



Nature and Culture: Natural Environment Ethics and Sensibility

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ABSTRACT:

This study explores the complex relationship between nature and society, specifically emphasising the ethical considerations and inherent sensitivity associated with the natural environment. It also explores the diverse ways in which various cultures have engaged with and conceptualised nature throughout the span of human civilization. These interactions and perspectives have subsequently led to the development of environmental ethics and the propagation of a heightened awareness of the natural environment. The study emphasises the interdependence of these concepts as well as their significance in the process of attaining a harmonious, long-term coexistence between humans and their natural surroundings. Using an interdisciplinary framework, the objective of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between culture and the natural environment. This framework is based on numerous academic disciplines, including philosophy, anthropology, ecology, geography, and the social sciences.

Keywords: *Nature, Culture, Ethics, Sensibility, Environment. Natural world, Ecology*

INTRODUCTION:

The relationship between nature and culture is a subject of scholarly investigation across multiple academic fields, highlighting the complex relationship between human beings and their surrounding environment. The present study investigates the intricate dynamics that interconnect two distinct realms. This research investigates the evolution of ethical frameworks and the recognition of the natural environment. The paper provides a comprehensive overview of many historical epochs, using insights from renowned scholars as a source of inspiration. The research takes into account the views of environmental philosophers such as Aldo Leopold and Arne Naess. The relationship between culture and the environment is highlighted by the impact of human actions on the natural world. This relationship can be observed in both physical and abstract forms. Indigenous myths and contemporary urban landscapes are two examples of how cultural components are integrated



into the natural environment. In order to demonstrate the link between cultural narratives and ecological consciousness, anthropologists like Clifford Geertz (1966) and others have studied cultural practises and rituals that emphasise the value civilizations place on the environment. He argues that culture functions as a bridge between human potential and actual development. People without a cultural upbringing would be dysfunctional, with few practical instincts, few lucid emotions, and no intellectual capacity.

As the world has become increasingly interdependent, the dynamics between human civilization and the natural world have become more complicated. It is essential to consider the moral consequences of our actions when interacting with and shaping the natural world. Caciuc, V. T. (2013) contends that the introduction of environmental principles into society can reawaken an inactive sensibility. Environmental ethics is essential for enhancing and reassessing human behaviour towards nature. According to Smirnova (2018), Recognising and appreciating the connection between humans and the natural world can help us develop a greater sense of responsibility and reverence for the natural world. A comprehensive understanding of the interrelationship between nature and culture is needed in order to adeptly confront environmental concerns. According to Fatimah (2021), engaging with nature brings up ethical problems and adds complexity to environmental challenges. William emphasises the relationship between moral considerations and environmental concerns. Fatimah (2021) argue that ethical frameworks are essential for a moral and civilised society because they enable the exploration of diverse perspectives on human behaviour and attitudes towards the environment. Environmental ethics is the study of the moral dimensions of our relationship with nature. The relationship between humanity and nature throughout history has been characterised by exploitation and dominance. The need for a balanced approach to assure the long-term sustainability of both humans and the environment is becoming increasingly apparent. Klaus Brinkmann (1999) stated the central argument in environmental ethics is that humans and their cultures do not have sustainable relationships with the natural environments in which they live. He suggests that integrating culture and the natural world requires recognising their differences and coming up with an ethical approach that recognises how they support each other.



Presently, there is a significant interaction between human society and the natural environment, marked by the occurrence of environmental degradation and changes in climate patterns. Rachel Carson's book (2009) "Silent Spring" explores the importance of understanding the interdependence of human culture and the natural world. The incorporation of indigenous knowledge and scientific progress has the capacity to promote peaceful coexistence. The term "biocultural diversity" refers to the importance of protecting cultural traditions and ecosystems together, recognising the vital role of local communities in environmental management.

Understanding the complex relationship between the natural world and human civilization is crucial in today's world, when we are faced with such severe environmental challenges. The development of sustainable solutions to today's problems depends critically on the fusion of cultural narratives, ethical perspectives, and ecological knowledge. Climate agreements, like the Paris Agreement, aim to combine cultural values and ecological imperatives to create a sustainable and long-lasting path towards sustainability. • Kellert, S. R., & Wilson, E. O. (1993) concept of "biophilia" recognises the inherent bond between humans and the natural environment. It argues that this link can help people develop an ecological worldview, which in turn can influence people's cultural attitudes towards environmental protection.

OBJECTIVE:

The primary objective of this study is to enhance comprehension of the relationship between human culture and the natural environment by employing a multidisciplinary methodology. This study incorporates a range of contributions from several academic disciplines, including philosophy, anthropology, ecology, geography, and the social sciences, which serve as valuable sources of data.

HISROTIAL PERSPECTIVES:

The historical context of nature-culture interactions provides invaluable insights into the diverse ways in which civilizations across time have approached and assigned value to the natural world. From ancient civilizations deeply intertwined with their environments to modern industrial societies, these perspectives have left lasting imprints on ethical considerations and attitudes towards nature. This section explores key historical epochs and



civilizations, highlighting their unique approaches to and valuations of the natural environment.

- ***Indigenous Knowledge and Ecological Balance***

Indigenous cultures throughout the world respect and cohabit with nature. These societies view themselves as integral elements of ecosystems and live in harmony with the land, vegetation, animals, and water resources. Native people's wisdom emphasises the importance of harmony between people and the natural environment by incorporating ecological principles into religious and cultural practises. Respecting the nature and being aware of the effects of upsetting its equilibrium are the foundations of ethical concerns. Indigenous Australians maintain spiritual links to their ancestral lands, while Indian Hindus practise ecological responsibility via ceremony and belief. Native American tribes practise responsible land management.

- ***Ancient Philosophies and the Order of the Universe:***

Ancient Greeks and Romans, and other scholars of the classical tradition, observed the natural world through the perspective of philosophical investigation and cosmological ideas. Ancient Greek philosophers, such as Aristotle, considered the inherent order and purpose in nature, thereby influencing the earliest concepts of teleology. The Roman concept of "genius loci" emphasised the spirit of place, highlighting the distinctive characteristics of various landscapes. These cultures respected nature for its benefits to human welfare and worked to comprehend its guiding principles, setting the groundwork for moral concerns based on reason and the quest of knowledge.

- ***Industrialization and Human centrality***

Industrialisation brought about a major change in the relationship between human society and the natural environment. Rapid urbanisation, considerable technological advancements, and the commercialization of resources have all contributed to a change in the manner in which humans observe the environment, making it more commercial. Anthropocentrism, a philosophical perspective that prioritises human needs above ecological wellbeing, has gained a lot of support and often places a focus on economic growth at the price of ecological



balance. There was environmental degradation during this period due to the unsustainable use of natural resources. Industrialization's lasting impact raises ethical dilemmas when prioritising human progress over environmental conservation.

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS:

Environmental ethics is a philosophical framework that analyses the ethical obligations individuals have towards the natural environment and its living organisms. The concept highlights the interconnectedness of organisms and ecosystems, prompting humanity to consider the long-term impacts of human actions on the environment. Environmental ethics were put into practise in 2010 with the Deepwater Horizon oil disaster. A vast amount of petroleum oil was released into the Gulf of Mexico as a result of an explosion at an offshore oil platform. Significant consequences resulted from the event, affecting marine organisms, coastal ecosystems, and the regional economy. The disaster response required technological, economic, and ethical considerations. Due to their extensive ecological damage, the individuals were held accountable for both financial losses and ethical violations. The event accentuates the significance of contemplating the ethical consequences of human actions on the environment and demonstrates the necessity of environmental ethics.

Environmental ethics highlights the significance of conserving and restoring biodiversity. The decline in species populations as a result of habitat loss, pollution, and climate change raises ethical concerns regarding our responsibilities towards other species. The discussion emphasises on the notion of "intrinsic value," which argues that all species have inherent worth and a right to exist regardless of their utility to humans. In Yellowstone National Park, the reintroduction of the grey wolf may demonstrate ethical principles. When a top predator was reintroduced to the park, its environment was drastically changed. Reintroducing wolves had two positive ecological effects: reducing herbivore overgrazing and allowing plant life to recover

The ideals of social justice and intergenerational equity are also an integral part of environmental ethics, expanding its purview beyond the realm of natural systems. Climate change is a topic that clearly demonstrates the ethical components. Carbon pollution and the use of resources have a direct effect on future generations, who will have to deal with the



results of our actions and decisions. Young people throughout the globe are taking a stand on climate change by organising climate strikes, shown most prominently by Greta Thunberg's Fridays for Future movement. The above movement is based on the principles of intergenerational justice, calling on the present generation to act in a responsible and ethical manner to ensure a habitable planet for future generations.

CULTRURAL INFLUENCE ON ECOLOGICAL PRACTICES:

The relationship between culture and ecological practises demonstrates how human civilizations interact with and influence their natural environments. Culture plays a major role in shaping how individuals perceive and interact with their environment. The existence of a symbiotic relationship may be seen in many places throughout the globe where cultural influences have either contributed to the development of sustainable ecological practises or have had a negative impact on the environment. Indigenous groups in the Amazon jungle demonstrate how culture influences ecological practises. These societies have maintained a peaceful and mutually beneficial relationship with their environment for many generations. This symbiotic coexistence is primarily influenced by profoundly engrained beliefs that regard nature as a sacred and revered being. The community demonstrates a deep understanding of ecological equilibrium through cultural practises like rotational farming and agroforestry. Farming diverse crops in harmony with the forest ecosystem helps combat soil degradation and promotes biodiversity.

Contemporary urban cultures demonstrate the negative effects of disconnecting from ecological knowledge. Rapid urbanisation and industrialisation prioritise economic growth over ecological concerns, resulting in overconsumption, pollution, and habitat loss. Disposable plastics in Western nations symbolise a detachment from environmentally conscious behaviours. The disparity between societal values and ecological stewardship is exemplified by the proliferation of plastic refuse in marine ecosystems and landfills, as well as the preference for convenience.

Sustainable living is affected by religious beliefs. The Hindu religion promotes ecological equilibrium through its reverence for all living things. Hindus highly value the Ganges River due to its sacred significance in Indian culture. Pilgrims engage in rituals such as bathing in



the river and placing offerings in the water. Pollution and refuse have accumulated in the Ganges as a result of industrialization and population growth. Increasing emphasis is being placed on restoring and protecting the river's ecological health, primarily due to cultural and religious factors. The Clean Ganges initiative exemplifies how cultural considerations can support ecological progress by combining cultural reverence with sustainable methods.

Cultural practises can be detrimental to ecological sustainability if they are founded on old beliefs that no longer correspond to reality. The use of endangered animal resources in traditional medicine and cultural practises has worsened the situation for some species, bringing them closer to extinction. To combat these behaviours, it is necessary to strike a balance between ecosystem conservation and the preservation of historical artefacts.

MODERN CHALLENGES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS:

The urgent environmental issues of the modern era, such as climate change, habitat loss, and pollution, emphasise the necessity of integrating nature and culture. Considerations of ethics and sensitivity should be incorporated into policy formulation, conservation efforts, and education. To achieve environmental sustainability, a comprehensive strategy is required. The seriousness of the situation necessitates a shift in how people view environmental issues. The ethical framework recognises the worth of all living organisms and ecosystems, extending beyond the typical human-centered perspective. Incorporating ethical considerations into the process of formulating public policy enables humanity to put the long-term health of the planet ahead of short-term gains. It is essential to include environmental ethics in order to solve the disconnection that currently exists between people and the natural world.

It is important for conservation efforts to have a moral attitude in order to maximise their efficiency in preserving the ecological web that sustains life on Earth. The mere use of nature as a means for human advantage is no longer sufficient. To make the preservation of biodiversity a moral obligation, conservation strategies should be governed by ethics that emphasise the interdependence of all living things. The use of indigenous knowledge and traditional ecological practises has significant value in attaining environmental harmony, since they serve as vital sources of wisdom. The need for education to conform to the



evolving dynamics of our relationship with the natural environment is essential. The incorporation of environmental ethics into educational curriculum equips forthcoming generations with the necessary knowledge and values to effectively address environmental concerns. Education has a crucial role in fostering ecological citizenship and cultivating persons with a heightened environmental consciousness, therefore enabling them to effectively contribute to the betterment of the planet. Education can promote ecological citizenship and cultivate environmentally cognizant, Earth-beneficial individuals.

Environmental governance and policy-making can be revolutionised by an ethical perspective. Ethical decisions are resistant to external pressures and prioritise the long-term over the short-term. Their primary focus is in safeguarding the long-term well-being of our planet, while also ensuring fairness across generations and the protection of Earth's natural legacy. It is crucial ethically to consider the inherent worth of nature and the rights of future generations, rather than only concentrating on the costs and advantages from an economic perspective. Ethics and sustainable practises are essential for creating environmental harmony. Promoting eco-centric values encourages individuals and industries to adopt sustainable, environmentally-conscious lifestyles. Reduced consumption, the use of renewable energy, and the adoption of circular economies are all ways that societies might become more sustainable. This will assist in reducing their ecological footprint and expanding the definition of prosperity beyond material accumulation.

The challenges of our time emphasise the necessity of recalibrating our relationship with nature. It is emphasised that integrating nature and culture is an ethical imperative for coexistence. Integrating ethics into policymaking, conservation efforts, and education can lead to a future in which humans have a meaningful and sustained relationship with the natural world. The effort to preserve the planet for future generations is a moral obligation. Environmental ethics is the study of the moral and ethical implications of human interactions with the environment. It investigates issues such as the value and rights of non-human entities, the responsibility of humans towards nature, and the ethical considerations in environmental decision-making.

CONCLUSION:



Influencing human contact with the natural environment necessitates ethical deliberation and sensitivity due to the complex relationship between human civilization and the natural world. Environmental ethics and sensitivity must be utilised in order to establish sustainable communities and find a solution to the ecological disaster. The transition towards a future characterised by increased environmental consciousness and harmony will be greatly facilitated by a deeper comprehension of the intricate connections between the natural world and human culture. The reason for this is that the natural world and human civilization are intrinsically connected.

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