

Chapter-1

Introduction

1.1: What is environmental ethics?

To talk about environmental ethics, as the topic of the thesis falls under this category, brings three things to our mind, i.e. environment, environmental ethics and environmental philosophy. Environment is everything around humans which is not strictly man made like, wild nature, fields, ditches etc. Environmental ethics, on the other hand, dwells on our treatment towards natural entities, our relationship with them and moral standing of those entities. Again, environmental philosophy deals with the knowledge about natural entities. It also enquires whether natural entities can know themselves as humans do, or are they rational like humans? What is the mode of existence of ecosystem?

Traditional ethics concerns about intra-human duties, specially duties among contemporaries. Environmental ethics extends the scope of ethical concerns beyond one's community and nation to include not only all people everywhere but also animals and whole of nature, the biosphere both present and future generation. Environmental ethics takes the consensus from environmental politics, environmental economics, environmental sciences and environmental literature. The distinctive perspectives and methodologies of these disciplines provide important inspiration for environmental ethics, the environmental ethics offers value foundation for these discipline. They reinforce, influence and support each other. The plurality of environmental ethics which is interpreted in terms of anthropocentrism, animal liberation, rights theory, biocentrism and ecocentrism provide unique and reasonable justification for environmental protection. However, their approaches are different, but by and large the share the common goals.

Let us quote of Claire Palmer from the introduction to the *Blackwell Anthology on Environmental Ethics* at least to grasp the basic concept of what environmental ethics is.

“A wide spectrum of ethical positions is covered by the umbrella term ‘environmental ethics.’ These positions draw on a variety of ethical traditions, from Plato and Aristotle to Mill and Moore. As one might expect, a vigorous debate is being conducted between those advocating such diverse approaches. Certain key questions lie at its heart. One central area of debate concerns value theory in environmental ethics. What is considered valuable, and from where does such value come?”¹

Besides what is in Palmer’s quotation, there are more fundamental questions in environmental ethics such as, “What is the nature of the value that nonhumans have?” “Is the value in question objective or subjective?” “Is it intrinsic or extrinsic?” “Is value instrumental or non-instrumental?” These questions are primarily focused on the nature of the value of nonhumans and the environment and can be summed up by the basic question, “What kind of value do these things have?” Thus, we could perhaps rephrase Palmer’s key question in environmental ethics as three separate questions: “What are the things that have value? What is the nature of value do these things have? And, what is the source of such value?”

1.2: Value centric terminology

There is, of course, the question of what exactly the term “value” itself means as there are many ways to use this terminology. We often see that the term value has being coined as “intrinsic value”, “inherent value”, “extrinsic value”, “instrumental value”, “non-instrumental value”, “value as an end”, “final value”, etc. Thus, some terminological explication is in order. Traditionally, “intrinsic value” is understood as synonymous with the idea of being “valuable as an end”. In this way, it can be understood that there are number of references to the term value. Thus intrinsic value of something is a value that referred to the terms like “in itself,” or “for its own sake,” or “as such,” or “in its own right.” Extrinsic value is value that is opposite to intrinsic.²I will assume that value is the same thing as what G.E. Moore calls “goodness” or “good” terms which he believes are indefinable notions that are “simple”. Moore writes, “What, then, is good? How is good to be defined? What I

¹Palmer, Clare (2003). “An Overview of Environmental Ethics.” in *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell publishing, p.16.

²Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Value; Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy, first published Tue Oct 22, 2002; substantive revision Wed Jan 9, 2019

want to discover is the nature of that object or idea, and about this I am extremely anxious to arrive at an agreement... But if we understand the question in this sense, my answer to it may seem a very disappointing one. If I am asked, 'What is good?' my answer is that good is good, and that is the end of the matter. Or if I am asked 'How is good to be defined?' my answer is that it cannot be defined and that is all I have to say about it...My point is that 'good' is a simple notion, just as 'yellow' is a simple notion; that just as you cannot, by any manner of means, explain to anyone who does not already know it, what yellow is, so you cannot explain what good is."³

With this terminology in mind, the first point to make is that intrinsic value can take at least two forms. Intrinsic value can be relational as well as non- relational. An object is relationally intrinsically good if it is intrinsically good for something or someone. Claims about the nature of well-being or prudential value are claims about relational intrinsic value. My experience of pleasure at a specific time is intrinsically good for me. An object is non-relationally intrinsically good if it is intrinsically good period, or full stop. Indeed, particular objects can be relationally intrinsically valuable but not non-relationally intrinsically valuable, and vice versa. We, therefore, may say that something is good for me, or relationally, does not guarantee that that thing is intrinsically good tout court, or non-relationally. My experience of pleasure might be intrinsically good for me, but might nevertheless lack non-relational intrinsic value. For instance, if I am a cold-blooded murderer, my experience of pleasure might be relationally intrinsically valuable, but it might, nevertheless, fail to be non-relationally intrinsically valuable. It might be intrinsically better; some have claimed that cold-blooded murderers feel pain than pleasure, though such pain is certainly intrinsically worse for them than pleasure.

1.3: Aspects of ascribing intrinsic value to nature

There are two aspects of ascribing intrinsic values to nature. One is epistemological which is in a direction that to ascribe anything valuable there must be an evaluator to value it. "Value is never found in objects in itself as property. It consists in a relation to an appreciating mind". There is another aspect of ascribing

³ Moore, G.E. (1948) *Principia Ethica*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press. pp. 6-7

intrinsic value to the nature which states that nature has its value of its own without any consideration of an evaluator. Despite the language of value conferral, if we try to take the term *intrinsic* seriously, this cannot refer to anything the object gains, to something *within* the present tree or the past trilobite, for the human subject does not really place anything on or in the natural object. We have only a ‘truncated sense’ of *intrinsic*. The *attributes* under consideration are objectively there before humans come, but the *attribution* of value is subjective. The object causally affects the subject, who is excited by the incoming data and translates this as value, after which the object, the tree, appears as having value, rather like it appears to have green colour. But nothing is really added *intrinsically*; everything in the object remains what it was before. Despite the language that humans are the *source* of value which they *locate* in the natural object, no value is really located there at all. The term *intrinsic*, even when reduced, is misleading. Here lies the great importance of debate to ascribe intrinsic value to the nature.

From Aristotle, we found that there is a gap between ethical judgment and ethical behavior which is explained in terms of the *akrasia* or impotence of people to act in accordance with reason. According to Aristotle, such a state is due to emotions or feelings which prevent rational choice, for instance our appetite for pleasure. Can we blame people’s irresponsiveness or indifference with regard to the ecological crisis on their irrationality or hedonism? As a consequence, we could explore interventions with the aim of making more reasonable choices in environmental affairs, ranging from education for sustainable development in order to increase environmental consciousness, to all kinds of policies for the restriction of industrial pollution, the preservation of natural resources or the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

1.4: Different approaches to assign value

The two basic directions of ascribing intrinsic value to nature, i.e. there must be an appreciating mind to value something and hence value is subjective in one hand and intrinsic value is objective, independent of any subject on the other hand gives rise to several questions for which we found different approaches to assign value to the nature. Only human beings have intrinsic value (only anthropocentric value) itself

gives rise to several questions i.e. is anthropocentric approach in the direction of not ascribing intrinsic value to the nature? Does anthropocentrism talk about sustainable development? Is anthropocentrism only a human centric approach towards nature? Does this approach have no appreciation of intrinsic value of nature? Again only sentient things have intrinsic value (Only sentience-centered value) may have several questions to answer i.e.; How can it be possible to limit the provenance of intrinsic value only to sentient things? Was this value present before it was valued by an evaluator? Another important approach towards nature says that only humans can generate intrinsic values, and ascribe it to some non-sentient things (Only anthropogenic values). Is it really true that only humans can generate intrinsic value? Does intrinsic value have independent status of existence? How humans generate intrinsic value if it is already present in nature independently? Intrinsic values exist independent of humans' appreciation (Anthropogenic values in nature). Is intrinsic value ontologically possible? Does it, in fact, independently exist? These questions direct us to think about who are the moral agents what is the moral standing of environment. There are arguments that those who have the freedom and rational capacities to be responsible for choices, or who are capable of moral reflections and decision are moral agents. This is, in fact, considered as a one sided theory. And that if one's continued existence is valuable for itself is a moral standing. In that case one's interests and choices may be weighed when deciding what is permissible to do. That is to say, which is owed by moral agents to those with moral standing? What moral duty do we have towards those with moral standing? These questions will be tried to address in this thesis.

The four approaches have raised several vital questions which need to be met. Hence, there arises a necessity of in-depth research analysis for a new direction to ascribe intrinsic value to the nature and this becomes the basic statement of this domain of research. The statement of this research problem may be formed in between the lines of epistemological and ontological or may give a road map for the better explanation of ascribing intrinsic value to nature.

Human being evaluates the things and events only when they take an interest. That is why a value relationship comes to the picture where it did not exist before. This evaluation is anthropogenic, which is generated by humans, but not center on humans (anthropocentric). Such process of evaluation requires some “properties” or “potentialities” in nature which are objective properties. For instance a plant can defend its own life, synthesize glucose by using photosynthesis. Animals have their own life, can be the subject, and can have their preferences.

Interaction with the nature is an important issue in the present day context not only for philosophers but also for the all others so far as well-beings of all living beings is concerned. In Indian we have a great respect to the nature; we call the earth as eternal mother, *Vasundharā*. In religion, there are beliefs and practices to respect trees, animals. But the present day concern is difficult because of the everyday scientific inventions, industrializations, discovering atom bombs, constructing mega dams etc. which have destroyed all age old ecology for which living and non-living beings have been suffering. The vital question is how do we interact with nature is a major concern of all. As Mckibben says, “we are living in a post natural world”. Nature has been used and destroyed as much as we want without considering the nature centered moral framework. But as the days passed and sufferings mount to peak nature has been looked into from a different angle. Philosophers try to add moral values to the nature. But again, a question may arise, how moral value can be assigned to nature? This leads to a debate and it generates an idea of ascribing instrumental value to the nature. Some philosophers say that it has an intrinsic value. This debate becomes more significant from different point of view including preservation of nature even if it is within the human centered framework.

1.5: Background of the study

If we have a historical look, we find over thousands of years man has regarded himself at the center of this planet. The *Great Chain of Being* (God at the apex of the universe, with humanity second, and the natural world below humanity) and *The Pyramid of Being* testify it. This tradition continues from Plato-Aristotle through Aquinas to contemporary times. Bible story of creation goes too far to put the entire earth on human control. The main theme of the story is that God has created the

nature and men have *dominion* over the entire nature. This story shows two different human attitudes towards the nature. (Bible, 18) The word *dominion* justifies it; 1. as a license to do as we wish. 2. as a directive to look after them.

In the history of Western thought, nature has been primarily appreciated as instrumentally valuable. In *Genesis*, it is said that God gives humankind ‘dominion over the earth,’ that is that natural things were created for the use and employment of man’s happiness. In Platonic philosophy, from Plato to Plotinus, the created world is seen as instrumentally valuable for approaching an understanding of the formal good, and ultimately the Good, or the Neoplatonic One. One might tend to think that nature was regarded as instrumentally good, but intrinsically bad by Platonic philosophers.

However, there is a tendency in Platonism and Neoplatonism, one which has a profound influence on subsequent Western philosophy, to regard nature as intrinsically good. Of course we understand such an idea under the rubric of providence. We can see the clues of these ideas in Plato’s *Timaeus*, and explicit expressions of it in Plotinus’ *Enneads*. This concept of providence holds a powerful influence over the thinking of all subsequent Western philosophy up to Enlightenment. To hold a belief in providence is to believe that the world is fundamentally good, that, being created by a good and benevolent deity, it could not possibly be bad. We can find in Leibniz, in 17th Century maintaining that this is “the best of all possible worlds.” Despite the discontent caused by Leibniz’s impersonal God, his belief in a providential world order is characteristic of that period of intellectual development that which we refer to as Enlightenment.

In the present context, we are more concern for human survival rather than the nature. Contemporary ethicist, Steven Schwarzschild holds that the commands in the *Bible* ultimately teach us to despise, dislike and conquer the nonhuman world. The Copenhagen and the France conferences on climate change are also human centered. These certify that the moral duties are derived from our direct duties to human inhabitants only.

Among environmental ethicists in the West, at least, there is widespread agreement that the forester and ecologist Aldo Leopold provided a benchmark against which subsequent environmental ethics can be measured. His short essay “The Land

Ethic” in *A Sand County Almanac* provided an evocative and profound effort to articulate ethical guidelines for human interactions with nature. In it Leopold defined ethics as guidelines for social or ecological situations, based on individual membership in “a community of interdependent parts.” On this basis Leopold claimed that land ethic, simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land. This extension of humans’ moral community transformed their place in relation to the nature, relation to the natural environment. Human beings are no more a subjugator of the land-community rather they are the plain member and citizen of earth having equal right. Leopold’s land ethic provided a model of and foundation for a type of environmental ethics now known as “ecocentrism” or alternatively “biocentrism”. Greek *Gaia* theory depicts an organic perspective of harmonic interrelatedness of human being to the Mother Earth. Ethical questions like, “can nature tell us what harmony is” or “how is the harmony sustained?” supposed to be raised from *Gaia* hypothesis.

Arne Naess in his “The shallow and the deep, long-range ecology movement” stated that ecologically responsible policies are concerned only in part with pollution and resource depletion. There are deeper concerns which touch upon principles of diversity, complexity, autonomy, decentralization, symbiosis, egalitarianism, and classlessness.

Partridge Earnest in his “On the Possibility of a Global Environmental Ethic” holds, given the alarming news that is coming in from the environmental sciences, we would be well advised to regard Nature as a common threat. However, we would also be both tactically and morally misguided to “regard Mother Nature in general as [our] enemy.” Nature is not malicious or blameworthy. And yet, while nature is not a moral agent, it is, in an important yet figurative sense, about to launch a dreadful retaliation against us. For the atmospheric and ecological scientists tell us that the same physical, chemical and biological processes which nurtured and sustained us as a species, have been so distorted by our thoughtless interventions upon the environment, that we are about to face consequences that we can barely foresee or scarcely imagine.

In Indian context, nature has been worshiped and respected as God and deity who have given a wide range of scope for considering nature having a sort of value in

it. Compiling all these aspects a trend of conflicts still resisting so far as ascribing value in nature is concern.

Gicu-Gabriel Arsene, in his, *The Human-Nature Relationship: The emergence of environmental ethics* advocates that a closer examination of traditional Indian philosophical systems reveals their complex and often sophisticated nature. In this wide variety of beliefs and attitudes, humans, animals, plants, gods and the earth are all subject to cosmic laws and the place of humankind in the universe is variable. Hinduism can be criticized for the fact that it focuses on transcendence and that, to some extent, it neglects pragmatic aspects such as defining the place of humankind within the universe. Mahatma Gandhi, the famous Hindu who made *ahimsa* popular, has inspired many environmentalists.

In The Hymns of the *Rig Veda* stated about *Agni, Vāyu, Indra* etc. are considered as the sacred Gods for worship. Water serves as a unifying fluid between sky/heaven and earth as described in the *Rig Veda*. (10.0.1-14). The origin of life in water in the form of fish as the first incarnation of *Lord Vishnu* states about the organic life-seeds in the earth. The norms have also been suggested in the *Rig Vedato* maintain the sacred power of water. For example verse 4.56 of *Manu Smriti* states: “One should not cause urine, stool, cough in the water. Anything which is mixed with these impious objects water becomes polluted; blood and poison should not be thrown in to water”.

Desire is the primary cause of unhappiness and suffering (*duḥkha*), especially when we desire what we cannot have. Consequently, happiness is achieved through renunciation and by restricting ourselves to our immediate needs. Humans do not try to obtain the grace of the gods but, through compassion and constant individual effort, by following the Noble Eightfold Path and observing *Dharma*, they seek to ultimately reach the perfect world of *Nirvāṇa*. Buddhists encourage non-violence and therefore this is one of the most compatible religions with the idea of preserving nature in its untamed state. Buddhism and Hinduism do not grant humans the status of “Master of nature”. These faiths exalt non-attachment to material goods and consider ignorance to be a sin which has major ecological ramifications.

R. Renugadevi, in her *Environmental ethics in the Hindu Vedas and Purāṇas in India* holds the *Vedas* are ancient Indian compilations of the Aryan period ranging between 2500 to 1500 B.C. *Rig Veda* especially mentions about environment on several occasions. A verse from the *Rig-Veda* states that “the sky is like father, the earth like mother and the space as their son. The universe consisting of the three is like a family and any kind of damage done to any one of the three throws the universe out of balance”. Vedic culture and Vedic scriptures reveal a clear concept about the earth’s ecosystems and the necessity for maintaining their balance. Another verse from *Rig Veda* says “Thousands and Hundreds of years if you want to enjoy the fruits and happiness of life then take up systematic planting of trees”. These verses carry a message to desist from inflicting any injury to the earth and embark upon constant a forestation for survival or else the ecological balance of the earth would be jeopardized. *Rig Veda* has dwelt upon various components of the ecosystem and their importance. “Rivers occasion widespread destruction if their coasts are damaged or destroyed and therefore trees standing on the coasts should not be cut off or uprooted”. Modern civilization is experiencing the wrath of flood due to erosion of river embankments everywhere and only tree plantations along river banks cannot prevent erosion.

The *Upaniṣadas* were the final stage in the development of Vedic literatures consisting of answers to some philosophical questions. The practice of *Vanmahotsava* is over 1500 years old in India. The *Matsyapurāṇa* tells about it. *Agnipurāṇa* says that the plantation of trees and creations of gardens leads to eradication of sin. In *Padmapurāṇa* the cutting of a green tree is an offence punishable in hell.

The problem we face today is that there is a huge gap between our ethical judgments about the ecological crisis on the one hand and our ethical behavior according to these judgments on the other. Intrinsic value, thus, plays a crucial role in framing the variety of moral judgments. The fundamental form of consequentialism, hence, argued that an action’s *moral worth* is exclusively determined by its intrinsically better consequences from many other actions, which are performed under the circumstances. There are also other theories that hold that the rightness and wrongness of an action has to do wholly or partly with the intrinsic value of the

consequences of the actions one can perform. However, intrinsic value is also referred to judgments about responsibility if one is *morally responsible* for doing some function of the rightness or wrongness of what one does. Intrinsic value can also be related to *moral justice* if relevant to judgments of justice. It is good if justice is done and bad if justice is denied. And in this way it appears that the justice is intimately tied to intrinsic value. Lastly, there are also issues which are thought to be judgments about *moral virtue and vice* that draw attention about the questions of intrinsic value, such as virtues are good, and vices bad, and that appear closely connected to such value.

Kant himself does not use the language of intrinsic value. It is Tom Regan in ‘Does environmental ethics rest on a mistake’ represents Kant’s position on the maxim i.e. “certain individuals exist as ends-in-themselves” and “those individuals who have this status, because they have value in themselves apart from their value as a means relative to someone’s else’s end, can be said to have intrinsic value and called it ends-in-itself theory of intrinsic value”. Some philosophers deny that intrinsic value can be relational. For instance, according to Noah Lemos, when one says that something is intrinsically good, in the sense with which we are concerned, he means that, that it is intrinsically good period.” However, Lemos does attempt to capture something like an account of relational intrinsic value.

1.6: Objectives and research gap

The questions whether, nature has intrinsic value, and whether all value require an evaluator is raised in the traditional environmental ethics. These questions are raised between nature objectivists and value subjectivists. The former presupposes that nature is intrinsically valuable, while the later holds that it takes an evaluator to ascribe value. In this dissertation, an attempt will be made to find out a collaborative and discursive process to account for those dual ways of proving intrinsic value in nature keeping in mind the followings.

1. To clarify the concept of intrinsic value from different philosophers’ standpoints.
2. To highlight the state of intrinsic value as discussed by Moore, Chisholm, Noah M. Lemos, John O’ Neill.

3. The ascription of intrinsic value and its outcome with the debates of Holmes Rolston, Robert Elliot, J. B. Callicott and Earnest Partridge
4. To examine whether intrinsic value is ascribed to nature.
5. To study the ontological and epistemological aspects of ascribing intrinsic value to nature.
6. To find out the debates which are more appropriate and have impact parameter.
7. To study and to find out amicable ways of ascribing intrinsic value to the nature from the dual aspects of ascriptions.

Morality requires that our sentiments must be balanced with relevant facts and reason. Philosophy is a “human product”; each individual philosophizes with more than just reason - we use our will, feelings, and our soul. We have an inclination that moral philosophy needs to be distinguished, predictable and dependable, with absolute answers to complex moral dilemmas, but nothing is beyond from the truth.

1.7: Methodology

The methodology selected for this research is introduced in its entirety and justified as similarities and differences between quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The specific methods or activities like proportional and logical method will be appropriate and feasible to accomplish the objectives. These methods need to be both qualitative and quantitative in temperament. Whenever possible, these methods will identify the linkage between intrinsic value in nature from Western perspective and Indian Philosophy.

Also the proposal deployed the exploratory research design based on literature survey involving review of qualitative information published either in records/reports or journals/magazines/books. Top scholarly articles in which there are epistemological and ontological aspects of ascribing intrinsic value to nature and which have an impact parameter will be considered as the universe of the study. The sampling is non-probability and purposive since the universe is purposively selected for the thesis.

Considering all these that have been discussed so far, we are to examine two broad assumptions which are the basis of the thesis.

First assumption

Even though there are diverse views, lots of criticisms, rejections, I will stick to what G. E. Moore exactly meant by *intrinsic value*. It consists of *intrinsic properties* and *intrinsic nature*. However, I differ from Moore's statement that intrinsic value is trans-worldly. I will try to defend it in chapter II.

Second Assumption

There is intrinsic value in nature and intrinsic value is independently objectively present in nature. I will try to defend it from western perspective and Indian perspective in chapter III and IV respectively.