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Ecology and Environmental Ethics : Indological Perspectives









Ecology and Environmental Ethics: Indological Perspectives

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An Upaniṣadic conception of an ecological economics for strong sustainability

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Abstract

Ecology is about the relationships between organisms within a species and between these organisms and the remaining biotic and abiotic world. For human beings, ecology proceeds primarily via market-based mechanisms. In a globalised economy, the invisible hand of the market masks the impacts of the relational self that are decoupled in both geographical space and time. Coupled with a narrow focus on economic growth through material accumulation, and based on the biophysically invalid assumption of perfect substitutability between different forms of capitals, the neo-classical economic model has become the root cause of the ecological crisis.

*For all practical purposes, the ecological crisis is an existential one for all lifeforms on the planet. More than ever, there is a dire need to develop an alternative ecological economic model (EEM). This paper has conceptualised an EEM mainly by drawing from the **Bhagavadgītā**, the **Īśā Upaniṣad** and the **Taittirīya Upaniṣad**. It has been shown how an **Upaniṣadic** conception of an EEM would support human wellbeing, and how such a model will be based on a spiritual economics of abundance resulting in fairness in the allocation and distribution of resources. The **Upaniṣads** provide a cosmology that embodies an ontology from which an ecological ethics for the EEM can be formulated. However, the spiritual economics supported by the **Upaniṣads** faces formidable epistemic challenges for its application. There is need to imperatively and purposefully reclaim the place of spirituality in public discourse on sustainable human development.*

Keywords: Ecology; Sustainability; Economics; Upaniṣads; Spirituality.

Unsustainability – Ecology and Economy

Humanity is today faced with two acute interlocking problems, namely (i) pronounced environmental degradation (environmental dimension) (Steffen et al. 2015, IPBES 2019, Persson et al. 2022), and (ii) large inequalities within and between countries (social dimension) (Roser 2013, Milanovic 2016). This situation is generally called an ecological crisis, and it is important to better understand how it is mediated. The starting point is to situate the actions of human beings within a complex socio-ecological system comprised of humans relating with each other, and their biotic and abiotic surroundings – i.e. human ecology (Marten 2003). In the modern world, human relating takes place

Deep Ecology and Modern Moral Movements: Philosophizing Some Preventive Measures to Fundamental Ecological Crisis

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Abstract

There are multiple pieces of evidence suggesting that the prima facie consequences of handling the earth as an anthropocentric mechanism or as an infinitely exploitable product that have resulted in multiple climate crises such as— multiple types of pollution, global warming, overpopulation, waste disposal, and ocean acidification, loss of biodiversity, deforestation, and ozone layer depletion and so on. Typically, we observe the surficial causes of such crises and find the temporary solution too, but can we have a long-term solution for them or not? This is the fundamental question we aim to discuss in this philosophical research to provide some preventive and long-term measures regarding contemporary civilizations' environmental crises. However, the question is, how are we going to work on this? One possible way originates in the philosophy of 'Deep Ecology,' which is an environmental ethics part or movement based on the philosophy that humans must immediately need to discern their relationship with the environment, in fact, radically need to change their relationship to Nature from one that values Nature solely for its usefulness to human beings to one that recognizes that Nature has an inherent value. Following such objectives in observance, we aim to highlight some of the modern moral movements pertaining to environmental crises, such as ecofeminism, care ethics, Vedantic movements, etc. and show how such an ethical approach can help us to form some of the philosophical preventive measures that are urgently needed to modern society.

Keywords: Climate, Crisis, Moral, Movements, Deep-Ecology.

Introduction

Human being occupies two worlds. One is the natural world which paved the way prior to us, billions of years ago, and of which we as individuals are the temporary parts as everyone will have to leave this planet at some point of time. The other is the world of social establishments and objects which we build for ourselves, using tools and locomotives, science and reason, etc. Now, if we believe in these two worlds, a philosophical problem arises, should we put the one at risk for the other? When we look at the history of humanity, mainly the post-industrialized age, we find that the human world has become much more complex, creating lots of challenges to the natural world. In other words, rather than giving anything to the Ecosystem, we have taken much

in various forms, which has been causing multiple forms of misbalances. It is also why many new connotations such as ecocide pertaining to the threats to the environment have been emerging day by day. Furthermore, it is a fact that every human era has its own problems and challenges, and the modern world has its own. In the last two hundred years, we have seen so many paradigm shifts in the human world order: two world wars, the concept of cold wars, the revival of extremism and invasion culture, technological revolution, and most importantly, the overall environmental and ecocide crisis.¹ Furthermore, these challenges are not individually created but rather result from collective choices and actions. This theory is also getting popular in modern times that environmental destruction is not a result of individual actions but of deeply ingrained socio-economic, socio-political and cultural values and practices. To the degree, if it is true, then acting on behalf of the Ecosystem and environment requires broad socio-cultural changes along with individual value reforms.

Moreover, among these changes, one of the main requirements follows the revaluation of anthropocentric culture, values, and way of life. The way modern Technological and consumerist culture, obviously due to anthropocentric domination, has altered the human consciousness to treat the earth and natural resources as mere instruments or as a rare substance of manipulation has managed critical thinkers to deduce these phenomena relatively consistent, of course, as a challenge, with contemporary debates about "Green-Politics and Deep-Ecology." Obviously, it would be swiped generalization to put everyone or every country in the anthropocentric category as not everyone is involved in the ecocide; some always work to protect it, and they love it. Nevertheless, the more significant section of the global society has been engrossed in the anthropocentric culture of blind consumerism, which critical thinkers and activists have to criticize reluctantly. Furthermore, it is also a matter of the fact that those who are pure at heart can understand the pain of losing their roots and relationship with the Ecosystem, human beings and animals, and so on. So criticism of anthropocentrism is not a swiped generalization but instead shifting the focus to a value crisis that everyone can embrace intuitively. As Rob Boddice points out:

Anthropocentrism is expressed either as a charge of human chauvinism or acknowledging human ontological boundaries. It is in tension with Nature, the environment, and nonhuman animals (as well as nonhumans per se). It is in apparent contrast to other-worldly cosmologies, religions, and philosophies. Anthropocentrism has provided order and structure to humans' understanding of the world while unavoidably expressing the limits of that understanding. It influences our ethics, our politics, and the moral status of others.¹ (Boddice, 2011)

¹ In April 1965, the Conservation Foundation convened a conference in Warrenton, Virginia, to discuss "future environments of North America." At that conference, Lewis Mumford, one of the most respected public intellectuals of the twentieth century, was called on to make "closing remarks." After several days of presentations, Mumford said, "The 'probable' future is not necessarily the actual future at all. It is always a summary of the past, and all its predictions are predictions about the past, not about the future. The other future is that based on possibility." For Mumford, that "possibility" was the idea that to secure human survival, we must transition from a technological culture to an ecological culture. An extension of this transition is the current hybridization of technology with ecology—known as ecotech—that has effectuated a direction for the twenty-first century. See- Cohen, W. J. (2019). *Ecohumanism and the Ecological Culture: The Educational Legacy of Lewis Mumford and Ian McHarg*. United States: Temple University Press. p. 22-38

So many evidence-based studies have been conducted showing that the situation of the Ecosystem and environment is getting worse day by day. Melting glaciers, untimely draughts, unbreathable contaminated air, crumpling insect and bird populations, heavy cloudbursts dowsing towns in unrecoverable downpours, intensifying widespread human diseases, the constant risk of pandemics, and many more ecocide incidents have been increasing in one way or another. The challenge is apparent that Climate change is upon us, and we are losing our relationship with the Ecosystem whether we admit it or not, and the overall impact of the same is unreplaceable. Nevertheless, the dichotomy of good and evil, good and pleasant, and the constant threat of various forms of crisis has a very long history in the human world order, and we have survived all these crises and dichotomies via various ways such as ancient wisdom, collective mass movements, ethics, philosophy and innovation and so on. Some may argue that if science, political and economic systems are enrolled to solve the environmental problem, why do we need philosophy, ethics, and mass movements? In this regard, our first response would be that what if the collective nexus of science, politics and the economic system itself is responsible for modern environmental problems? Then what and who will help us? As Rob Boddice exposes some facts:

*The economic and political influence of polluters and developers, lax enforcement of the law, biased or deficient media coverage, an economic system that rewards selfishness, competition, and consumption, and a system of private property rights that allows private owners almost total control over their property are just some of the factors that diminish the effectiveness of working within the system.*² (Boddice, 2011)

Therefore, considering such facts, we will look at some of the philosophical and moral movements about ecosystem well-being and overall environmental justice in the upcoming segments. In general, we may trace two forms of goals of any socio-cultural criticism in all areas of human life, i.e., either we want to reform the age-old status quo or seek a complete paradigm shift in our culture and value. In other words, either we may seek a temporary solution with slight changes or look for radical change to adequately address the problems. A Typical environmental philosophy can be classified as a reformist, which claims specific reforms in law and economics or may expand our moral sphere or seek to create a better integration of science and ethics. This chapter mainly discusses those moral and philosophical theories that have the power to create a paradigm shift in our worldview, maybe in the form of some reforms.

Feminist Moral Movements: Preventing Ecocide and Promoting Environmental Justice

In modern times, when we talk about feminism, it may perhaps give us a negative connotation of left-driven propaganda to promote identity politics or otherwise. There may be some truth in this notion; however, a comprehensive understanding of the different feminist movements would give us a different picture of the reality. Care ethics and Eco-feminism are also the well-known feminist

moral theory as well as movements that serve two purposes altogether— On the one hand, these movements work for gender justice and, on the other hand, for Environmental justice. Actually, this question of the relationship between environmental justice and social justice has been much contested in contemporary applied ethical debates. In this regard, we may have a couple of different positions, among which two are very popular. Some people argue that environmental justice and social justice are two distinct issues concerned with very different aims, which often conflict. For them, environmental justice is concerned with protecting the environment, ecosystems, and overall environmental resources. In contrast, social justice addresses inequalities between human beings and addresses the problem of equality, racism, sexism, classism, poverty, and so on. In other words, this question arises while paralleling social and environmental justice— is it possible that what is good for the environment may be suitable for social justice? For example, in trying to address the poverty issue, we often try to create economic opportunities via industrialization or create food sources via advanced farming, which are often thought to conflict with the Ecosystem. Moreover, it is also the reason that sometimes the very idea of sustainable development seems a sort of bluff or utopia that we can never reach. The Ecosystem requires sacrifices; questions and demands follow: are we ready to do so?

Furthermore, some thinkers and schools of thought argue that these two forms of justice may look contradictory at a concrete level; however, it is easy to parallel them at an abstract level. In fact, one could elevate the other. In other words, as per the promoters of these theories or movements, one form of justice promotes another form of justice. In short, it may be said that gender justice (women's equality) and environmental justice are the two sides of the same coin. Here, one critical problem may arise: why are we making the justice kind of thing gender specific? So in this regard, feminist thinkers argue, mainly concerning Western philosophy and culture, that the history of philosophy and ethics has been male-dominated to a considerable extent where the women's voice has been primarily subjugated. As Virginia Held put it:

*The history of philosophy, including the history of ethics, has been constructed from male points of view and built on assumptions and concepts that are by no means gender-neutral. 'Feminists characteristically begin with different concerns, emphasize the issues we consider (care), and then make non-feminist approaches (impartial prejudice).'*³ (Held, 1990)

If we start with the above assumption, then the basic idea of ecofeminism follows that the leading cause of women and Nature's subjugation is toxic patriarchy. In addition, the best way to deal with such issues is to embrace the voice of women (feminine perspective), i.e., care. In other words, when we follow the ethics of empathy and relationality, which feminist moralists aim to suggest, our attitude towards all living creatures will be changed. As Carol Gilligan, the feminist psychologist, affirms this thesis in her famous work '*In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*':

The specific claim that the way women treat moral problems is, on average, different from (but not inferior or superior to) the way men do and claimed, very roughly, that women tend to think of moral issues in terms of emotionally and relationally involved caring for others and empathic connection to others. In contrast, most men see things in terms of autonomy from others and the just and rational application of rules or principles to problem situations. (Gilligan 1982: 19) These two contrasting 'voices' have been characterized as an "Ethic of Care" and "Ethics of Justice", which, Gilligan claims, are 'fundamentally incompatible.'⁴ (Noddings, 1982)

Of course, this understanding or exclusive claim of the feminist psychologist seems quite radical or maybe prejudiced that men and women are incompatible while discussing the idea of care (positive morality) as women are much more caring than men. This dichotomy does not apply much in the Indian context and should not be embraced at any place on earth; instead, we all should learn this skill to be caring, relational, and empathic to all living creatures since it is what makes us truly human. This virtue can very well be learned from the Indian value system, where the importance of being kind, compassionate, and caring has frequently been echoed. For instance, The Indological connotation for care resonates with the idea of Dāya, which apply to all living creature altogether. As Tulsidas ji recited:

*Dāya dharam ka mool hai,
paap mool abhimaan
Tulsi daya na chhodiye,
jab lag hoye ghat mein praan⁵ (Tulsidas, self-translated)*

This means the foundation of Dharma is compassion which we should never forget, no matter what happens. Furthermore, the typical interpretation of Dāya in the Indological context is that it applies equally to all creatures and ecosystems. Seemingly this is the best definition of what Dharam indeed we can imagine, which has nothing to do with manufactured conviction. Tulsidas Ji has so aptly confirmed that Dharam is not an external way of life or a ritual; instead, it is a holistic way of life that springs from inside and then flows outwards, protecting the life and Ecosystem. Now, if we associate this idea of Dharma and care (Dāya) with the philosophy of ecofeminism, then one new synthesis comes out in the form of eco-humanism. Furthermore, perhaps, it is what is required in modern times. Typically, Humanism also gives us an anthropocentric connotation that has greater lacunas, as discussed above.

Humanism, too, like anthropocentrism, centres the human being in the centre of all value. For instance, it also gives us a sense that all our natural world, all our forests and rivers, all our earth and animals are for us. They are ours, and we can use them for our benefit. Even the environmentalists use a very rational scientific human-centred approach that we have to preserve the earth and its environment. We have to take care of the forests and rivers and animals, but we have to conserve them and preserve them and take care of them because we can use them for human benefit. In short, the fundamental values that Humanism talks about are reason and

secular morality, which may play a significant role in human development. However, the question is, are these values enough for the Ecosystem and environmental justice and particularly for the current environmental crisis? The possibilities are very few as we have already tested these values under the umbrella of modernism, and what we got out of that is quite apparent in all areas of life, including the bad health of the Ecosystem.⁶ (Gandhi, 2010). Moreover, it is here that care ethics and ecofeminism may help Humanism and anthropocentrism reform themselves and develop new positive forms such as— eco-humanism or eco-anthropocentrism. This very reform would be a significant paradigm shift in the modern individualistic and consumerist culture.

To conclude this segment, we may summarise that every individual on earth has unique and constructive qualities. Moreover, we can imagine, without any gender discrimination, many positive qualities can be imagined in men and women altogether in lottery form that we all should accept and embrace. In other words, there is nothing wrong with accepting that women are more caring, relational and empathic, and if any human being lacks them, they should acquire them. It is the basic structure of the feminist moral movement that also applies to the protection of ecological justice and confiscating ecocide kinds of injustices.

Vedanta Metaphysics and Sacred Nature: Strengthening The Foundation Of Deep-Ecology

What or who should be in the center of the universe? When we ask this question in a normative sense, we have certain cautious and preventive things in mind as we are not simply searching for the locus of the human world order; but the best one which can best serve us in the long term. In other words, whether we follow cosmocentrism (ecocentrism) or anthropocentrism, it is all about the responsibility, values, and morals we follow while living in or with the environment. If those are environmentally conducive, then it is 'okay', but if not, then things will have to be revalued. It might sound a little conservative, but anthropocentric ethics has not worked fine for the environment, as discussed above. As noted in the abstract, the way ecocide kind of things has occurred, it is really a high time to be cautious despite being called conservative. Moreover, it is here; that we have the opportunity to highlight the ethics of Vedanta, which may provide a solid and holistic foundation to protect Dharma, life, and the Ecosystem on earth altogether.⁷ (Radhakrishnan, 1914) Vedanta philosophy has that sort of capability that may satisfy the demands of universal moral consciousness, which have been largely missing in the modern dualistic, individualistic and materialistic world order. As S. Radhakrishnan beautifully put it:

The ethics of the Vedanta is dependent on its metaphysics. According to the Vedanta metaphysics, the Brahman is the sole reality, and the individuals are only modifications of it. The Vedanta postulates the absolute oneness of all things. "In a Brahmana endowed with wisdom and humility, in a cow, in an elephant, and a dog and a dog-eater, the wise see the same."⁸ (Radhakrishnan, 1914)

This Advaitic monism that also leads to moral holism requires us to look upon all creation as one without any discrimination, which also gives a new connotation to the idea of Deep-ecology. In other words, when we will establish a non-different relationship with every living creature on earth

and beyond, then things will be grasped in a complete form. Additionally, this non-difference will naturally lead to the ethics of empathy, compassion, and friendship. In short, the whole Ecosystem and living beings will be coequal to us and treated as an end and not a means. Here the problem of practicality would definitely arise as some parts of the world would not be able to survive with this philosophy, but still, the importance of this form of way of life does not decrease since we still have the way to live these ethics and that is to extend our tolerating limits. Sometimes, due to our hedonistic lifestyle, we forget the very Nature of being loving and compassionate and start treating the Ecosystem as a means to our pleasurable ends. It is what is needed to be reformed. Besides, in this very reformation, the practice of metaphysics and ethics of Vedanta can help us a lot. As S. Radhakrishnan put it:

*To a Vendantin, nothing human is alien. The whole universe is one country, all creations of the family of God. No man has a right to isolate himself from the life of the whole. The individual's life is not a means to satisfy his desires but is a trust for humanity. This Vedantic idea of love, fellowship, and self-sacrifice is not the vain fancy of a dreaming poet sighing after an impossible Utopia but is the logical outcome of a rational reflection upon man's place in the cosmos.*⁹ (Radhakrishnan, 1914)

When we establish the philosophy of Deep Ecology on the aforesaid Advaita Vedanta's metaphysics, consequently on ethics, we go even further into Deep-ecology and reach a new state of 'Reverential-ecology'.¹⁰ In this state, we no longer see the Ecosystem as a means to the selfish human end; instead, the value of mutuality, reciprocity, interdependence, and interconnectedness develops automatically. With the very realization of reverential ecology, we start thinking and acting that humans are not here to rule over the earth but rather live in it, with it and beautify it as we often do with our houses and surroundings. Likewise, we also get into the position to challenge the old paradigm of Darwinian thinking, which suggests that it is a complete natural selection, the survival of the fittest, and all species compete to survive. In contrast, 'Deep Ecology' and 'Reverential-ecology' say that species are not in competition with each other to survive; species are in a continuous dance of mutuality, reciprocity and connectivity. In other words, when we create a new worldview based on new foundations, like the Advaita foundation, in this case, a new paradigm, novel thinking, and different language and expressions come our way. Associating this idea to Deep-ecology, a paradigm shift occurs in our ethos because the old worldview depended on this idea that human beings are superior, which creates a sort of collective illusion that we are somehow here to rule whole the Ecosystem. However, since our foundation has changed and our collective illusions have broken down, now that way of life has to change. We precisely create a new language of respect and devotion and develops a sacred sense. As Arne Naess and Prof. Satish Kumar distinguish the different forms of ecology—

Shallow ecology considers Nature conservation necessary, but only because Nature applies to humans. It is an anthropocentric and environment science worldview. It is humancentric; they are a unique and superior species. Humans take care of the environment to benefit from Nature. Shallow ecologists desire a sustainable future for humanity, and Nature is a "resource" for the economy. For the advocates of deep ecology, Nature has intrinsic value. Nature is not a resource for the

*economy. Nature is the source of life itself. Trees are good, not just because they are helpful to humans, because they give us oxygen, take our carbon or give us shade, fruit, and wood: trees are good in themselves. Trees, oceans and mountains were here before humans came on the scene. How can we say that humans are superior to Nature and that Nature is made for humans? Remember, evolution. Deep ecologists recognise not just human rights but the rights of Nature. Rivers have rights. Forests have rights. Reverential ecology says yes to all that, but it adds an extra dimension: it considers Nature sacred. Life is sacred. Humans need to cultivate a sense of gratitude for Nature.*¹¹ (Kumar, 2017).

It is worth noting that here the idea of sacred is not mystical or mythological; rather represents a socio-ethical way of life in which we understand our responsibility and caring debt towards the universal parent, i.e., "Nature", which nurtures life on earth perpetually, without any self-interest. In the Indian context, we have multiple sorts of debt (*Rnas*) that all human beings have to pay by fulfilling the prescribed duties in different areas of life, including to Ecosystem. Within this idea of *Rna*, the Indian Dharma system prescribes the Dev *Rna*, where the notion of Dev represents the different parts of our Ecosystem, such as water, sun, soil, tree, etc. There are specific points that we may evoke to recapitulate the philosophy of Deep-ecology and which have been discussed by the leading proponents of this movement, such as George Sessions and Arne Naess. These conservation codes are the culminating points and life philosophy of George Sessions and Arne Naess that they delivered in April 1984, during the advent of Spring and John Muir's birthday, while camping in Death Valley, California.¹² (Sessions,1995). These principles have been cited multiple times in almost every book on environmental philosophy and ethics book or research paper. As per George Sessions and Arne Naess's opinion, they articulated these principles in the hope that these points would be embraced and interpreted in any diverse platform and culture. Furthermore, these are not the exclusive point; rather can be enhanced and reinterpreted as per the requirements, which we also have done :

(1) If we really wish to protect our Ecosystem, firstly, we will have to apprehend that the flourishing of the Ecosystem, including the human and nonhuman life on earth, has intrinsic value. The value of nonhuman-life forms is independent of the utility they may have for narrow human purposes. In short, we will have to predominantly practise the ethics of treating every living creature as an end in themselves and not as a mean.

(2) In our Ecosystem, everything is interdependent. Therefore, the loss of one is also the loss of the other in one way or another. Therefore, we should respect the diversity of our Ecosystem to contribute to the prosperity of every living creature on earth.

(3) Reason and sense of manipulation do not give us the right to reduce the productivity and diversity of our Ecosystem just for some selfish gains. In short, we will have to be open-minded to

observe if our pragmatic and hedonic senses are biased.

(4) We constantly should assess our interference with the holistic Nature of the Ecosystem, such as— are we excessively changing our surroundings? In addition, it is possible by assigning our place and responsibility in our Ecosystem.

(5) The richness of Nature's luxury, such as fresh and cool air, freshwater, and so on, is priceless. Moreover, we should always check out how the development of human life and cultures is compatible with our Ecosystem.

(6) The human world is very complex and involves many things, such as religion, civilization, culture, politics, ethics, economics, etc. Considering such facts, we will have to decide where we will place our environment and Ecosystem. In short, significant changes in living conditions would be required in a crisis. Moreover, to better protect our Ecosystem, we will have to be ready to bear some economic, technological, and ideological losses.

(7) Such moral and philosophical change is to appreciate the beauty and quality of life rather than abided by some high and rigorous morals.

Conclusion

To conclude, we may say that the moral and environmental movements discussed in this chapter embrace the idea that the cause of environmental and ecological destruction lies within the socio-cultural dynamics that are deeply embedded in the current world order. Moreover, we tried to propose some ideas to change such dynamics by addressing the deeply ingrained causes of environmental crisis and making radical changes and critical reforms via Eco-feminism, care, and Vedanta ethics that ultimately culminates in the Deep-ecology. This research will promote a detailed description of symptoms and underlying causes, which are often neglected due to some methodological lacunas. In other words, the way environmental scientists take ecological issues such as pollution, resource depletion, and so on, their reforming approach looks only at the immediate effects of the environmental crisis. However, the question is how to find permanent or enduring solutions? Just as environmental philosopher Joseph R. Des Jardins put it:

Just as a sneeze or a cough can disrupt a person's daily routine, pollution and resource depletion disrupt the lifestyle of modern industrial societies. However, it would be a mistake for medicine merely to treat sneezing and coughing and not to investigate their underlying causes. So, too, it is a mistake for environmentalists to be concerned only with pollution and resource depletion without investigating their social and human causes. ¹³

Following the above potential perspective, we explored the impending realms of above mentioned radical environmental philosophies and ethics in the sense that they take up an approach that significant socio-cultural and global changes are necessary to get to the roots of any ecosystem problem. The good thing is that the environmental moral movements which we discussed, such as— Eco-feminism, Deep-ecology and Vedanta and care ethics, along with searching for the roots of the environmental problem, also put forward a general philosophy or worldview about our place in the cosmos, our relationship with the Ecosystem and our overall impact on the ecological network and so on. Moreover, it is what is needed in modern times to break the collective illusions of not taking the first step to raising the voice against the injustice that our Ecosystem has to face. For example, the dominant anthropocentric worldview, which beholds human-centeredness in all our way of life and collective global culture, should be questioned to cure the crisis. Furthermore, how is it possible? The answer we found is that it can come up with a far-reaching transformation in our ethics about being human and our place in the Ecosystem. Concisely, we need to change ourselves as individuals, as a society, as a culture, and as a globalized world.

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Environmentalism and Satyāgraha



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Abstract

With the world plagued by rapid modernisation and industrialisation, global warming, war, pollution among others, there is a pressing need for environmental consciousness to dawn on mankind. Following the same line of thought, this paper aims at capitalising on the inspiring and lofty ideals of Gandhi, one of the renowned political and spiritual leaders the world has ever known, in order to achieve the above objective. Gandhi's philosophy of conflict resolution often translated as Satyāgraha will be used as key instrument to promote sustainability and peace in the society. Gandhi's concept of Satyāgraha involves three main principles namely truth or Satya, non-violence or ahimsā and self-suffering or tapas that are essential prerequisites in the propagation of passive resistance, a political tool that respects the dignity of the opponent and teaches mankind the importance of solving conflicts without resorting to violence. Additionally, Gandhi's views on environmentalism can serve as basis for governing human thought and action. He laid emphasis on man-nature relationship and appealed for the preservation of the environment. Gandhi's idea of environmentalism also coincides with voluntary simplicity that rejects over-indulgence and warns against excessive consumerism.

Key words: environmental consciousness, Satyāgraha, satya, ahimsā, tapas.

Introduction

The onset of the Industrial Revolution ushered in a period of prompt change, development and technological progress but it also brought along with it the scourge of environmental degradation that destabilized man's relationship with nature. Consequently, attempts to address this challenge became a priority for man. In order to ascertain that future generations inhabit a safe and green environment, environmental consciousness should be prioritized. According to Eren and Yaqub (2015), environmental consciousness is "a form of behaviour, thought and attitude of an individual and community to maintain a balanced way of interaction with the environment." In other words, it is crucial for people to adopt an eco-friendly lifestyle and start preserving our natural resources.

Environmental awareness can also be detected in Gandhi's Satyāgraha. Even though Gandhi did not intend to be known as an environmentalist, still his ideas and philosophy inspired man to

