

## Preface

*The prime objective of my thesis is to unravel the disastrous consequences arising on account of man's unlimited and unwanted intrusion and interference with nature and the role of philosophy or more precisely the role of environmental ethics with a non-anthropocentric approach in tackling and bringing about an amicable solution to the global environmental crisis.*

*The unprecedented rate of scientific and technological development without a metaphysical base is primarily responsible for the ecological crisis. The concept of 'conquest of nature' by technologically oriented man and the visualization of nature as a 'storehouse of materials' to be exploited and plundered has driven the whole world into a paradoxical situation of global environmental crisis.*

*Environmental ethics is a branch of applied ethics which endeavours to restore and preserve the dignity of all biotic species, humans as well as non-humans. This specific branch of applied ethics took its birth in protest against traditional anthropocentric or human centred ethics which recognizes superiority of humans over non-humans fostering conquest or plundering of nature ending up in ecological disaster of the greatest magnitude.*

*In the Introductory chapter we propose to examine the environmental problem or crisis the world is facing. Alarming and uncontrolled population growth promoting industrial expansion, expansion of transportation network, agricultural expansion, deforestation, growth of slums and bustees have polluted the environment's air, water and soil to such an extent that nature's self 'homeostatic mechanism' fails to repair the lost ecological balance. The failure of humans to respond to the Gandhian axiom that there is enough in the world to satisfy one's need and not one's greed, and the relentless march of humans towards materialism, consumerism, individualism and egoism have brought the life of every species at the brink of extinction.*

*The world needs to be saved from this catastrophe. The first order solutions in the form of environmental laws, media communication and other scientific environmental protection activities have proved futile. In this context we have proposed the role to be played by environmental ethics with its non-anthropocentric approach.*

*In the Second Chapter entitled “Human Attitude Towards Nature”, we propose to highlight that an attitudinal change of humans towards nature is essential for proper curing of the diseased environment. A respectful, reverential, caring and loving attitude towards all species of the biotic world can save the world from further degradation. The attitude of mastery over nature which is in fact backed mainly by Judeo-Christian tradition and traditional man-centred ethics is primarily responsible for the world environmental catastrophe. Human beings ought to realize that as moral agents they have an obligation and responsibility towards all living species and the abiotic world. They also need to realize that all species have inherent worth and are flourishing in their own natural manner. That all species including man are interdependent and survive through the natural pre-predator relationship is a matter of realization. Humans ought not to inflict harm or damage the environment conducive for the natural flourishing of living species for the satisfaction of his greedy and luxurious need. He needs to confine himself within his satisfaction of basic needs and curb his materialistic and consumerist desire.*

*In this respect we would like to focus on the teaching of Lord Buddha. Buddhism as a religion is very much relevant to environmental studies particularly when the world is facing such environmental crisis. The religion is in fact based on true wisdom (bodhi) and not on any blind faith or dogma. True compassion, sympathy and respect towards all living species, care for the abiotic environment and self-realisation or a feeling for oneness with the Greater Self forms the core philosophy of Buddhism. The religion spreads the notion of kindness (maitrī), compassion (karuṇā), joy (muditā) and equanimity (upekṣā). Therefore, the cultivation and culture of Buddhism as a*

*religion by individuals brings about an attitudinal change within them. Individuals gradually develop a feeling of oneness with all species of the natural world; learn to treat all species with love, respect, care and sympathy setting aside his materialistic and consumerist desire and lifestyle by exploiting nature. Thus, his attitude towards nature gradually changes from an 'ego centric' one to an 'eco-centric' one which will gradually restore the lost ecological balance.*

*In the Third Chapter bearing the title "The Value of life: A Biocentric Approach", we propose to make a theoretical discussion on the bio-centric approach which is a new dimension of environmental ethics. In this respect, we have highlighted the thoughts of Paul W. Taylor who rules out the superiority of humans over non-humans and confers equal moral dignity to all species of the biotic community including humans. It is said that all living species, humans as well as non-humans, are members of the earth's community of life and are an integral part of nature. They are all teleological centres of life flourishing in their own-natural manner and humans are by no means superior to non-humans. This is reality according to Taylor and human beings by virtue of their rationality and consciousness should be aware of this reality which in turns restores the dignity of all species. The biocentric approach pleas for a universal community of life.*

*I intend to concentrate on the question of value in the Fourth Chapter of my thesis entitled Searching Intrinsic Value in Nature. Values may be classified into two main types- intrinsic or non-instrumental value and non-intrinsic or instrumental value. Any object possesses instrumental or use value if it satisfies a given end, i.e. it is a means to an end. For example, petroleum which is utilised as a power resource in many industries and a fuel for transportation is of instrumental use to man. Intrinsic value refers to the value an object possesses which is an end in itself and not a means to an end. The aesthetic value of nature is in fact intrinsic. The concept which requires clarification is that nature not only possesses instrumental value for man but is also intrinsically valuable. In fact both instrumental and intrinsic value*

*exists side by side in nature. A goat may be of instrumental use to a lion and grass may be of instrumental use to the goat. But this does not mean that goat and grass possess only instrumental value. Both are good in themselves and their life possesses intrinsic value. Thus, both intrinsic and instrumental value exists side by side in nature and such values exist irrespective of human presence or absence. Environmental ethics with its non-anthropocentric approach is closely associated with intrinsic value of all living species including humans which ignores subjugation of one species by another and thereby promotes coherent association of all biotic species which in turn restores the dignity of all species.*

*Thus, by establishing the fact that all natural entities possess intrinsic value and therefore deserve moral consideration and respect, the problem of environmental degradation can be tackled to a great extent.*

*Discussion on Ecofeminism, a twin concept of ecology and feminism, which looks into the domination of both nature and women, is outlined in the Fifth Chapter. This particular field of study brings out the interconnectedness between women and nature and shows that both women and nature are dominated and exploited for their distinct and similar qualities. Ecofeminism is therefore a movement which endeavours to eradicate the domination of women in a patriarchal society and exploitation of nature together and inculcate a loving and sympathetic attitude towards all life forms.*

*Ecofeminism not only brings out the parity of domination between women and nature, it also explores various ways and means through which such types of domination can be regarded as morally unjust. By making such connections and comparisons between women and nature, it tries to restore the dignity of nature in moral context. Ecofeminism seeks to understand better the scope of moral respect, the sort of entities that can and should receive moral attention and the true natural world which morality is supposed to promote. We propose to examine and highlight in what sense the connection between women's oppression and environmental degradation are interlocked, the problematic philosophical foundations of several popular*

*ecofeminist theories and the ways to restore respect and dignity of nature through care ethics.*

*Environmental holism, an extension of the non-anthropocentric approach of environmental ethics takes the whole biosphere into moral consideration. It enlarges the boundary of moral community by encompassing the abiotic environment which includes land, water and soil. In fact environmental holism leads to the Gaia hypothesis where the earth behaves like a single living organism.*

*Therefore, considering the whole of nature as a single family without any subjugation and exploitation of one species by another is the true message of non-anthropocentrism. The Hindu concept of ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’ exemplifies this feeling of oneness. This is the deep ecological movement which rests on environmental holism and the extension and realization of the self. Deep ecology which rests on environmental holism states that everything is fundamentally one and nothing can be separated from the whole. Thus, there remains no isolated thing in the whole world, but an interlocking web of relations in a constant state of flux in which individuals are centres of interaction. Human beings ought to develop a feeling of oneness with nature, world or cosmos which will bring out his true meaning of life. This is self-realisation which is the core word of deep ecological movement. Through self-realisation or identification of the relation one holds with every part and parcel of the cosmos, one strengthens ones urge to survive in oneness with the cosmos through more and more widening of the sphere of relation with the world. Thus, it may be understood that self-realisation involves the identification of smaller human self with the Greater Self. Such a feeling of oneness with the cosmos will gradually bring about the realisation that the good of one is intimately wedded to the well being of the rest. Thus, one ought not to insult, unduly exploit or violate the dictation of nature or harm the species within it. We have discussed this view of deep ecology vividly in the Sixth Chapter of this thesis bearing the title “Deep Ecology Movement”.*

*The discussion on non-anthropocentrism as the most amicable solution for the present environmental crisis will remain incomplete if we fail to include the issue relating to the revival of the lost spirituality in man. This line of thinking has been discussed in the Seventh Chapter of this thesis bearing the title “A Spiritual Approach of Non-anthropocentrism from religious perspective”. The spiritual relation which existed between man and nature is lost due to the predominance of the concept of conquest of nature by man which has led to unprecedented rate of scientific and technological development in an attempt to artificialise the natural environment. The lack of metaphysical base in modern quantitative science is said to bring destruction to the spiritual bridge that existed between man and nature.*

*Such a paradoxical situation calls for the revival of eco-spirituality which is echoed in the ancient religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and many others. The universal acceptance of the holistic world view which echoed in the ancient religious thought will help to create a society free from domination and exploitation of society by man which will enable him to live in peace and harmony with nature.*

*To bring about an attitudinal change towards nature the inner minds of the individuals need to be cultured. This requires cultivation of the thoughts embedded within the ancient religions. The concept of Ṛta in the Upanishad, the dictation of Manu Samhita, the zoomorphic nature of Hindu deities, the worship of Uṣā, Aranyāni, Agni, Sūrya etc bear evidence about the respect and reverence for nature by individuals in ancient times which enabled maintenance of ecological balance. The cordial relationship between man and nature has been marred due to blind faith in quantitative science lacking metaphysical base. Revival and re-culture of Upanishadic and Vedic thoughts can bring back the respect which man once paid to nature. Buddhist teachings revolving around love, care and compassion bear immense value in environmental concerns. Various ecological and environmental problems can be gradually tackled if the concept of environmental holism through merging of one’s self with the Greater Self*

*which is the core philosophy of Buddhism is once again accepted by the masses, Concern about the environment is found in most of the religions of the world. We may therefore say that world religions provide constructive framework for changing human attitudes towards nature from an 'ego-centric' to an 'eco-centric' one.*

*Finally, the requirement of environmental justice and sustainable development for maintenance of ecological balance is brought into light in the Concluding Remarks. In writing this thesis, I have tried my level best to make it flawless theoretically as well as grammatically. However, if there still remains any flaw, I myself owe responsibility for this.*