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## 17. Achieving Sustainable Development through Environmental Ethics

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*“Earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s needs, but not every man’s greed”.*

-Mahatma Gandhi



**Figure 17.1: Environmental Ethics**

**Abstract:**

*Environmental ethics is of philosophy that deals with the ethical problems surrounding environmental protection. It aims to provide ethical justification and moral motivation for the cause of global environmental protection. Environmental ethics is related to environmental philosophy and defines what is right and wrong. Population explosion, environmental degradation, resource crisis etc problems drew the attention towards the environmental concerns. Due to modern urbanization, industrialization, over population growth, deforestation etc our environment has degraded.*

*The qualitative and quantitative degradation of natural resources has immensely affected life of humans, animals, plants and micro organism. This environmental degradation can be prevented with the change in our life style and with the inculcation of some moral principles and eco-friendly living. Then only we can provide a sustainable future to our children. Environmental ethics teaches our responsibility towards environment, also helps to build better relationships with nature.*

**Keywords:**

*Environmental ethics, natural resources, population explosion, deforestation, climate change, sustainable development.*

**17.1 Introduction:**

India has a rich tradition of Environmental ethics<sup>1-6</sup> since Vedic Era since 5000 years ago. Also conservation of natural resources is reflected in our history, culture, religion and philosophy. India thoughtful about environment protection before the world woke up to the alarming environmental issues. Environmental ethics has been described as having a moral conscience which reflects one's commitment and responsibility toward the environment. Human beings are a part of the society like the other living beings that are an integral part of the environment and hence have a right to be considered a part of the human life. Environmental ethics says that we must base our behavior on a set of ethical values that guide our approach towards the other living beings in nature. Environmental ethics is about including the rights and moral values. The environment is not the property of the human alone. We exist because of all other nonliving elements of the environment. Therefore conservation of natural resources is our prime duty.

We are cutting down forests for making our homes. We are continuing with an excessive consumption of natural resources. Their excessive use is resulting in their depletion, risking the life of our future generations. Is this ethical? This is the issue that environmental ethics takes up. Today, environmental ethics is one of the major concerns of mankind. When industrial processes lead to destruction of resources, is it not the industry's responsibility to restore the depleted resources. Most of the human activities lead to environmental pollution. The increasing human population is increasing the human demand for resources like food and shelter. As the population is exceeding the carrying capacity of our planet, natural environments are being used for human in habitation. Thus human beings are disturbing the balance in the nature.

Environmental ethics is applied to the three pillars of sustainability: Social, economic and environmental. Here, we focus on the Environmental ethics and Sustainability<sup>7-11</sup>. This shows the interconnections between nature and human beings. Environmental ethics is the beauty of the biotic community cannot be determined by adding together the beauty of each of its elements. It is instead a property of the whole, which is determined not only by the individual parts but by the relationships among them.

### **17.1.1 Importance of Environmental Ethics:**

Environmental ethics is essential for protecting the environment and resources. It promotes sustainable practices. It emphasizes the interdependence of all living things and the need to respect them. It encourages us to think how we can contribute to conserving the natural environment. Environmental ethics teaches our responsibility towards environment, also helps to build better relationships with nature.



**Figure 17.2: Principles of Environmental Ethics**

### **17.1.2 Principles of Environmental Ethics:**

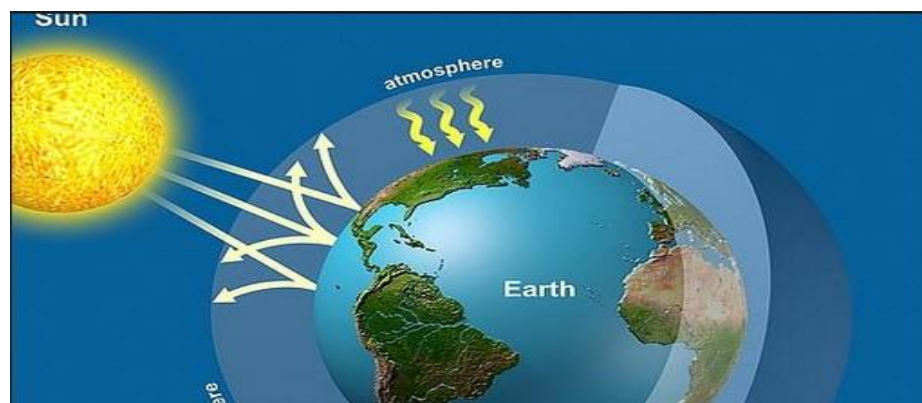
The important principles are given as follows:

- Nature should not be treated as a commodity or resource to be exploited and discarded.
- Humans depend on nature and natural systems and must recognize our role in preserving and protecting the environment.
- We must try to use resources carefully and preserve ecosystems and biodiversity.
- Humans are responsible for our own actions and decisions which affects the environment.
- We must try to make an effort to accomplish the rights of animals and plants are respected and protected.
- We should adopt safety measures regarding environmental protection.
- People have the right to participate in environmental decision-making processes.

Environmental ethics promotes the most challenging moral questions that arise with such issues as resource management, industrialization and development and climate change. The practice of avoiding activity that may pose a threat to environmental health.

## **17.2 Global Warming and Climate Change:**

Climate change<sup>12-16</sup> is a source of global debate on all levels of society. The term climate change describes all the changes in climate patterns that result from the upward trend in earth's annual temperature, such as extreme weather events, rising sea levels and the loss of biodiversity. Some believe climate change is occurring but debate the extent to which humans are responsible. The concept of global warming has attracted considerable attention in recent years, as climate change manifests itself in hotter summers and colder winters, disrupted seasons variations, rising sea levels and devastating natural disasters. Scientific research continues to provide evidence that not only is our climate changing at an alarming rate but that human activity is the culprit. The climate change threatening the health, safety, economies and societies of future generations. Because of the numerous perspectives on climate change and the varying degrees of responsibility of the entities involved, the subject remains under major discussion. Global warming and climate change are often used interchangeably, but there is an important distinction between the two. Global warming describes the recent rapid increase in the average temperature of the planet due to our reliance on fossil fuels as an energy source. Our emissions contribute to global warming through a phenomenon known as the greenhouse effect. When solar radiation reaches earth, some is reflected and some strikes earth's surface. The radiation that reaches the Earth's surface is absorbed, heats the earth or reflects back into the atmosphere as infrared radiation as heat. Some of this heat may pass through the atmosphere, whereas the rest is absorbed by greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and reflected back to earth essentially trapping heat. The greater the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, such as carbon dioxide and methane, the more heat that will be trapped. China is at the top of the list of nations that produce the most greenhouse gas emissions.



**Figure 17.3: Greenhouse Effect**

In recent decades, there has been a substantial rise in greenhouse gas emissions on a global scale. Scientists are concerned about the consequences of our emissions, as global warming has far more implications than hot summer.

### **17.2.1 Heart-Wrenching Video Shows Starving Polar Bears:**



**Figure 17.4: Climate change**

The polar bear is an endangered species, meaning that it is at risk of extinction due to habitat destruction. The polar bear has become the poster victim of climate change. With rising temperatures melting ice and threatening global winter seasons, animals such as polar bears have been affected. The polar bear relies on winter seasons for its nourishment, as white ice serves as a camouflaging backdrop for the predator seeking blubber-rich prey. As arctic winters become warmer and melting ice in the Arctic, polar bear populations are threatened with starvation.

### **17.2.2 Rising Sea Levels:**



**Figure 17.5: Rising Sea Levels**

Climate change has been linked to a number of environmental disruptions that manifest themselves on a global scale. Melting ice contributes to rising sea levels. The recent increase in extreme weather events and natural disasters due to climate change. The Bangladesh

facing threats of rising sea levels. A sea-level rise of 1 meter would flood one-third of its coastline, creating millions of environmental refugees and destroying water supplies, crops and livestock. Saltwater intruding inland and crops and harm livestock. Natural disasters will become more frequent and intense threatening more lives, land and property at risk.



**Figure 17.6: Stockholm Declaration**

Development comes through industrialization, urbanization, science and technology which in turn is the main reasons behind the degradation of environment. To resolve the issue, the experts worldwide have come up with a doctrine called '**Sustainable Development**', "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs" there must be balance between development and ecology. Thus, to maintain a balance between development and the environment the important measure for are: 3-R Approach (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle), promoting environmental awareness and resource utilization. The doctrine of '**Sustainable Development**' had come to be known in 1972 in the Stockholm Declaration. It states that: "Man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being and his responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generation". The sustainable development goals were born at the United Nation conference at Rio de Janerio in 2012 that set the objectives of universal goals that made the urgent environmental, political and economic challenges facing our world. The 17 sustainable development goals of the 2030 agenda were adopted on 1st January, 2016.





**Figure 17.7: Sustainable Development goals**

Moral principles and eco-friendly living define the responsibility of particular person and the nation towards the Environment. Threats to the environment came from two sources: Pollution and Resource. Pollution refers to the undesirable and unlimited contamination of the environment by the manufacturer or use of commodities. Resource depletion refers to the consumption of finite or scarce resources. Pollution of air causes global warming, ozone depletion, acid rain, declining air quality, respiratory and skin disease, etc. water pollution from oil spills and disposal of organic waste aquatic life.



**Figure 17.8: Air Pollution**

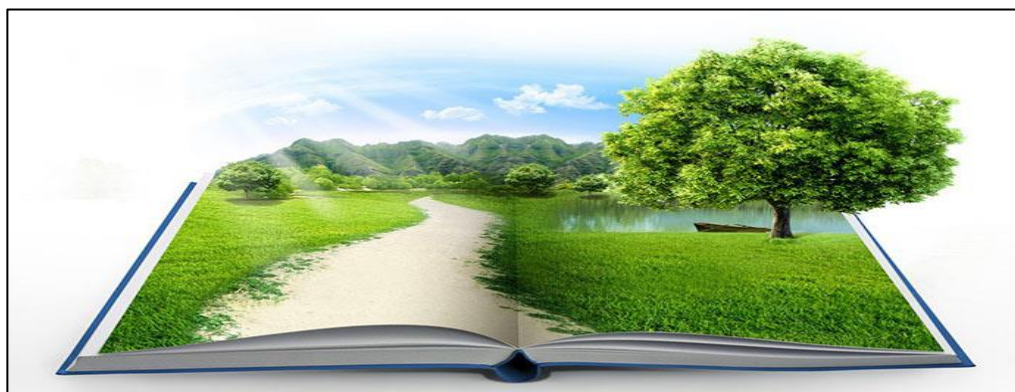
### **17.3 Conclusion:**

Sustainable development is the path way to the future. Our Indian constitution has made several provisions for the preservation and conservation of forests and animals life from any kind of pollution that played a vital role in sustainable development which is the need of every country to achieve the 17 goals for 2030. This can make our present and also future generations to lead a happy and peaceful life. Environment and development are two sides of the same coin and any one of these cannot be sacrificed for the other. Both are equally important for a better future. Climate change can be attributed to our use of fossil fuels, the

most obvious solution to reduce the damage would involve a decrease in reliance on fossil fuels and seeking sources of renewable energy. As the global population steadily increases, so does the consuming energy and contributing to impact on the environment. Thus, an additional course of action would involve stabilizing our population. Carbon dioxide removal attempts to reduce the quantity of greenhouse gases accumulating in the atmosphere by taking carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide removal involves planting trees to absorb carbon dioxide or fertilizing oceans to promote phytoplankton blooms of microorganisms that can consume carbon dioxide.

The environmental ethics of conserving natural environment is required not only for present generation but also for the future generation. Some remedial measures which have been taken or can be taken are:

- Reduction of Vehicular Pollution
- Use of unleaded petrol
- Ban on old vehicles
- Adoption of CNG as fuel.
- Promotion of battery operated vehicles
- Ethanol to be reviewed as alternative fuel
- Electric vehicles to be encouraged



**Figure 17.9: Sustainable Earth**

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