ganesh- Dictionary Of Environment, Pacific Book International Delhi P41
The biosphere is responsible for the grand scale recycling of energy and matter on earth. The mobilization of matter by biota is by no means restricted to small geographic regions. The periodic burning of forests for example, not only changes the chemical form of matter. It also results in long-range atmospheric transport and deposition. Some of the biologically released chemicals, including carbon, nitrogen, and Sulphur have long atmospheric residence times, resulting in continental and global-scale redistribution.

Biosphere is that portion of the earth which supports life, in which life exists. This comprises parts of the lithosphere, hydrosphere, and the lower layer of atmosphere or troposphere. It is the life zone of the earth which includes all living organisms from the single-celled amoebae to complex trees and animals. The biosphere can be divided into a distinct ecosystem that represents interactions between different groups of organisms.

**c. Relation between Ecology and Ecosystem**

A species is what it is and where it is. No environmental ethics has found its way on Earth until it finds an ethics for the biotic communities. We have two parts to the ethics:

- First, that ecosystems exist, both in the wild and in support of culture;
- Secondly, that ecosystem ought to exist.

Both are for what they are in themselves and as modified by culture. Again, we must move with care from the biological claims to the ethical claims.
Classical, humanistic ethics finds ecosystems unfamiliar territory. It is difficult to get the biology right, and when superimposed on the biology, to get the ethics right. Fortunately, it is often evident that human welfare depends on eco-systemic support. In this sense, all our legislation about clean air, clean water, soil conservation, population control, and renewable resources are connected to ecosystem level processes. Further, human beings find most values while preserving wild ecosystems and the wilderness.

Ecosystems generate and support life. In fact there is not a single living organism on earth that exists in a free state.\(^\text{39}\) It also brings in harmony with sufficient containment. The ecologist finds that ecosystems are filled with objectively satisfactory communities where the organism’s needs are sufficiently met with for species which long to survive. The critical ethicist also finds that such ecosystems are made up of satisfactory communities to whom duties can be attached, because of their concern about the fundamental unit of survival.

Environmental ethics must break these boundaries. They hold the view that only organisms are real. They actually exist as entities, whereas ecosystems are nominal just interacting individuals. For instance, oak trees are real, but forests are nothing but a collection of trees. But any level is real, if it shapes behaviour in the level below it. Thus the cell is real, because that pattern shapes the behaviour of amino acids. The organism is real because that pattern coordinates the behaviour of heart and lungs. The biotic community is real because the niche shapes the morphology of the oak trees within it. Being real at the level of the

community only requires an organization that shapes the behaviour of its members.

The challenge is to find a clear model of the community, to discover an ethics for it. Even before the rise of ecology, biologists began to conclude that the combative survival of the fittest distorted the truth. Predator and prey, parasite and host, grazer and grazed are contending in a dynamic process. In this process, the wellbeing of each is bound with the wellbeing of with others. The ecosystem supplies the coordinates through which each organism moves, outside which the species cannot really be located.

One should not look for a single centre or ‘programme’ in ecosystems. Instead, one should look for a matrix, for the interconnection between centers, for creative stimulus and open-ended potential. Everything will be connected to many other things. Sometimes they are connected by obligate associations. Among other things, there will be no significant interactions.

There will be functions in a communal sense. An order will arise spontaneously and systematically when many self-concerned units jostle and seek their own programmes. In such an order, each does its own thing and forces into informed interaction.

An ecosystem is a productive, projective system. Organisms in ecosystem defend only themselves. The evolutionary ecosystem spins a bigger story. It limits each kind, locking it into the welfare of others, promoting new arrivals, increasing kinds and the integration of kinds. Species increase the numbers of their kind; but ecosystems increase kinds, superimposing the latter increase into the former.
Ecosystems are selective systems, as surely as organisms. They are imposed on the individual. The individual is programmed to make more of its kind, but more is going on systematically than that. The system is making more kinds.

2.3. What is Environmental Ethics?

Respect for life demands an ethics concerned about human welfare, other creatures and the environment. All ethics seek an appropriate respect for life. But in the real sense, man does not just need humanist ethics applied to the environment, like the way man has needed one for business, law, medicine, technology, international development, or nuclear disarmament. So environmental ethics, in a deeper sense, stands at a frontier, as radically theoretical. It is applied ethics. It can alone ask whether there can be non-human objects of duty.

Environmental ethics must be more biologically objective and non-anthropocentric. It challenges the separation of science and ethics. It tries to reform a science that finds nature as value-free. It is an ethics that assumes that only human beings count morally. Environmental ethics seeks to escape relativism in ethics. It tries to discover a way for culturally-free ethics.

Human beings interact with nature, which is mixed with culture and wild nature. All of us know that a natural world exists apart from human cultures. Though ethics is included in our cultural heritage, environmental ethics is the only ethics that breaks out of this culture because it believes that to evaluate nature is man’s duty. So environmental ethics is theory-laden and value-laden.

Environmental ethics became much more widespread during the 1960s. In 1973, the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess classified the ecology
movement by its depth in a celebrated article, and related issues were presented to a World Congress of Philosophy by the New Zealand philosopher Richard Roultey, based at Australian National University, Canberra. The first major in the subject, Environmental ethics was founded at the University of New Mexico in 1979, with Eugene C. Hargrove as Editor in Chief.\textsuperscript{40}

Why is environmental ethics a recent phenomenon? Because ethics is in a large part, the critical study of one’s personal and collective responsibility towards vulnerable things. The study actually aims at people, social institutions and human communities. Until recently, nature was believed to be too large and permanent to be vulnerable. But now, the science of ecology has shown us that this is not so.

Environmental ethics asks about the moral relationship between human beings and the world around us. It asks the following questions:

- Do we have special duties, obligations or responsibilities to other species or to nature in general?
- Are there any ethical principles that put constraints on how we use our resources or modify our environment? If so then,
  - What are the foundations of those constraints?
  - How do they differ from principles governing our relations with other humans?
  - How are our obligations and responsibilities to nature weighed against human values and interests?

Environmental ethics is a set of principles. It gives rules which govern human behaviour. Such ethics can be viewed as an adaptive device. It is destined not only for individuals, but also for communities. For effective

\textsuperscript{40} S Subbarao -Ethics Of Ecology And Environment, Rajat Publication New Delhi P165-166
application, it should be understood and made acceptable by people of all races, religions and philosophies.

Environmental ethics can be simply defined as a system of ethical values, human reasoning and knowledge of nature. It attempts to make a pattern of the right conduct towards environment, which has fulfilled the needs of the living beings in the present generation. It does not permit any compromise made on the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs, in contrast to the traditional ethics which only deals with relationship among people.

**a. Definitions of Environmental Ethics**

According to Standford Dictionary – environmental ethics is a discipline in philosophy that studies the moral relationship of human beings, to and also the value and the moral status of the environment and its non-human contents.\(^\text{41}\)

The term, ‘Environmental Ethics, has two significant and distinct interpretations.\(^\text{42}\)

Moral philosophers would call a meta-ethical interpretation whereby we simply inquire the possibility of a global consensus among the elite regarding some general conceptions and doctrines related to human responsibilities with nature and remote future, without identifying any particular ethical content to that doctrine.

Normative interpretation identifies such a doctrine for instance, ‘anthropocentrism’, (nature for humanity’s benefits), land ethics (respect for the community of nature) or deep ecology (affirmation of all natural

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\(^\text{41}\) [www.igc.org on the possibility of Global environmental Ethics – Ernest Partridge Wisconsin Institution Published in In View point 1995]

\(^\text{42}\) [www.igc.org on the possibility of Global environmental Ethics – Ernest Partridge Wisconsin Institution Published in In View point 1995]
processes combined with distrust of all human interference with these processes). Clearly, the more specific the doctrine, the less likely would be a global consensus.

b. Philosophical Foundation of Environmental Ethics

Philosophy is organic to the nature of man. Philosophy defends reasons values. It lays bare the influence of ideas. It is ideas which shape the world. Things first happen in the minds of men and then are action. Reasoning produces ideas and values give them direction.

Philosophy is the foundation of ideas. It supplies the bases for knowledge. It helps individuals to reflect, judge, and think. It refines values and establishes their universality. It also promotes freedom, deeper understanding of man. It also helps individuals to form problems and to find ways and means to solve them.

Man has learnt to live in harmony with his fellow beings. But that Actually, he also has to be in harmony with nature, animates inanimate. We should live together in peace. It is the basic ethics What is the source of these ethical values? It is the basic principles: life is endless and life is interdependent. We must appreciate that dependent on us, we are also dependent on others. This is reciprocation.

Man should respect nature. He should take care of nature. He should which is not sustainable, economically as well as ecologically. Man nature. He has no existence outside nature. His life is tied to breathes, the food he eats, the water he drinks, etc. All his primary satisfaction from nature. We have to move towards a society in which relationship is not based on wants but on needs. And we must make on the unity and integrity of all life on the earth.
c. Moral Foundation of Environmental Ethics

Moral reasoning cannot be regarded as an alternative for science. It seeks to give a powerful complement to scientific knowledge about the earth. Science does not teach us to care. Scientific knowledge does not, by itself, provide reasons for environmental protection. Science and economics provide data, information and knowledge. Environmental ethics turns to such information which makes applications and asks questions such as how we should live and why we should care.

Environmental ethics is built on a scientific understanding which brings human values, moral principles, and improved decision making into conversation with science. Environmental ethics is necessarily an interdisciplinary approach. It draws from fields of academic inquiry, as it cannot stand by itself. It has often raised a simple question- “What is the right thing for us to do? Can we open up fresh perspectives on environmental problems? Thinking ethically about the environment has the potential which can be helpful to anyone who can contribute to creating environmental solutions.

All living beings have their particular homes in Nature, to which they are tied by various stands of environmental relationships of interaction, cooperation development, reproduction and survival, so on this complex web of biological processes depends the survival of all living beings including man.43 If a man asks for his rights, then he has to perform his duties. He should refrain from such actions, which create harm and properties of fellow beings. Many global environmental problems exist, simply because so many people at so many places contribute small bits and pieces to it. Environmental issues raise many difficult questions. We

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are living in a changing world. Man is simply a resident, and a custodian of the living and non-living resources of this planet.

If an individual has rights, then questions arise —

- Does nature also have rights?
- Do other species have rights?
- Are the environment and its resources specifically created for man to use or abuse?

What is real is that man is not the only single species among the millions living on planet Earth. That he cannot live alone is a realization that compels him to stretch his moral concern and consequently, his ethical values. His conscience obliges him to allow a certain respect to non-humans and the pleasures and pains they may experience, simply because beyond usefulness, they share nature with him too.

That man is not the single species among millions of species, living on Earth and that he cannot live alone, is a real concept. It is this reality that urges him to widen his moral and ethical values. His conscience compels him to respect the pleasure and pains of non-humans, not because they are useful, but also because they are as much a part of nature as he is.

Though temporary, man is still guarding planet Earth. Linking the cycle of events that happen here, he has ensured that this cycle has continued since the very beginning. Being that conspicuous link, he still is that unimportant piece in the puzzle that will affect all future generations. So that does not give him the right to spoil the resources, pollute the environment or tamper with the life cycle. While untouched, clean and usable for generations to come, is the question here.
Only if it appeals to man’s conscience can a lot be achieved. Realisation and belief that one’s actions will only add fuel to the existing problems can bring in the much-needed restraint. This can have significant impact on the limiting of wasteful activities. An action is truly ethical if it is the result of a personal decision to act in a moral way and if the way chosen can be accepted as truly morals. It has two implication: firstly moral action means an action that confirms to moral rules, and secondly our intention should be moral.\(^{44}\)

Gently persuading and appealing to one’s conscience could probably make the human world realize that lack of development can lead to the degradation of natural resources and the environment, just as much as too much of development can. Showing some restraint with better foresight, it is environment-friendly technologies that will serve as fire-fighters.

One look at the surrounding world shows damage of the ozone layer which hints at the ice caps melting on the mountains and an alarming rise in the sea level. The ozone layer, after all, is merely protecting the earth from the harmful cosmic radiation and increase in global temperature. If such essential resources are on the verge of running out and questioning the continuity of civilized life, it is not a happy sight that is foreseen.

Nature has been kind, but man has not been so, in return. Man still thinks that the biosphere is much beyond in vastness and hence too deep to be devastated by what humans have inflicted. Since the 1980s, this perception has been blinded by the biospheric change that even the World War II has brought in. More than half of the ice-free ecosystems on Earth have been transformed by man, and the rest are in the process of being impacted as well. Man has replaced so many of the other existing species,

reducing their numbers by a large margin. Pollution, hunting and the
destruction of natural habitat have directly led to such extinction. If man
continues at this rate, the biosphere will no longer be sufficient to carry
the burden of man and his population.

Although we cannot completely suppress the earth system, we do affect it
significantly. We use energy and have created pollution in our quest to
provide food and shelter. Scientific evidence indicates that our activities
are responsible for the global environment. Man has long affected his
local environment, over the last fifty years. The consequences of his
actions have expanded to a global level.

We must put a full stop to this damaging trend. We have to plan the right
code of conduct to regulate our behaviour towards the environment and
natural resources. Only then will the quality of life we live not be
compromised. The ability of our future generations to meet their own
ends will not be affected, as an appeal to human conscience is often an
effective way to control unmanageable problems. Environmental ethics
assumes a central role in our efforts. We have to stop the damages we are
causing to the environment, wildlife and natural resources.

**Concept of Moral responsibility**

“Moral responsibility” normally implies knowledge, capacity, choice, and
value significance. That is to say, if a person is morally responsible to
do something, then he should consider the following:

- He knows of this requirement,
- He is capable of performing it,
- He can freely choose whether to do or not to do it, and

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He is aware that the performance affects the welfare and liberty of other beings.

This is because one’s response to these requirements reflects upon his values as a person. So we can say that this response has ‘moral significance’. This analysis of ‘moral responsibility’ might help us to explain why ‘environmental ethics’ has only recently attracted the attention and concern of moral philosophers. Until recently, our effects on the natural environment were regarded as morally neutral. We assumed nature as both impersonal and too wide to be dealt with. As we interfered with nature using our interventions, we were quite unable to foresee the harm resulting from our dealings with nature.

Some of the key features of environmental ethics help us to recognize the use of moral language to describe how they value the earth. They are:

- to understand the essential features of moral or ethical thinking;
- to understand the important and distinguishing characteristics in environmental ethics;
- to develop the skills to recognize and deploy moral discourse in environmental fields.

Recognizing and using ethics rely heavily on language skills. The essential vocabulary of environmental ethics are, for example, the moral significance of nature, the ethical dimension of sustainability, and environmental virtue ethics, etc. Virtue ethics may also provide a framework for condemning those human actions which degrade, spoil, or destroy the natural environment.46 Most people use the language of ethics every day. They often do so without fully realizing that what we care about is rooted in our moral vision. When we instinctively exclaim that

46 Edited By Robert Elliot – Environment Ethics, Oxford University Press 1995 P4
something is wrong, we do soon the basis of an ethical principle at the back of our minds. For example, we are consuming resources and degrading our planet’s ability to provide the services we human beings need. The consumption of resources is to be so done that they can naturally replenish. If we believe this is wrong, we are basing this on some kind of moral principles. An understanding of environmental ethics makes our reasons explicit which is always helpful in believing that the earth has some ethical significance. Often the simple shift from implicit to explicit use of language of ethics can make statements much more meaningful and much more persuasive.

In the most general sense, environmental ethics invites us to consider three key propositions:

- The Earth and its creatures have moral status. It is natural that they are worthy of our ethical concern.
- The Earth and its creatures have intrinsic value. They have moral values merely because they exist and they meet human needs.
- Human beings should consider “wholes” that include other forms of life and the environment.

There are different trends, voices, and diverse opinions within the field of environmental ethics:

- First, these opinions provide us the essential tools which will enable us to develop our own moral vision for living in a relationship with the Earth, and
- Second, for inviting others to consider the Earth as morally significant.

Environmental ethics is concerned with the issue of responsible personal conduct with respect to natural landscapes, resources, species and non-
human organisms. Conduct with respect to persons is, of course, the
direct concern of moral philosophy. Environmental ethics could be
interpreted more broadly which includes questions of human beings’
responsibility towards the natural environment and their attention to the
matter of moral significance regarding natural environment.

2.4. Aim of Environmental Ethics

Ethics is practical reasoning. It is aimed at action, whereas environmental
ethics is a practical philosophy. Environmental ethics shows concerns
about how human beings, as moral agents, should live the best of lives. It
includes the study of human beings, the study of the environment, and the
study of the relationship between the two. Several questions
automatically arise:

- What are human beings?
- What is nature?
- How are human beings related to nature?
- How should human beings be related to nature?

Some definitions of human nature identify the essential qualities and
universal characteristics that all people have in common. Awareness of
human beings lies at the heart of several important ethical theories that
regard human beings as basically rational beings. These theories make
appeals to reason, to motivate people towards the right action.

To define a human environment, it is one in which mankind can find
maximum fulfillment. Human beings have always inhabited two worlds.
One is the natural world of plants, animals, soils air and water that
preceded us by billions of years and of which we are a part. The other is

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47 Edited by David R. Keller -Environmental Ethics- The Big Questions, A John Wiley and Sons Ltd Publication, 2010. P 1,2
the world of social institutions and artifacts. We have created them for ourselves by using science, technology. Both the worlds are essential to our lives but integrating them successfully causes enduring tensions. It will be wrong to say that the best environment is one in which human beings can have maximum contact with their type of natural environment. The optimum modern human environment requires a compromise between major advantages of civilization and our genetic heritage. Its purpose is to examine the environment in which human beings have evolved and for which it is genetically programmed. We are unwilling to give up the fruits of human civilization.

When environmental philosophers talk about ‘nature’, they generally are not talking about distant galaxies. Similarly, they are not talking about teleological essences. They mean that human beings interact with a part of nature, hydrosphere, atmosphere and biosphere. These four earth systems comprise the environment with its inanimate component of natural systems and the animate component.

Environmental ethics concerns how human beings live, interact with and influence non-human nature, within the context of the ecological system. This environment includes not only wilderness but also the human-built environment. The human-built environment is the product of technology. Technology provides a nexus to relate the foregoing key term of the study of environmental ethics. They are nature, environment, ecology, wilderness, and the essence of humanness.

2.5. Different Approaches to Environmental Ethics

The central issue in environmental ethics is - Can there be non-anthropocentric environmental ethics? Environmental ethics is a basis to judge the right and wrong action concerning the environment. The
theoretical foundation is based on the belief that, it is not grounded solely on human concerns. The main dispute is between those who claim that ethics can only have an anthropocentric basis. Others insist there must be a non-anthropocentric basis for environmental ethics.

There are varieties of approaches to environmental ethics that can be considered as being anthropocentric or human-centered. Some of these approaches maintain that the non-human natural world is considered ethically best. This ethical consideration is based in terms of its instrumental values to human beings. Such instrumental values may be interpreted very broadly.

**Anthropocentric, Psycho-centric, Bio-centric and Eco-centric Theories**

An ethical system could be non-anthropocentric in a number of ways. A no anthropocentric ethical system states that morality can be effective if we remove human beings from being the sole element of concern. The main examples in environmental ethics are:

- **Anthropocentric Theories** (which insist on only human beings having moral standing)
- **Psycho-centric! Liberation Theories** (which insist on only sentient animals having moral standing)
- **Bio-centric Theories** (which insist on only individual living things having moral standing)
- **Eco-centric Theories** (which insist on only ecological systems having moral standing)
a. Anthropocentrism

Human beings have been offered a range of physical, aesthetic and spiritual instrumental values. Anthropocentric theory defined as follows:

- considering human being as the most significant entity of the universe.
- interpreting or regarding the world in terms of human values and experience.

In the natural world, anthropocentric approaches do not necessarily suggest exploitation of environment, but give more importance to the human beings’ needs and interests. They may instead maintain that natural resources should be very carefully managed for human benefit and for the future human generations.

Anthropocentrism takes the position that human beings are the central or most significant species on the planet, or it symbolizes the assessment of reality through an exclusively human perspective.49 The term human-centrism can also be used for anthropocentrism. The first concept can also

48 * www.merriamwebster.com/.../anthrop...

49 Anthropocentrism Merriam-Webster Dictionary
be referred to as human supremacy. Anthropocentrism is a major concept in the field of environmental ethics and environmental philosophy. It is often considered to be the root cause of problems created by human interaction with the environment.

According to anthropocentric views, humanity’s needs and interests are supreme in nature. It has exclusive value and importance in moral life. The needs and interests dominate the thinking of most of the people in our culture. It is a virtually preconscious and unexamined presupposition of most popular cultures and feelings.

Anthropocentrism suggests that human beings are unique and superior to nonhuman organisms in a number of ways. Because they are self-conscious, use language and reason, have free will, and are moral agents. Human individuals have the potential and they are radically unique. The difference between two human beings can be greater and more interesting than the difference between plants and species. On the other hand, non-humans do not have free will, so they cannot choose between alternative actions that shape identity and destiny.

Anthropocentrism is the grounding for some naturalistic concept of human rights. It gives rise to human duties to each other, the natural world and to treat animals humanely. Defenders of anthropocentrism argue that it is necessary to defend universal human rights. But what matters morally is simply being human.
b. Psycho-centrism

The possession of a sentient psyche is an attribute. It provides the axiological foundation for the theories that fall under the heading psycho-centrism. Psycho-centrism draws the line between humanity and animality. For this reason, it includes theories referred to as animal welfare ethics.

One way of formulating psycho-centrism is to emphasize awareness of oneself as a subject. It persists through time in a community of other subjects. Human beings are notable for this sort of awareness. The evidence suggests that other animals also exist. To be a subject of life is a moral attribute that secures intrinsic value. Such beings have a right to be respected as a moral agents. That right involves the agreement to duties of moral agents.

We have to be clear on the kind of ethical concern that has to do with the ‘welfare’ of animals. Various ethical concerns arise over the treatment given to animals. We may consider that certain butterflies should be protected because the species is endangered. The pigs should be housed in certain ways to prevent environmental pollution. The children should not ill-treat animals because such actions may make children cruel or destructive. The primary concern in these cases centre around genetic conservation, environmental integrity, or human virtues, rather than the
quality of life. In contrast, it concerns about the welfare of animals which arises when human beings consider that protecting the quality of life of animals has instrumental value. But it has some external goals which have some importance by themselves.

Social critics, ethicists and others have expressed three different types of quality of life concerns which overlap with each other -

- ‘Natural-living’ - This concern emphasizes the naturalness of the circumstances in which animals are kept. It also includes the ability of an animal to live according to its ‘nature’.
- ‘Feelings-based’ - It emphasizes the affective experiences i.e. ‘feelings’ and ‘emotions’ of animals. So a good life for animals is thought to depend on the freedom from suffering. For this, suffering is prolonged for intense pain, fear, hunger and other negative states. It sometimes emphasizes positive states such as comfort, contentment and pleasure.
- ‘Functioning-based’ - It is held especially by many farmers, veterinarians and others with practical responsibility for animal care. They give special importance to health. The ‘normal’ or ‘satisfactory’ functioning of the animal’s biological systems is important.

Some scientists have proposed conceptions of animal welfare. It has included two or all three of the above concerns while other scientists have suggested a logical ordering whereby the animal’s experience is the ultimate concern. So a satisfactory biological functioning is important because it partly influences the animal’s experience, to say the least.
c. Biocentrism

Biocentrism is an ethical point of view which extends inherent value to the nonhuman species. It stands in contrast to anthropocentrism which centre on the value of humans.\textsuperscript{50} Advocates of biocentrism often promotes preservation of biodiversity, animal rights and environmental protection. Biodiversity is the degree of variation of life forms within a given species, ecosystem and planet.

The term biocentrism encompasses all environmental ethics that “extend the status of moral object from human beings to all living things in nature.”\textsuperscript{51} Bio-centric ethics calls for a rethinking of the relationship between human beings and nature. It states that nature does not exist simply to be consumed by human beings.

Human beings are simply one species amongst many. Human beings are part of an ecosystem. So any action which negatively affects the living systems of which human beings are a part, adversely affects all. This happens whether we maintain a bio-centric world view or not. Bio-

centrists believe that all species have inherent value. Human beings are not “superior” to other species in a moral or ethical sense.

The four main pillars of a bio-centric outlook are:  

1. Human beings and all other species are members of the Earth’s community.
2. All species are part of a system of interdependence.
3. All living organisms pursue their own “good” in their own ways.
4. Human beings are not inherently superior to other living things.

Bio-centric ethics differs from classical and traditional ethical thinking. It does not focus on strict moral rules, as in classical ethics. It focuses on attitudes and character. In contrast with traditional ethics, it is non-hierarchical. It gives priority to the natural world rather than to humankind.

Peter Singer argues that non-human animals deserve the same equality of consideration that we extend to human beings. His arguments are roughly as follows:  

1. Membership in the species ‘Tomo Sapiens’ is the only criterion of moral importance that includes all humans and excludes all non-humans.
2. Using membership in the species ‘Homo sapiens’ as a criterion of moral importance is a completely one-sided approach.
3. Of the remaining criteria, we might consider only sentience as a plausible criterion of moral importance.

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53 Vuletic, Mark, “Philosophy Notes: Singer, “All Animals Are Equal”. Retrieved from vuletic.com on 8 November 2012
4. Using sentience as a criterion of moral importance entails that we extend the same basic moral consideration (i.e. "basic principle of equality") to other sentient creatures as we do to the human beings.

5. Therefore, we ought to extend to animals the same equality of consideration that we extend to human beings.

Biocentrism is most commonly associated with the work of Paul Taylor, especially his book Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics (1986). Taylor maintains that biocentrism is an "attitude of respect for nature". According to this view, if one attempts to make an effort to live one’s life in a way that respects the welfare and inherent worth of all living creatures, Taylor states that:

1. Human beings are members of a community of life along with all other species, and on equal terms.

2. This community consists of a system of interdependence between all members, both physically, and in terms of relationships with other species.

3. Every organism is a "teleological centre of life", that is, each organism has a purpose and a reason for being, which is inherently "good" or "valuable."

4. Human beings are not inherently superior to other species.

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d. Eco-centrism

Eco-centrism has been derived from the Greek word, “oikos” which means house and “kentron” which means centre. It is a term which is used in ecological political philosophy. It insists on a nature-centered, as opposed to human-centered, system of values. The justification for eco-centrism usually builds on an ontological belief.

The ontological belief denies that there are any existential divisions between human and non-human nature sufficient to claim that humans are either (a) the sole bearers of intrinsic value or (b) possess greater intrinsic value than non-human nature. Thus the subsequent ethical claim is for an equality of intrinsic value across human and non-human nature.\(^{55}\)

Eco-centric ethics was conceived by Aldo Leopold.\(^{56}\) It recognizes that all species, including human beings, are the product of a long evolutionary process. They are inter-related in their life processes. The writings of Aldo Leopold and his idea of the land ethic and good environmental management are a key element to this philosophy. Eco-

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\(^{55}\) Political Dictionary. Retrieved on 13 June 2009

\(^{56}\) Leopold, A. -A Sand County Almanac. New York: Oxford University Press 1949
centrism focuses on the biotic community as a whole where it strives to maintain ecosystem composition and ecological processes.\textsuperscript{57}

It emphasis on ecological wholes and moves away from individual plants and animals. In eco-centrism, the value is placed on these ecological systems as a whole. The early version of eco-centric ethics is Aldo Leopold’s “Land Ethic”.

Eco-centric ethics are holistic ethics, rather than individualistic. The holism can be metaphysical or epistemological. Metaphysical holism is that which insists on the whole as it exists, apart from or as really as its parts. Epistemological holism is that which insists that the whole is the chief way to understand the parts. Then there is moral holism -it is the system that should be considered morally, independently of the individuals in that system.

Eco-centric ethics appeals to ecology for helping in explaining and defending its conclusions. Ecology is the study of the interactions of living organisms with each other and with their non-living environments. An ecosystem is an area in which a variety of living organisms interact in mutually beneficial ways with their living and non-living environment. Ecologists, like botanists and zoologists, focus more on inter-dependencies and relationships than on individual organisms.

2.6. Two models of Environmental Ethics

For a better and clear understanding of environmental ethics, we should consider the relevance of two models:

a. Based on Anthropocentric View

Discussions regarding man and environmental relations is always based on harm versus benefits. The benefits of economic activities are weighed against the harm they cause to the environment. According to the anthropocentric view-based model of environmental ethics, decisions are based on whether the harm is offset to a significant extent by a co-related benefit. For example, cutting tropical rain forest causes long-term ecological harm. If one can prove that its benefits outweigh its harmful effects, then a destructive activity is permitted.

Few people disagree with this because it provides protection for the existing human beings. The controversy occurs when people consider the harm done to future generations which includes human beings, animals, plants, or the planet itself. Such values of costs and profits guide group behaviour in this ethical model. This model entails an anthropocentric view in which humanity’s place is in the centre and is the ultimate goal of the universe. It also views the environment as existing for its convenience. Nature is viewed as a mere storehouse of raw materials for
human use. The environment is seen as relatively stable, unlimited and well-understood.

b. Based on Bio-Centric View

A second model of environmental ethics is based on bio-centrism. It views the planet Earth as a living system of interdependent species. This approach, is based on a ‘do no harm’ principle, which provides an adaptable model of decision making. It takes a holistic view which emphasizes on ethical and environmental considerations in all decisions. A balance is sought between organizational goals and environment-based values. The environment is viewed as fragile, limited in resources, and vulnerable to organizational actions. It sees the planet as a community of life-forms where each member contributes and depends on others. Every act of pollution and resource exhaustion is viewed not as an isolated event, but as a contributing factor to a collective impact of increasingly accelerating global proportions.

Both the above views have an obligation to seek and to understand the other’s views and arguments. Candid, honest, and respectful communication can lead to the creation of shared values. Communication should include education. The anthropocentric view should be undertaken to know and understand the workings and interdependencies of the biosphere. The bio-centric view seeks to understand the concerns of business. A holistic view considers all the parts of the problem. It is not realistic to attempt to eliminate all business. People must, however, evaluate the ways in which they live and make appropriate changes. People must consider ethics and the environment in all of their decision making.
2.7. Post-Modern Environmental Ethics

Postmodern theory is a broad and somewhat ambiguous belief system tied to the philosophical and cultural reaction to the convictions of modernism which is sometimes equated with Humanism. Human nature is constructed by language, which is based on structures and institutions of human society. Post-modernism as a form of philosophy rarely seeks out innate meanings in human existence. It focuses on analyzing and critiquing of the given meanings in order to rationalize and reconstruct them. In post-modernist terms, anything resembling a meaning of life can only be understood within a social and linguistic framework. Post-modernist thought is an escape from the power structures which are already embedded in all forms of speech and interaction. A post-modernist is always aware of a necessary rule of the restrictions to a language.

A post-modern perspective has introduced critiques about ideology, discourse, representation, knowledge and power that overturn many of our assumptions about the world. Post-modern environmental ethics also enjoys a playful criticism of an unquestioned relationship between humanity and environment. Much of the post-modernists’ work considers the historical context in which nature, knowledge and language were defined. Thus a post-modern critique can open up a wider discussion of science, knowledge, language, power and ideology. These are all important considerations when we want to analyze environmental discourses, humanity-environment relationship and environmental issues and policy.

58 www.allaboutworldview.org/postmodern...
Post-modern environmental ethics attempts to situate social theory which is based on the inquiry of environmental ethics. The fact remains that, defining post-modern environmental ethics remains an unfinished project. Post-modernism by itself is difficult to be defined. So it is a challenge to explore the role of language and science in the creation of such a humanity-environment discourse.

In our modern society, knowledge and truth have been understood to belong to the field of science. As a result, our culture has virtually been identified as the achievement of knowledge with the procedures of science. One new area of thought that has emerged from that of the post-modern perspective is the social construction of nature. For many years, the study of the environment has been dominated by physical scientists or policy makers. We have often taken for granted that nature is an objective reality. But the fact reminds that it is, in fact, a social creation.

The post-modern perspective challenges the assumption that nature is a physical entity that has to be studied and understood only by natural scientists. For example, if there has to be a concept of pollution there must first be an understanding of the system or environment, in order. Pollution is basically the same system, but out of order. Thus, we must first explore the system of knowing and of knowledge. Recently, there has been an explosion of social science. Social scientists have been reported to have seriously examined various concepts such as environmental history, environmental discourses, humanity environment relationships and the role of environment’s play in the culture-value system.
2.8. Environmental Ethics in the Indian Perspective - In Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism

Environmental ethics has always been an inherent part of the Indian religious precepts and philosophy. Reverence to nature has always been reflected in Indian culture, which is a unique feature of Indian culture. Every human society has a set of beliefs about nature and natural resources. The concept of environmental ethics seems to be a recent subject but its root is fixed deeply in human history. Virtually all religions have much to say about environmental ethics which are related to human interactions with their environment. These interactions are concerned about issues, principles and guidelines for man’s behaviour.

The ancient Indian culture adopted a set of ethical and moral values, which was truly based on respect for nature. They followed ethical principles while using land, water and air. Earlier, natural resources were not looked only from the perspective of their usefulness to human beings. It was based on the principle that plants and trees had their own life, meant not only to sustain human beings but coexist as sanctuaries to other creatures.

Philosophy in India is not a mere speculation, but it is completely spiritual. Indian philosophy has been in existence for thousands of years because it is truly practical and has its applied value. Its chief concern has been to conceive a philosophical scheme with practical application. It is a chariot, in which man could ride and can reach a proper destination i.e. liberation.

The rich ancient Indian tradition has always given importance to taking care of the environment due to awe, wonder, love and respect for the nature. Ancient Indian philosophical tradition established a way of living
that was in tune with nature and its surroundings. These ancient Indian thoughts throw light upon the protection of flora and fauna, which is based on the fundamental principle of ecology.

The human mind made a fateful decision during the course of the Scientific Revolution, ignoring the wisdom of the world’s spiritual traditions. Scientific research and development seemed to bring to the world technologic superiority over nature, after which man attempted to become a presiding deity of modern civilization. This has led to environmental degradation where man’s greed has emphasized the right over obligation, thus raising serious questions in modern society.

Ecological experts have highlighted the decline of respect for nature. Even some of the most secular nations are calling for a rediscovery of the sacredness of nature.

They want answers for bringing about environmental behavioural change. They have spoken wistfully of the need to import “Eastern Concepts of respect for the quality of all life forms.” What strategy can we formulate to protect this planet earth which will keep it intact for future generations? Changing circumstances and ongoing efforts can craft a strategy for planet earth. Work is in progress and not a one-time event. Honesty, integrity, keeping one’s word, and respecting the rights of others are the main traits that a good individual is supposed to believe in and to display.

Religion has blended with ‘Vasudev Kutumbakam’ which means the world is one family can be a powerful tool for this planet. Today the challenge to modern religions and the modern strategist is to reclaim their connection with the earth.
a. Hinduism and Environmental Ethics

Environmental ethics has always been an inherent part of Indian philosophy. Man- nature relationship has been at the centre of the Vedic vision. The sacred scriptures, Vedas and Upaniṣads specifically talk about man’s responsibility to preserve his environment. Worship of nature arose from deep reverence, which was shown to the forces of nature and not as a response to the fear of the unknown. The root of the environmental values is deep in the ancient Indian Vedic literature and Upaniṣads. The principle of environmental ethics in Hinduism is based on the respect for nature, care for the environment, sustained use of resources and the path of non-violence.

In Hinduism it is believed that, the Vedas are as old as Nature, because they represent the divine voice which emerged at the time of Creation of Nature. Even the ozone layer is mentioned in the hymns of Rgveda and Atharva Veda as a thick membrane surrounding the earth: Ulbā is the membrane while the world hirnyeya describes the golden colour. 59

To understand the role of Hinduism in the ecological crisis, we need to understand Hinduism’s attitude to nature shaped by its view of the cosmos and creation. In Hinduism, theory of nature and ecology is enormously affected by theory of creation, which recognizes that every element, object and living beings in the universe is created by the same supreme being, and the man has no special dominion over nature. 60 In Hinduism, the traditional values and beliefs have been based on the respectful treatment that humans gave to the environment, needs to be understood. Hindu environmental ethics engenders respect and reverence

as the natural way of looking at things in the world. These are all parts, but none is apart. This awareness of biotic and spiritual connectedness has been entrenched in Hinduism.

The Bhūmisūkta of Atharva Veda considers ‘Bhūmi’ as the earth where she is personified as the mother goddess. In fact, the earth in Bhūmisūkta does not merely represent land but it represents all parts of the environment. The earth, which is symbolized as the environment has three principal elements - land, water and air. This points to mother earth being the source of life and it is the human being’s responsibility to preserve it for his own existence.

Hindu philosophy is rich in ideas, attitudes, and values, which furnish the necessary principles for a proper management of the physical environment. It proposes the ideas which in turn gives the outline of the ecological principles. The Vedas, Purānas, Upaniṣads, Bhagavadgītā, Mahābhārata, Rāmāyaṇa and many more ancient scriptures contain the earliest message of environmental ethics.

The Upanishad has explained the performance of all components of nature and their inter-relations. Water is the strength of the plant and a source of energy for every living organisms. One of the descriptions of water is ‘Jīvan’ means ‘life’. Chāndogya Upaniṣad states that - water is the sap of the earth, the wind ‘vāyudevtā’, the forest ‘vanadevatā’ are all sources of natural energy. So they should be preserved and worshipped.

In Hinduism, the universe was integrated as a whole and all natural phenomena had divine origin. There was an all-round intense awareness for the need of having a balance in the man- environment interaction. Though all creations do not occupy the same gamut of existence and they

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61 Dr. Yamin Sahay, Prof. (Dr) Sohan Raj Tater- Applied Ethics and Social Responsibility, Deepak Publishers and Distributers, Jaipur, 2012. P 70
are different in compassion to their level of consciousness, this is the concept of oneness found in Hinduism. So, worshipping nature shows respect for the divine principle, which is there in nature. The perception is based on the fact that life is present in all biotic and non-biotic things.

Hinduism comprises articles of faith that prescribe a way of life, and cannot just be called a mere set of beliefs. This faith is the very essence that permeate through the social organization. With every change in the social backdrop, the articles of faith keep getting modified and understood better. Rather than looking at such opportunities for quick change, the Hindu moral code continues to uphold its fundamental principle of *Karma* as the highest ideal and does not let any change violate its dignity.

To understand the concept of environmental ethics in Hinduism, I would like to highlight a few basic concepts of Upanishadic philosophy which are there in Hinduism. They are —

- Concept of *Rta* and *Rna*
- *Pañcamahābhuta* and their significance
- Doctrine of *Karma*
- Concept of *Yajña*

**Concept of *Rta* and *Rna***

Law covers all fields of human activity in Hinduism. The word ‘*Rta*’ in *Vedic* hymns signifies cosmic order. In the *Vedic* period there was only one word *Rta* which was used for both men and nature. The highest good to be identified with the total harmony of the cosmic and natural order was characterized in *Rta* concept. Correlating with the natural order, the social and moral order was thus conceived. The universe had an inner order with a law and purpose and not strewn around randomly. *Rta* as a
law still governs the macrocosm and the microcosm. It determines not just the place, function or what one is entitled to but also the end of everything. Rta is too subtle for those who cannot understand.

Rta equates the moral ideal to a universal law, a law which operates not only in the human behavioural context as the moral law, but also as the operative supreme universal law of nature. This, as we called Rta in the Rig Veda, was the principle which was not only in charge of the changing seasons but also of the affairs of man and was considered as the guiding principle for all his actions. The importance of this law now becomes clear when we find that in the Vedas the Gods were looked upon as the keepers of this moral order. They were Rta Jata (born within the moral law), Rta Jana (knowing the moral law), Rta-Pa (protecting the moral law), Rta Syagopa (guardians of Rta). Thus, the Gods were there to see that man did not break the moral order to which they themselves were subjects.

The idea of 'Rta' is expressed in the several verses of the Vedas. The verses speak of the mythological deeds of a galaxy of gods such as Indra, Varuna, Mītra, Ādita and so no who are responsible for holding together the universe by various devices where they nourished and punished the same fetters, the transgressors of the Law. Rta means, 'the course of nature or the regular general order in the cosmos and which signifies the concept of moral law in the universe.'

Highest good of human beings was identified with the total harmony of the cosmic or natural order, characterized in the earliest religious texts as Rta.

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From that cosmic sacrifice,
Drops of oil were collected,
Beasts of the wings were born,
And animals wild and tame.
From the horses were given birth,
And cattle’s with two rows of teeth,
Cows were born from that,
And from that were born goats and sheep.
The moon was born from his mind;
His eyes gave birth to sun;
Indra and Agni came from his mouth;
And Vāyu (the wind) from his breath.
From the navel midair arose;
The sky arose from his head;
From feet, the earth; from ears, the directions.
Thus they formed the worlds.⁵⁴

Rta has represents a more significant nuance here, as a natural law. An active and positive energy to abide by what lies ahead is the only thing that will help anything strive towards realizing the intrinsic good from the larger perspective. This is because every element in the universe has its own worth and history and so has its own moral value. Relevant to this moral value is every individual, thing or species’ conscious or unconscious journey of working at realizing the deeper truth.

Rta’s overflow and ritual foods
Nurse forever the healthy child
Wearing, him as mantle, Heaven and Earth
Grow strong by pleasant food and drink.
When Sat (Being) and Asat (Non-Being) were in Aditi’s bosom,

⁵⁴ Rig Veda Purusa Sukta X.90.8.10.13.14.
In Dksa’s origin, in the vault heaven,
Agni was for us Rta’s first-born,
A bull and a cow at the origin life.65

Ecologically, a number of insights and truths are interwoven by the Vedic hymns. These express the uncanny coming together of creation and interconnectedness, and the dependence of every single thing. Everything comes with a role and a purpose in the larger gamut of things. The unitive orientation of Hinduism has predisposed it to account for natural and human processes in terms of the principle of interconnectedness. The concept of Rta representing the immanent dynamic order was an early formulation of this principle that linked cause and effect. This order was not something imposed by the gods from outside, but it was the internal function of the universe to which all beings, including the gods, were subject. Later, Rta gave rise to the notion of dharma, meaning what holds together and thus the basis of all order. The operative element of dharma is the law of Karma.

Dharma is not merely a set of beliefs, but it is the very principle of a healthy and beneficent life. It is described in Mahabharat Karna Parvaixix 59- “That which supports, that which holds together the peoples (of the universe), that is Dharma.”66

The moral concept in Hinduism which must have been instrumental in protecting the natural environment is dharma. This dharma concept finds more palpable expression in Rna theory, which received vehement exposition in Márkandeya Purānas. Rna means ‘debt’ and is used to

65a Rig Veda X,5,3,4,7; XI, 37,47

66 M.C. Joshi Hindu Religion and Ethics ,Aryan Books International, New Delhi, 1903.P 2
signify man’s indebtedness to his ancestors, teachers and society at large.\(^{67}\)

The most inclusive declaration of the interdependence is found in the notion of ‘Rna’. The Hinduism prescribed four debts, which are as follows —

1. **Deva Rna** or Debt towards Divine Beings — The Supreme Being and various deities under his supervision sustain the Universe, ensure our well-being. By worshipping God and other deities, we acknowledge their help and assistance. This debt is discharged by **Devayajña**.

2. Debt towards *Rishis*: The *Rishis* of the past strove to realize the truth, and then they wrote sacred texts to disseminate these truths for the benefit of mankind. By the performance of *Brahmayajña*, and preaching the scriptures to others, we are discharging our *Rishi-Rna*. By providing food to respected scholars as a part of *Atithi yajña*, we again discharge this debt.

3. Debt towards elders and ancestors: Our parents have to struggle hard to give birth to us, bring us up, get us educated us and so on. We repay this debt by serving them and taking care of them when they grow old, and by performing ceremonies in memory even after they die.

4. Debt towards society - The debt towards human beings and society at large, is discharged through the fifth *mahā-yajña*, and by serving visiting guests and other needy persons as a part of the *Atithi -yajña*.

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\(^{67}\) S.S. Barlingay — *A Modern Introduction to Indian Ethics*, Penman Publishers, New Delhi, 1998, P 81
Pañcamahābhutas and their significance

Hinduism believes that life is present in all biotic and non-biotic things. The whole world is made up of the Pañcamahābhutas — the basic five elements which are earth, water, fire, air and space. Thus all creations on earth is made up of these five elements. Not only the plants but also human beings are created from these essential elements. Most of the ancient scriptures highlight the divineness, sacredness and richness of the Pañcamahābhutas.

There are many hymns seeking the blessings of the five basic gross elements of nature — ākāśa or firmament, Vāyu or air, Agni, tejas or fire, āpa or water and Prthvī or earth. According to Matsya Purāṇa, ‘there is no other thing in this Universe than the elements. The whole creation is made of elements’. 68 Pañcamahābhutas are the common postulate in Hinduism which constitute not just human body but all living organism. The awareness of different forces of nature was worshipped in Hinduism because these forces are the manifestation of the universal consciousness.

Doctrine of Karma

The Upaniṣads also witnessed the development of the doctrine of Karma. Karma is the basis on the law of cause and effect. It attracted the Indian mind early. The Vedic hymns are connected to convictions. According to these convictions, whatever we do must have consequences. Rta is an inescapable fact of life. It binds all mortals and gods alike. The doctrine of Karma is combined with the idea of rebirths. It is held that the universe is so structured that the consequences of our action are played out into an unknown and unseen future.

68 Matsya Purāṇa, 289.13
The concept of *Rta* representing the immanent dynamic order was an early formulation of this principle. It linked cause and effect. Order was not something imposed by the gods from outside. It was the internal function of the universe in which all beings, including the gods, were subjects. So *Rta* gave birth to the notion of *Dharma* which means, “what holds together”. It is the basis of all order. The operative element of *dharma* is the law of *Karma*.

Hinduism has always been an environmentally sensitive philosophy. The scriptures in Hinduism contain the earliest messages for preservation of environment and ecological balance. Nature or Earth has never been considered a hostile element. In fact, man is forbidden from exploiting nature. He is taught to live in harmony with nature. Hinduism recognizes the divinity which prevails in all elements, including plants and animals.

The ancient sacred literature of the *Vedas* preserves a holistic and poetic cosmic vision. The *Vedas* represent the oldest and the most carefully-nurtured scriptures.

*Vedic* literature is the most elaborately, systematized and the most lovingly preserved oral traditions in the annals of the world. They are unique in their perspective of time and space. Their evocative poetry is a joyous and spontaneous affirmation of life and nature.

The *Vedic* seers who worshipped the forces of Nature are the manifestations of universal consciousness.69

“The all-embracing truth innermost
The terrible laws of nature
The will in dominated to act scrupulously,

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The conscious strivings to the end,
The prayers surging from within,
And the sacrifices selfless and benign -
These six alone maintain the Earth” *(Atharva Veda- 12.1.1)*

In following the Ṛkāvāsyopaniṣada Upaniṣads, there is a warning to human greed which is the root cause of all environmental problems. So man has to learn to replace acquisitiveness and greed by self-abnegation, lust by restraint and self-discipline, and destruction by regeneration.\(^7^0\)

“Please remember that this world is the Lord’s creation,
And everything that exists here is His, He pervades the whole universe.
Be content with whatever is left by him
And do not greed the wealth of others.”

**Concept of Yajña**

In Hinduism, the people were showing more concern to the environment in which they breathed. It is noteworthy that man in the *Vedic* age treated himself as a part of nature. This awareness is found in the Śukla Yajurveda. It is said that the whole world is a creation of *Yajantya Purura* which means a person born from the sacrifice.

The word *Yajña* has been used in a different sense in *Vedas*. The root meaning of *Yajña* means the worship of gods, association performance and giving gifts. In *Rgveda*, the Supreme Being and creation have been called *Yajña*. The performance of *Yajña* can be attributed to a few of the following reasons. Thus the performance of *Yajña* was a means of giving back to the atmosphere what was taken from them. The *Yajña* performance was given high importance also because of the fact that

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rainfall was needed for producing food and nutrition for all living creatures of the earth.

The mixture of ghee, firewood, specific dried herbs added while performing Yajñas also helped in clearing the pollution from the atmospheric region, by making the air clean and perfumed which was appropriate for all living creatures to breathe. Performing Yajñas with a sincere spirit and in the open air had always been advised by the Hinduism. It pointed out the importance given to different components of our environment as these rituals ensured the balance and harmony that would be maintained among all creations in the world.

The heart of Vedic worship was ritual, intended to adapt the beneficent powers of nature to human needs. The gods to whom the prayers were addressed granted favours but were, in turn, dependent on the humans’ offerings in the Yajña. The picture is one of interrelationship and interdependence between people and the great cosmic forces which often worked in pairs, indicating the systemic integration of natural forces. This eventually highlights a significant feature of Vedic religion: the notion of cosmic law.

Hinduism’s expression of interdependence takes shape within the dynamics of an awesome sense of all-encompassing natural forces. It is also ritualized in the magico-religious effect/response/impact from yajña. Through sacrifice, the worshipper would attempt to secure earthly blessings. It was believed that the generative properties of nature were maintained by the gods, who in turn, depended on the human beings to sustain them through obligations. Offerings to these divinized forms of natural phenomena acknowledged a truth. The truth was to ensure fertility; human beings were meant to harmonise their lives with the
energy of the sun, the wind, water, and fire. Delicate exercises had to be observed to make sure that the mechanisms did not go wrong.

In ancient scriptures, the Vedic scholars have not only explained the usefulness of trees and plants but also depicted their beauty and charm in their writings. But they were also pointing out to the need of protection of the environment that would help in maintaining the ecological balance for the overall benefit to human society. The environmental education which was based on respect, wonder, gratitude and a sense of awareness of living life is in fact, the basic foundation of Hinduism. It is necessary to follow a harmonious balance with the natural surroundings.

To establish peaceful harmony with nature is the prime object of Hinduism. According to Hinduism, it is the sacred duty of human beings to protect our ecology and environment. Today the most important cause of the environmental crisis is the materialistic approach of human beings. Hinduism expected the belief in natural elements like Space, the Earth, Air, Water, Fire, etc. and recognized them as creations of God.  

The environmental crisis today is basically made up of two factors:

- One, our belief that we are somehow separate from nature
- Two, our willingness to ignore the consequences of our actions

These problems are proceeds of our short-sighted vision. Today, human beings are concentrating on current needs and short-term issues. With little faith in the future, the human beings find it difficult to assess the impact of their actions on the future generations. We act ignorant, where we try to ignore the future consequences of our today’s action.

b. Buddhism and Environmental Ethics

In Buddhism, it is also believed that an individual is a part of the creation and he is well integrated into the ecosystem functions. The individual gives back what he has taken from the environment. This is the concept of ‘Sarvabhutodaya’ in Buddhism. All living beings live in order. To free themselves from their miseries they should try to attain the joy of peace. Joy of the present world and joy of ‘Nirvāṇa’ is the main aim of life.

The respect for life and property, the rejection of hedonistic lifestyle and the notion of truthfulness emphasizing consistency in thought and action are all ethical premises. These are relevant for the development of environmental ethics.

In the Buddhist philosophy of Buddhism, a pro-conservationist approach gives importance to the conception towards nature. Though change is inherent in nature, Buddhism believes that natural processes are affected by the morals of humanity. ⁷² According to it, an aggressive attempt to exploit the environment for short-term benefits and a lifestyle based on limitless consumerism should be avoided.

The original Pali term for Buddhism is Dhamma, which literally means that which upholds, it is the doctrine of reality which is a means of deliverance from suffering and deliverance itself.⁷³ The appropriate moral response is to minimize suffering and pain as best as one can. One should overcome suffering and dissatisfaction. Both should be done by understanding the causes of such suffering and dissatisfaction.

⁷³ Arvind Diwedi – Buuddhist Philosophy, Abhjeet Publication New Delhi 2012 P 142
Buddhist ethics covers human behavior in relation to all living beings. It underpins certain basic virtues, particularly, love, kindness, sympathy, empathy, equanimity and joy in others’ happiness. In Buddhist scheme of spiritual development śīlā discipline, meaning morally wholesome habits, from the foundation of civilized life and the famous Pañcaśīla spells the minimum required for lay life. It is said that human beings are capable of infinite amounts of compassion, generosity and gratitude. So all creatures, great and small, should be the subject of our moral sensibilities.

Buddhism describes the triangular relationship amongst human beings, plants and animals. It also presents their role on environmental establishment. Buddhist literature has stressed that nature and human beings need to live in close harmony. Plants and animals should be the objects of unlimited kindness and benevolence. Life and nature, humanity and environment, are equally dependent on each other. Environmental ethics, according to Buddhism, can be observed through the practical application of the following -

- Four Noble Truths
- Right Living
- Right Understanding Of Noble Eightfold Path
- Craving Or Tanhā
- Loving Kindness Or Mettā
- Compassion Or Karunā

The right understanding is necessary for its application. The social aspect of Buddhist ethics seems to include animals and nature and may be

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74 Lily De Silva – Essays On Buddhism Culture And Ecology- For Peace And Survival, Buddhist Cultural Centre Shri Lanka 2001 Pg 47
developed in terms of ecological responsibility. Karunā or compassion, according to Buddhism, is that feeling in human beings which motivates action. It is one of the constituents of the concept of Brahma Vihāra, which occupies an important position in all forms of Buddhism.

Tanha or craving is the basis of all life, the main spring, a vital principle of living being. Our power cannot and should not be exercised over all of nature without a thought about the probable negative effects that our actions may cause. Buddhism says that the mind believes that nature is meant for him. And so, in order to conquer the material aspects of the world, man overlooks his own inner nature that he needs to conquer first, and loses all control. This inner nature or Tanhā is now no longer a small effect to contend with.

Brahma-vihāra refers to the sublime way of living. If all the members in a society should develop infinite consciousness saturated with Mettā, Karunā, Muditā and Upekkhā collectively termed Brahmavihāra, it will result in the perfect social order.

The term mettā is derived from the Pāli term ‘Mejjati’ which means the state of love.\(^{76}\) It also refers to friendliness, benevolence, goodwill, loving, kindness and universal love. It is the wish for the welfare and happiness of all beings.

The main characteristics of Mettā are:

1. To promote social welfare;
2. To remove hatred from the mind; and
3. To regard the whole world as one’s mother and all as fellow-beings

\(^{76}\) * Chintala Venkata Siva Sai - Compassion and Peace in Buddhism, Sonali Publications, New Delhi, 2006. P 60*
Since anger and hatred form the obstacle of Mettā, these defects are to be dropped.
The Pāli term Karunā means pity or compassion. In the Aṅguttarā Nikāya, it is defined as, “Ahitā dukkha apānayā Kamatā” or the desire removing the bane and sorrow (from one’s fellow men). “If Karunā is taken to be the equivalent of the English word compassion, then it can refer to “Sympathy for the sufferings and misfortunes on the others, causing a desire to give help or show mercy.”

The main characteristics of Karunā are as follows:

1. To help a person’ from suffering by ignoring one’s own suffering’;
2. It takes the form of non-violence in removing the suffering of others.
The term Muditā is derived from the Pāli root ‘Mudanti, which is associated with the gladness or Mudanti meaning that which itself is gladness or Mudanti meaning the mere act of being glad and therefore Muditā can be defined as gladness with a qualification.

**Characteristics of ‘Muditā’**

It is happy acquiescence in others prosperity and successes (Anumodanā). Muditā embraces all prosperous beings. It eliminates dislike (Ārati)and is the congratulatory attitude of a person.” Muditā is not only sympathetic or appreciating joy, but also the quality of heart that can make one happy at the prosperity of others as his own. In short, “Gladness is characterized as gladdening (produced by others’ successes)”. Its function resides in being unenvious. It is manifested as the elimination of aversion (boredom), its proximate cause is seeing being successes. It succeeds when it makes aversion (boredom) subside, and it fails when it produces merriment.
The term ‘Upekkhā’ means ‘discreming’ highly, viewing justly or looking at something impartially. It is observing without a favorable or unfavorable intent. Upekkhā ‘is viewing an object with a balanced mind.’

Upekkhā is a neutral condition or a balanced state of mind. It discards clinging and aversion. It is the impartial attitude looking at all beings equally. In other words, “Equanimity is characterized as promoting the aspect of neutrality towards beings. Its function is to see equality in beings. It is manifested as the quieting of resentment and approval. Its proximate cause is seeing ownership (Kamma) thus: Beings are owners of their deeds.”

As compassion for all sentient beings should be developed, people should become aware of their actions and principally, their effect on other beings and nature. Once planted, each thought, word and deed based on compassion will give beneficial results. In the widest ecological sense, Buddha’s demonstration of compassion has been revealed and the effects are felt even today.

In Buddhism, things are described as interdependent where both cause and effect play a significant role in nature. The interdependence has been analyzed in Buddha’s Law of Dependent Origination. This doctrine of Buddhism has suggested the ways for overcoming the problems. So, it will maintain an ecological balance in the society and nature.

Buddhist philosophy presents a rational interpretation of environment. The philosophy also includes inner and outer environment. To understand the nature of the inner environment, the Buddhist doctrine of Annicā (Theory of Impermanence) and doctrine of Dukkha (Theory of Suffering) are helpful. The theory of impermanence entails that there is nothing which is permanent. This is true of all organic and inorganic substances.
Existence, in Buddhism, is nothing but misery. The theory of suffering has been treated as identical with the origin of individuality.

1. In Buddhist ecology, it is believed that man-nature relationship is governed and determined by the nature of man.
2. Man’s greed which is uncontrolled and unlimited, can be removed by *Prajna* which means proper knowledge.
3. Due to ignorance, man thinks that he is superior to nature and starts treating nature as a means for the satisfaction of his desire. Consequently, he is alienated from nature.

The *Buddha’s* life was closely related from his birth to the natural environment and after his enlightenment he spent the rest of his life amidst nature. Even his enlightenment wouldn’t have been possible had he not gone to nature in search of the Truth. A devout Buddhist realizes the contribution of nature in his personal life, he receives mental and physical support for his sustenance from nature. Such a person will always do his best to preserve nature, clean and free from pollution. *Buddha’s* teachings and its derivations are absolutely impossible without a clean and peaceful natural environment. If nature is not protected and preserved, the ethics of Buddhism can never be achieved. Nature becomes a friend to him - a real source of spiritual inspiration. Flora and fauna must be protected for natural beauty and aesthetics. All these help a Buddhist to express his love and compassion to all beings which is the essence of Buddhism. The *Buddha* could be considered as a naturalist in his philosophy and a true environmentalist, in practice. Thus Buddhism is a science and art for total living and Buddhism offers a solution and means to maintain a balance in nature and to preserve it for the coming generations.
Therefore, preservation of nature is a human duty. It is man’s moral duty to preserve nature and have an environmental conscience so that good people could inherit this earth for good living. If one is fully aware of Lord Buddha’s Dhamma and its follow up, nature can be kept without its ruination.

Thus, we can see that Buddhist ethics is an eco-centric ethics. It stresses on an environment-friendly attitude. It is not the anthropocentric theme. Buddha’s life itself was closely related to the natural environment from his birth until he passed away. Buddhism expresses love and compassion for all beings. It stresses on a non-exploitative, non-aggressive and gentle attitude towards nature. Man should live in harmony with nature, utilising its resources for the satisfaction of his basic needs without harming the natural world in which he lives. If we follow the teachings of such an eco-centric ethics, we would go a long way in reducing the environmental crisis.

C. Jainism and Environmental Ethics

It is in Jainism that one finds an explicit environmental ethic more than in Hinduism and Buddhism. In Jainism there is a fundamental dichotomy between the soul and body, mind and matter. Each soul maintains its own integrity. It is not a manifestation of the universal soul. Every living thing is possessed with such a soul. Its consciousness is merely dimmed and confused with the sensory perception of various modes and degrees of clarity. All souls are equally pure and perfect.

Consider all the life forms same and equal without attachment to any. The Jain evolutionary theory is based on a grading of the physical bodies which contains souls according to the degree of sensory perception. All

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souls are equal but are bound by varying amounts of karmic particles. It is reflected in the types of bodies that they inhabit: - The lowest form of physical body has only the sense of touch. Trees and vegetation have a sense of touch and are therefore able to experience pleasure and pain, and have souls.

Mahāvīra taught that only the one who understood the grave demerit and detriment caused by destruction of plants and trees will have understood the meaning and merit of reverence for nature. Even metals and stones might have life in them. So it should not be dealt with recklessly.

The entire ecosystem today is upset by human interference with nature. Ecological balance will be maintained if nature is left to itself. The need of today’s life is based on the friendly relationship between man and nature. It has been felt that there is an urgent need for sustainable development. So the approach should be humanistic.

Jainism has been referred as an ecological religion. In fact, environmental problems have ethical implications. So today, Jainism has an important role to play in proposing an ethical direction. Jain ethics and practices are important for the awakening of environmental consciousness. Jain ethics shows the paths to human beings in which the virtues of moral life are to be followed in his day-to-day life. The ethical principle of Jainism prescribes a code of conduct. It requires an individual to be an ideal non-violent person.

The Jain world-view has large implications for the emergence of a non-violent culture which is key for environmental protection. It will give a new outlook in the age of globalization. Environmental degradation is directly or indirectly related to violence which is based on destruction of life, and which ultimately creates imbalance in ecosystems. The main
cause is the behaviour of man. The basic question is — ‘How we ought to behave’. A non-violent lifestyle may help. The basic principle is it is morally wrong to destroy nature. The root of all problems lies in human greed and egoism.

Jainism has developed its own unique environmental ethics inspired by Jain values. There is a close relationship between the Jain world view and environmental protection. Jain environmental ethics is non-anthropocentric. The basic principle is equality of all souls. It insists that members of all species are equal. So, human beings should not be considered as superior to members of all other species. If human beings analyze these principles and act accordingly, the result is preservation of bio-diversity. Thus, Jainism subscribes to the view that all living beings are intrinsically and equally valuable. Aggressive actions or harmful actions are not permissible. Animals or plants should not be killed and the ecosystem should not be destroyed. Jain principles are eco-centric and bio-centric, not human-centric.

With this eco-centric and bio-centric approach, human beings can set all things right. If this approach is realized by man then he has to exercise self-control while dealing with nature. Human beings’ wasteful lifestyle should be changed. An alternative model of non-violent lifestyle should be adopted. If it is manifested in practical life, then only he will maintain harmony with nature. The basis ethics of non-violence has the greatest spiritual force.

Jain environmental ethics is based on the following principles:

- Importance to life forms
- Principle of mutualism (symbiosis)
- Human responsibility
Key doctrines — non-violence, non-consumerism and celibacy.

Equality to all is one of the basic principles in Jainism and this is applicable to all life forms that may or may not be similar to human beings. This principle takes into account each and every life form, right from the smallest microorganism to the highest evolved human being, each of which is elevated to the same potential status.

This equal status to the human being and to every other constituent of the environment, is a unique doctrine in Jainism, and is fundamental to protect and preserve the environment. Considering this equality, no element will be harmed, and man will not encroach or exploit anyone else’s capacity.

Symbiosis or mutualism means such action and interactions of individuals or group that are mutually beneficial and do not cause any harm to anyone. For example, the microbes take food from the digestive tract and simultaneously help in digestion.\textsuperscript{78}

Every element in nature shares a symbiosis with all other constituents, and this is how there is interaction for the mutual benefit of everything that is living and non-living. The anthropocentric attitude of human beings create problems rendering a superiority to mankind and leaving all other creatures as subservient and merely present for pleasure or indiscriminate use.

\textit{Ahimsā} or non-violence is an innate part of self-discipline. Referring to external conduct or behavior towards others, it is also the most sympathetic to an ecological world view, according to Jain philosophy. Non-violence is meant to be an experience that relates to the occurrence

\textsuperscript{78} S. M. Jain - Environmental Doctrines of Jainism Prarit Bharati Academy, Jaipur, 2012. P 77,79
of pain and suffering among living beings and is universalized for others from one’s own experience of pain. It is the ‘good’ and its ‘objectivity’ to which other values share an affinity.

Jainism places non-violence among its principles of morality in its system of ethics. To be highly attentive, observant and mindful when one interacts with nature, and to abstain from any kind of injury in thought, words and deeds, to any living, mobile or immobile being, is the true form of *Ahimsā*.

An important Jain doctrine - *Aparigraha* or non-consumerism — implies non-acquisition and non-possession, promoting social harmony and also attempting to stop an unbridled exploitation of natural resources. To reduce the pinch on our natural resources, a collective effort by society across caste and creed is necessary.

Environmental degradation points to one major factor — and that is population. So as an effort towards maintaining social harmony, Jainism advocates celibacy prohibiting unrestricted licentious sex. Natural resources and their rejuvenation are now showing limited capacities, and hence the ever-consuming population numbers need to now be checked.

**Concept of *Leśyā* - Soul Coloring For Preservation of Nature**
The doctrine of non-violence is significantly related to Jain concept of six kinds of Leśyā. Non-violent attitude implies not taking more from nature that is necessary healthy environment.

There are six Leśyā which symbolized six human attitudes. The names of these six Leśyā or soul complexions in due order are – Black, Blue, Grey, Yellow, Pink, White. It is well illustrated the incident of picking fruits from a tree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>The person with Black Lesya Will Uproot The Tree For Fruits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>The person with Blue Lesya Cuts The Tree From Its Truck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grey</td>
<td>The person with Grey Lesya Cuts A Branch Of The Tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>The person with Yellow Lesya Cut Off A Bunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pink</td>
<td>The person with Pink Lesya Plucks Ripe Fruit From The Tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>The person with White Lesya Merely Picks Up Ripe Fruit Fallen on The Ground</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The person with white Leśyā is the person with highest spiritual level and he has concern for environment, he cares for protection of nature. So he does not destroy, does not create waste and pollute nature. He is self-restraint and inner motivated person. Pure thought inspired pure conduct.

Thus by practice of opposite reflection one could overcome evil thoughts, one’s vicious feeling. Kishna (black) Neel (blue) and Kapot (grey) are three kinds of evil Leśyā thought states, Tej (yellow) Padma (pink) and sukla (whilte) are auspicious thought states. Change in thought states is possible there is outward reaction according to internal thinking. Hence one has to pass from impure thought activities to pure thought activities.

79 किर्णता नीला या काँठ या तेंठा पन्था तहें याँ।
सुक्कलेसा या छन्दा उ, नामाई तु जहक्कल्मं। || Uttaradhyayna Sutra 34.3
for eco-friendly life style. With the help of therapeutic thinking, we may annihilate the root causes of evil thoughts.

A wise man should know about the duration of these Leśyā, avoid inauspicious ones and established himself firmly in auspicious ones.\textsuperscript{80}

This is perhaps one of the best models of protecting environment. What is important to note here is that environmental degradation can be prevented only if we follow ethical code of conduct which substantially ensure ecological balance. Besides the thoughts of human beings ought to be guided by ethical values translated into actions. Thus environmental protection can be effected by eco-friendly life style coupled with spiritualism.

According to Jainism nature is intrinsically valuable. Nature should not be seen in a utilitarian and instrumental perspective. We need to change our attitude towards nature. Jain code of conduct is a pointer in that direction. While exploring distinct Jain vision, it is hoped that Jainism with its philosophy of friendliness to all can offer an effective alternative to the present day material view of reality. There should be understanding of theoretical rules and then practical part is amazingly simple.

Today, environmental concerns are on the top of human agenda Jainism is inter-weave with life. It presents ancient wisdom which genuinely respects the intrinsic rights of diverse species to exist. We need to reestablish value of non-violence. It is necessary that we consider the entire ecological system with love and compassion. Reverence tolerance and sympathy is required for attitudinal change which can be brought about by meditation. Jainism insists on need of sound morals for happy

\textsuperscript{80}तम्म्त्वा एव्याण्य सेसाणं, अणुभाणे वियाणिया ||
अप्पस्त्याओ वज्जितत्त्वा, पस्त्याओ अहिष्क्नेुजासि ||||Uttaradhyayna Sutra 34.61
living and peaceful coexistence. The sense of kin-ship with all forms is the essence of Jainism. Jainism might provide a new ethics for the development of eco-friendly life style. Jainism recommends a lay person to behave with mindfulness. The ethico spiritual model insists on a particular life style.

Traditional Hindu, Jain and Buddhist environmental values and concerns have continued harmony with the earth, with emphasis on self-control, patience, contentment, purity, truthfulness and right attitudes toward the environment. Their environmental ethics cover human behaviour in relation to all living beings and it underpins certain basic virtues, particularly love, kindness, sympathy, empathy, equanimity and joy in other’s happiness.

Like Hinduism and Buddhism, Jainism is also centered on life, not on the human person. Jainism gives deep respect to all life, despite its place in the biological hierarchy. The Jain tradition insists on the philosophy of ecological harmony. The ecological philosophy of Jainism flows from its spiritual quest. It has always been central to its ethics, aesthetics, art, literature, economics and politics. It is represented in all its glory by the 24 Jinas or Tirthankaras. Their teachings have been its living legacy through the millenia.
It is a tradition that Hindu, Jain and Buddhist environmental values and concerns have always influenced the discourses and practices of environmentalism. Here, a study that compares the environmental ethics of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism would help understand the ethical concern for the environment and its creatures and how the three religions have accorded moral significance to other creatures and proposed ethical responsibilities to humans. This ethico-religious environmental teaching actually presents the hidden environmental ethics seen in the three learned religions of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.