Unit:3
Environmental Ethics

By: Falah Deeba

ETHICAL USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Environmental ethics deals with issues related to the rights of individuals that are fundamental to life and well being.

This concerns not only the needs of each person today, but also those who will come after us. It also deals with the rights of other living creatures that inhabit our earth.

Why Ethical Use Of Natural Resources?

Can individuals justifiably use resources so differently that one individual uses resources many times more lavishly than other individuals who have barely enough to survive?

In a just world, there has to be a more equitable sharing of resources than we encounter at present.

The just distribution of resources has global, national and local concerns that we need to address. There are rich and poor nations. There are rich and poor communities in every country. And there are rich and poor families.

In this era of modern economic development, the disparity between the haves and have-nots is widening.

Our human environments in the urban, rural and wilderness sectors, use natural resources that shift from the wilderness (forests, grasslands, wetlands, etc.) to the rural sector, and from there to the urban sector.

So, there is a great need of ethical use of natural resources.

ADVANTAGES

Ethical use of natural resources will help in following ways:

1. Judicious use of natural resources and avoiding wastage of it.

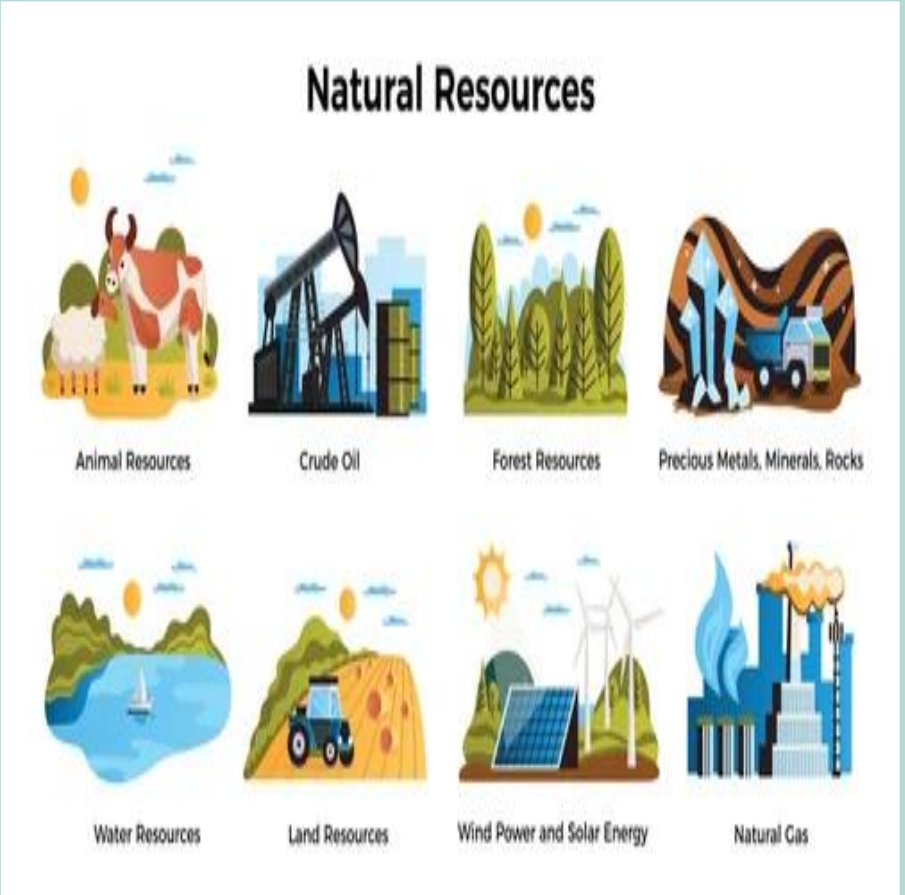
2. Long term planning for the use of natural resources so that it last not only for the present but also for future generations.

3. It reduces the exploitation of natural resources and teaches how to distribute it equally for all.

4. While extracting and using natural resources it also plans for the safe disposal of wastes so that no damage is caused to the environment.

5. A long-term perspective so that these will last for the generations to come and will not merely be exploited to the hilt for short term gains.

6.It also ensures equitable distribution of resources so that all, and not just a handful of rich and powerful people, benefit from the development of these resources.



Making human communities and ecosystems better, protecting important resources for the present and future i.e use of Earth's resources sustainably. Such care further encourages us to restore resources that we have degraded. People in the field of restoration ecology, for example, work to return damaged ecosystems such as tall-grass prairies and wetlands to their original condition.

Environmental Equity

Definition

- Environmental equity means protection from environmental hazards as well as access to environmental benefits, regardless of income, race, and other characteristics.
- **Environmental equity is the goal of spreading environmental disadvantages equally among all people.**
- Differences between strata often lead to discrimination based on group membership. Poorer people and ethnic and racial minorities tend to live in more hazard-prone, vulnerable, and crowded parts of cities. These circumstances increase their susceptibility to the impacts of climate change and reduce their capacity to adapt to and withstand extreme events.

ENVIRONMENTAL EQUITY

According to the EPA, environmental equity can be broken down into two categories

1) Fair treatment means:

- No group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, governmental and commercial operations or policies.

2) Meaningful involvement means:

- People have an opportunity to participate in decisions about activities that may affect their environment and/or health;
- The public's contribution can influence the regulatory agency's decision;
- Community concerns will be considered in the decision making process; and
- Decision makers will seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected.

EXAMPLE

- It’s helpful to visualize this in terms of an environmental disaster like a hurricane. Environmental equity means that everyone has equal access to the resources they need to protect themselves and their homes from the hurricane. For example, everyone would have the ability to evacuate, have access to sand bagging materials, and even more broadly everyone would have the right to live somewhere that wasn’t vulnerable to flooding based on harmful laws and policies.

Environmental justice

- **Environmental justice (EJ)** is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies.
- **If environmental equity is a basic human right, environmental justice is the act of protecting that right.**
- Environmental justice involves the actions and activism necessary to highlight inequities and level the playing field.
- This means proper oversight and review of federal agencies, proper permitting and licensing for companies, buildings, and warehouses that emit pollution, setting clear standards, regulations, and laws that protect at-risk communities, and awarding grants to organizations that act on behalf of these communities.
- Equity is the outcome of environmental justice. An equitable society is one in which justice has been served. They are complementary, not one in the same.
- Equity is not achieved without justice.

Principles of Environmental Justice

1)Environmental justice demands that public policy be based on mutual respect and justice for all peoples, free from any form of discrimination or bias.

2)Environmental justice mandates the right to ethical, balanced and responsible uses of land and renewable resources in the interest of a sustainable planet for humans and other living things.

3)Environmental justice calls for universal protection from nuclear testing, extraction, production, and disposal of toxic/hazardous wastes and poisons and nuclear testing that threaten the fundamental right to clean air, land, water, and food.

4)Environmental justice affirms the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural, and environmental self-determination of all peoples.

5)Environmental justice demands the cessation of the production of all toxins, hazardous waste and radioactive materials, and that all past and current producers be held strictly accountable to the people for detoxification and the containment at the point of production.

Principles of Environmental Justice

7) Environmental Justice demands the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making, including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation.

8) Environmental Justice affirms the right of all workers to a safe and healthy work environment without being forced to choose between an unsafe livelihood and unemployment. It also affirms the right of those who work at home to be free from environmental hazards.

9) Environmental Justice protects the right of victims of environmental injustice to receive full compensation and reparations for damages as well as quality health care.

10) Environmental Justice considers governmental acts of environmental injustice a violation of international law, the Universal Declaration On Human Rights, and the United Nations Convention on Genocide.

11) Environmental Justice must recognize a special legal and natural relationship of Native Peoples to the U.S. government through treaties, agreements, compacts, and covenants affirming sovereignty and self-determination.

Principles of Environmental Justice

12) Environmental Justice affirms the need for urban and rural ecological policies to clean up and rebuild our cities and rural areas in balance with nature, honoring the cultural integrity of all our communities, and provided fair access for all to the full range of resources.

13) Environmental Justice calls for the strict enforcement of principles of informed consent, and a halt to the testing of experimental reproductive and medical procedures and vaccinations on people of color.

14) Environmental Justice opposes the destructive operations of multi-national corporations.

15) Environmental Justice opposes military occupation, repression and exploitation of lands, peoples and cultures, and other life forms.

16) Environmental Justice calls for the education of present and future generations which emphasizes social and environmental issues, based on our experience and an appreciation of our diverse cultural perspectives.

17) Environmental Justice requires that we, as individuals, make personal and consumer choices to consume as little of Mother Earth's resources and to produce as little waste as possible; and make the conscious decision to challenge and reprioritize our lifestyles to ensure the health of the natural world for present and future generations.

Environmental Justice

Equality

The assumption is that **everyone benefits from the same supports**. This is equal treatment.

Equity

Everyone gets the supports they need (this is the concept of "affirmative action"), thus producing equity.

Justice

All 3 can see the game without supports or accommodations because **the cause(s) of the inequity was addressed**. The systemic barrier has been removed.

Environmental Racism

Environmental racism is a concept in the environmental justice movement, which developed in the United States and abroad throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The term is used to describe disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on people of color.

Environmental racism refers to the institutional rules, regulations, policies or government and/or corporate decisions that deliberately target certain communities for locally undesirable land uses and lax enforcement of zoning and environmental laws, resulting in communities being disproportionately exposed to toxic and hazardous waste based upon race.

CAUSES

Environmental racism is caused by several factors, including intentional neglect, the alleged need for a receptacle for pollutants in urban areas, and a lack of institutional/political power, poverty and low land values of people of color. It is a well-documented fact that communities of color and low-income communities are disproportionately impacted by polluting industries (and very specifically, hazardous waste facilities) and lax regulation of these industries.

Examples of Environmental Racism

1) kodaikanal mercury poisoning is a proven case of mercury contamination at the hill station of Kodaikanal by Hindustan Unilever in the process of making mercury thermometers for export around the world.

2) Arsenic contamination in San Joaquin Valley

Arsenic is a chemical element that occurs naturally in groundwater but is exacerbated by agricultural activities. In California's San Joaquin Valley, arsenic can reach elevated concentrations due to mobilization. In particular, irrigation and drainage enhance arsenic releases, while high evapotranspiration rates can concentrate arsenic in surface water and shallow groundwater

In humans, exposure to arsenic can cause cancer in the: Skin, lungs, kidneys, bladder

Religious teachings about Environment

All religions agree that nature is an act of divinity and should be treated as such...

Almost all religions address the issue of the creation of the universe, or universes, in different forms and with varying degrees of clarity or detail. However, all religions agree that the creation is an act of God and should be treated as such.

1) Hinduism: Hinduism is a religion deeply rooted in nature. The sacred text (Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Epics) has many references of divinity related to nature, such as rivers, mountains, trees, animals, and the earth.

Hinduism Connections and Reflection on Environment: "I shall now explain the knowable, knowing which you will taste the eternal. Brahman, the spirit, beginningless and subordinate to Me, lies beyond the cause and effect of this material world." (Bhagavad Gita 13.13)

2) Islam: Hundreds of Qur'an verses support the protection of the environment Islam also approaches environment from a stewardship perspective**.** The responsibility of humanity is to protect and ensure the unity (Tawheed) of the God's creation. Moreover, Islam prohibits the excessive consumption of resources the planet provides to the humanity

Muslim Connections and Reflection on Environment: "Devote thyself single-mindedly to the Faith, and thus follow the nature designed by Allah, the nature according to which He has fashioned mankind. There is no altering the creation of Allah." (Qur'an 30:30)

Religious teachings about Environment

3) **Jainism**: Originated from India, the main teaching from Jainism is Ahimsa, the non-violence, in all parts of life. Verbally, physically and mentally, Jainism doctrines focus on a peaceful and disciplined life. Kindness to animals, vegetarianism and self-restraint with the avoidance of waste are parts of Jains life.

Jainism Connections and Reflection on Environment: "Do not injure, abuse, oppress, enslave, insult, torment, torture, or kill any creature or living being." (Mahavira)

4) **Sikhism**: Sikhism is a native Indian religion appeared in the late 15th century founded by the first guru, Guru Nanak Dev Ji.

Sikh Connections and Reflection on Environment: “You, Yourself created the Universe, and You are pleased…You, Yourself the bumblebee, flower, fruit and the tree.” (Guru Granth Sahib, Maru Sohele, page 1020)

5) **Christianity**: There are approximately hundred verses in the bible that talk about protection of the environment. Christians therefore have environmental responsibility and encourage behavioral change for the good of the future

Religious teachings about Environment

Christian Connections and Reflection on Environment: “Do not pollute the land where you are. Bloodshed pollutes the land, and atonement cannot be made for the land on which blood has been shed, except by the blood of the one who shed it.” (Verse 35:33)

6) **Buddhism**: The notion of karma alone, being an important part of Buddha's lessons, conveys the values of conservation and responsibility for the future. It is said that the morality of our actions in the present will shape our character for the future, an idea close of sustainable development.

Buddhist Connections and Reflection on Environment: “As a bee – without harming the blossom, its color, its fragrance – takes its nectar and flies away: so should the sage go through a village.” (Dhammapada IV, Pupphavagga: Blossoms, 49)

7) **Confucianism**: For more than 2500 years, Confucianism influenced culture, society, economy and politics of China mainly, but also Japan, Korea and Vietnam.

Confucian Connections and Reflection on Environment: “… sustainable harmonious relationship between the human species and nature is not merely an abstract ideal, but a concrete guide for practical living.” (International Confucian Ecological Alliance, 2015)

Religious teachings about Environment

8) Judaism: In tradition, the land and environment are properties of God, and it is the duty of humankind to take care of it. The book of genesis, as an example, proposes that the garden in Eden was initially the chosen territory chosen by God for human to live**.**

Jewish Connections and Reflection on Environment: “And God said: 'Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed--to you it shall be for food.” (Gen 1:29)

9) Taoism: Taoism, or Daoism, is an old Chinese religion based on the divine harmony between nature and humanity

Taoist Connections and Reflection on Environment: “This original nature is the eternal law. To know the nature’s law is to be enlightened. He who is ignorant of the nature’s law shall act recklessly, and thus will invite misfortune..

Attitude towards nature

1) **Anthropocentrism** is a view where value is conceived instrumentally or non-intrinsically, where nature is conceived as a storehouse of materials to be used exploited and satisfies the needs of human beings ,the unique creation of God possessing rationality. Nature according to the anthropocentric outlook is therefore used as a means to satisfy ends. This anthropocentric attitude towards nature is further strengthened with the advancement of science and technology and the rise of materialism and consumerism.

2) A Modified Version of Anthropocentric Approach(Attitude) towards Nature: **The naturalistic philosophy**
From the above section we come to understand that a strong form of anthropocentrism persisted in society, particularly in the western society which generated degradation of the environment. It was gradually felt that such an anthropocentric philosophy of life needs to be replaced by a new one.

The naturalistic philosophy, however, is not new. Its foundations have been laid since the time of Darwin when he propounded the 'theory of survival of the fittest. This philosophy tries to reduce the strangeness of nature by proposing that man is a part of nature and therefore nature is not alien to man, neither strange to him. Thus all plants and animals and even human beings are therefore subject to natural laws.

What ought to be Human Attitude towards Nature

- A life-centered theory occupies a very important place in modern environmental ethics. The theory states that every human being by virtue of being a moral agent have moral obligation towards plants, animals and all living species since all are members of the biotic community.
- We are morally bound to protect and promote their good for their own sake. In fact the healthy survival of all species within the environment depends largely on human attitude towards them.
- An attitude of respect towards all natural species on the part of human beings enhances their healthy and proper survival within the natural environment.
- Two concepts need to be clarified and analyzed in understanding the attitude of respect towards nature. These two concepts are first that of **the good of being and second the concept of inherent worth.**

The concept of good of a Being

- The concept of 'good of a being' and the concept of 'inherent worth'. That entity possesses good of their own does not entail that moral agents ought to respect them or promote their welfare. Moral agents may protect, care or bring about welfare to those entities or may not do so, i.e. they can even harm or destroy those entities possessing good of their own. Possession of good of a being only does not make an entity worthy of respect by moral agents.. **For example, A machine is oiled, not for the true well being of the machine itself, but for the efficient work it can perform for some human purposes or ends.**
- From the above examples it may be said that those entities which have their own interests or ends or those affected by positive or negative actions by any agent can be said to possess good of their own.

What ought to be Human Attitude towards Nature

The concept of Inherent/intrinsic worth

- An entity, whether human or nonhuman, deserves respect from moral agents when it possesses inherent worth (worth or value placed on them by the society) along with having a good of its own.

- Those entities possessing inherent worth, all have the same worth irrespective of differences in merit.

- One individual may be superior to the other on the basis of merit, or individuals may be graded in the order of merit, but such gradation does not hold good when we say that all those individuals possess inherent worth.

- In the non-human world also, one animal species may be better than the other, but all species should be treated or considered equally as all possess inherent worth irrespective of their inferiority or superiority.

Collective Actions

- **Collective action** refers to the actions taken by a collection or group of people, acting based on a collective decision.

- For example, if you choose to walk instead of drive, then you are taking an individual action. Or, if you are part of a neighborhood that chooses to install sidewalks to help people there walk more, then you are involved in a collective action.

- Collective action often involves larger scales, since there are more people involved. However, it is possible to take individual action on large-scale issues, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions to reduce global climate change.

Collective Actions

Your actions affect the environment. For example:

- When you use a car, bus, or airplane, oil is burned, sending greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and changing the global climate. Fueling these vehicles also involves extracting oil from oil wells in the ground. (There are some exceptions: vehicles that use electricity or natural gas instead of oil, though both of these typically involve emitting greenhouse gases and extracting resources from the ground.)
- When you choose where to live – including which city to live in and which neighborhood to live in within the city – there are several environmental impacts, including how much energy your residence and transportation uses and how heavily you will stress water supplies.
- But for each of these actions, you're not the only person doing it. Other people drive, ride buses and airplanes, choose certain cities and neighborhoods, and speak up and vote in any given democracy.

Collective Actions

One question that often comes up in the context of collective action, especially for big global environmental issues, is: *Given that there are so many other people whose actions are affecting the issue, what difference do my own individual actions make?*

The answer is that an individual's actions almost always still make a difference, even if there are many other people involved.

For example, if you reduce your greenhouse gas emissions, there will be less climate change. To be sure, there still will be climate change. No one can prevent something as big as climate change without any collective action. But there will be less climate change, and that is something we can care about.

But an individual can also influence what collective actions are made. When you get involved in your government, or your neighborhood, or an organization, or even just a group of friends or family, you often influence what actions other people take. Likewise, other people are often influencing what actions you take

Collective Actions

Collective Action Problems
Two concepts from ethics that are altruism (selflessness) and selfishness. Perhaps we should be altruistic and make personal sacrifices to help others. But, for better or worse, people often are at least somewhat selfish. Collective action problems arise when people are selfish and thus fail to achieve successful collective actions.

A **collective action problem** is a scenario in which there is conflict between the individual interest and the group interest. In the scenario, each individual in the group faces a choice to either act selfishly or cooperate. In a collective action problem it is always in the individual's best interest to act selfishly, regardless of what the other individuals do. However, if all individuals act selfishly, then they all get worse outcomes than if they all cooperate. In other words, it is in the individual's interest to act selfishly, but it is in the group's interest to have everyone cooperate. This is the conflict between the individual interest and the group interest.

Environmental Collective Action Problems
Collective action problems are widespread throughout environmental issues. Usually, they involve scenarios in which individuals want to act selfishly in a way that would harm the environment, but groups would benefit from environmental protection. Here are some examples:
•Individuals often want to do things that emit a lot of greenhouse gases, but society overall may be better off with less climate change.

Collective Actions

- Individuals often want to drive cars so as to get around faster, but driving causes more air pollution that harms the whole group. Additionally, driving can cause traffic jams, whereas public transit avoids traffic jams. The car/transit decision is often a collective action problem for travel time: each individual travels faster by driving regardless of what other individuals do, but the group will overall travel faster if everyone takes transit than if everyone drives.

- Individuals may want to harvest scarce natural resources that are up for grabs, but society overall may be better off if everyone avoids using too much of these resources. This last example is closely related to the "tragedy of the commons". This concept has an important connection to sustainability and is worth considering in greater detail.

- The term "**tragedy of the commons**" was coined by Garrett Hardin in his 1968 article published in the journal *Science*, titled "The Tragedy of the Commons". Hardin argued that **in the absence of private property rights or strict government regulation, shared resources (i.e., the commons) would ultimately be depleted because individuals tend to act selfishly, rushing to harvest as many resources as they can from the commons.**

- What happened in the Boston Common is one example of the tragedy of the commons.

Collective Actions

- **Another important example of the tragedy of the commons is overfishing. Fish can be found in lakes, oceans, rivers, and streams, which are typically not owned by any one person. Anyone can fish in these places, so the places are a “commons" and the fish are a common-pool resource. But there is never an infinite supply of fish.**

- Each individual fisher may want to catch as many fish as he or she can, but if everyone does this, then the supply of fish will be depleted. The depletion is the “tragedy," and it is unsustainable. Eventually, there will be no more fish, and no one will be able to fish anymore.

- On the other hand, if everyone exercises restraint and doesn’t remove too many fish, then the fish will be able to reproduce, the supply of fish will not become depleted, and fishing can persist indefinitely.

- **Overfishing is a major global issue. Many fish populations have become severely depleted due to overfishing. One example is the population of cod off the Atlantic coast of the United States and Canada.**

Solving Collective Action Problems

Fortunately, as we learned at the close of the last section, we are not doomed to suffer the consequences of failing to cooperate on collective action problems. People can and often do act collectively, even if they still hold selfish ethical views.

There are three major types of solutions to collective action problems:

- **Government regulation: A government can declare it against the law to act selfishly and require individuals to cooperate.**
- **Private ownership: If someone owns a resource, then he or she can restrict access to it. Furthermore, it will be in his or her interest to prevent the resource from collapsing.**
- **Community self-organization: Groups of individuals can work together to foster cooperation.**

Summary

Our actions have large impacts on the environment. These actions include individual actions taken by one person and collective actions taken by groups of people. While we can make a difference through our individual actions, collective actions pose some distinct challenges worthy of dedicated attention. In particular, collective action problems occur when individual interest conflicts with group interest. One type of collective action problem is the tragedy of the commons, which involves the sustainability of natural resources. Collective action problems such as the tragedy of the commons can be avoided. The three main types of solutions are government regulation, private ownership, and community self-organization. Depending on interactions with larger-scale factors, such as global market forces and climate change, any of these basic solutions may not be sufficient on its own.


Thank
you