

7.7 ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS:

Religion and the Environment

- There is a central belief amongst the religions that nature was created by God and should be protected.
- Traditionally, religion used to play an integral role in linking people to the natural world, imbuing people with the knowledge and values that make caring for it a priority.

Buddhism:

- Buddhism recognised that all life forms should be respected equally.
- It is the religion full of love, understanding and compassion committed to the ideals of non violence.
- The basic tenets of Buddhism are simplicity and ahimsa.
- The principle of simplicity based on sustainability teaches that man should not over exploit the natural resources.

Jainism

- Jainism places great emphasis on the principle that one should refrain from avoidable acts that are harmful to oneself or others.
- Ahimsa (non-violence) is the fundamental tenet of Jain way of life, a term that is clearly allied with realism, common sense, personal worth and responsibility.

Sikhism

- Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh religion assigned divine attributes to nature.
- According to Sikhism people should respect God's creations and know the eternal truth regarding their place in the universe.
- Human race is the integral part of the nature and linked to the rest of creation by indissoluble bonds.

- The Guru Granth Sahib proclaims the glory of God in nature and the environment.
- The history of the gurus contains many stories of their love and special relationship with the natural environment-with animals, birds, vegetation, earth, rivers, mountains and the sky.

Christianity:

- The Christianity also says that harmonic triadic relationship exists between the divine and humanity, among human beings and nature and failure to maintain the harmony may alienate humanity from its creator and also from Nature.
- Awareness of the environmental protection has increased in the United States as the churches are initiating responsibility towards environmental protection.

Hinduism:

- The Supreme God has absolute sovereignty over all creatures including humans.
- Hindu images relate to the powerful natural world.
- Ecological sensitivity is based on the relationship between humans and how they respect the gods and goddesses related to the earth.
- Vedic literature clearly speaks that there is an integral balance in Man, Nature and The God.
- Natural forces were considered to be expressions of the Lord Himself and are venerable entities.
- In Rig Veda it is mentioned that universe consists of five basic elements namely Earth, Water, Air, Fire and Space (Ether).

- These five elements provide basis for life in everything and man is ordained to conserve them.
- During the puranic period a popular belief emerged that each tree had its own deity.
- People offered water and circled trees with sacred threads in order to protect them.
- Matsya purana regards planting of single tree is equivalent to leaving a progeny of ten sons.

Judaism:

- An environmental perspective suggests that a belief of Judaism is that “we are only tenants on this earth.”
- The earth must then be cared for as there are other inhabitants, both presently as well as in the future, that will be living here.

Islam:

- In Islam the Holy Qur'an and the divinely inspired words of Prophet Mohammed form the foundation of and rules for the conservation of nature.
- The Holy Qur'an declares that everything is created from water.
- Allah is considered to be the owner of land and mankind is the trustee or guardian whereas other living creatures are considered to be the beneficiaries.

Indigenous Religions:

- Religion and the environment are intertwined in that they have had a history and will continue to have a role together in the future.

- This may be one area where science and religion can find a common ground – both have the environment in their best interest and can work together to find a solution to the current environmental crisis.

Environment and Indian culture

- The cultural heritage of India shows a deep concern for the protection and preservation of the environment.
- Indian tradition considered the earth as ‘Mother’.
- Rivers are described Lokamata.
- India is a land of rites and rituals.
- Indians have articulated the need to sustain and promote the ecological balances of nature through sacred incarnations and systematized rituals for the sustenance of life on the earth.

Environmental communication and public awareness:

- It is the study and practice of how individuals, institutions, societies, and cultures, distribute, receive, understand, and use messages about the environment and human interactions with the environment.
- This includes a wide range of possible interactions, from interpersonal communication to virtual communities, participatory decision making, and environmental media coverage as well as verbal communication.
- Environmental communication is communication about environmental affairs.
- This includes all of the diverse forms of interpersonal, group, public, organizational, and media communication that make up the social debate about environmental issues and problems, and our relationship to the rest of nature.