

Possibility of Sustainable Development on pollution free Environment: The Role of Ecocentric Perspectives of Environmental Philosophy

Pranab Kirtunia

Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Bejoy Narayan Mahavidyalaya, Itachuna, Hooghly, West Bengal 712147, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

We have responsibility for providing the natural resources to our future generations for maintaining their quality life. All development decision should be taken with consuming natural resources in a limited way and to make a healthy natural environment. The developments so far done and being done in the name of 'sustainable development' are all meant for meeting only the human interests, even at the crucial cost of non-human nature. The major parts of the environment are nonhuman nature, but this part is not taken in the name of sustainable development. Human fail to pay their responsibility to the nature. Every entity in the environment is interdependent and interrelated. They are a unit. This unit is a system; in this system if an entity is destroyed then whole system will be harmed. In this paper I will address the issues, which are obstacles for making sustainable development in true sense. In this context I will discuss sustainable development as well as environmental ecocentric moral perspectives that really help to be proper sustainable development, where human and nature both will be consider in the name of sustainable development, whose goal is to form a healthy and peaceful environment.

1. Introduction

The population is constantly increasing on the earth. To meet the basic needs (Basic needs are those things, which are essential for people to lead normal life in society) of this population, many productions have become necessary to produce various essential commodities, industry is being created by destroying plants, lands, rivers etc. finally environment has been polluted. So it is necessary to make long term development by ensuring of pollution free environment, which is called sustainable development. The concept of 'sustainability' has acquired an unprecedented currency in contemporary times. Now we feel urgency of analyzing it when environmental crises, like the exhaustion of natural resources and greenery, climate catastrophe, etc. are at doorstep. Human civilization has achieved significant progress in different fields in human society, whatever; economy, science, technology, industry etc., but all developments in these fields have been archived, and are being achieved, at high cost of exploitation and exhaustion of natural environment. A group of thinkers suggest that developmental works should be continued to give basic living conditions to people of developing and developed countries, but it should be achieved in such a way that remains compatible with sustaining capacity of the nature. This model of development goes by the name 'sustainable development'. So respecting all the members of the environment and protecting them should create a beautiful healthy environment where the people in the society can meet their basic needs and at the same time respect nonhuman members on the earth. Under guidance by environmental ecocentric moral perspectives the development is to be proper sustainable development, where humans and nonhuman beings will exist by friendly interactions.

2. Nature of Sustainable Development

There is disagreement of many thinkers about the meaning of sustainability or sustainable development. Some of them consider of the sustainability, as a level of happiness, a rate of economic growth, a rate of consumption, a level of wealth, a rate of extinction, a level of biodiversity etc. Brundtland defining sustainable development as "development which meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."¹ This report focused all needs in favor of human interests. It tries to ensure human basic needs. So for the human interest it try to achieve global equity through socio-economic development with compromising environment. Today populations are overcrowded on the Earth. With the increase in population, it has become very difficult to meet their basic needs. In 1798 Thomas Robert Malthus wrote in his book *An Essay on the Principle of Population* "... population, when unchecked, increased in a geometrical ratio, and subsistence for man in an arithmetical ratio."² Consumptions of natural resources are rapidly increase for satisfying the hunger of people. Humans are building industries by destroying of trees, water lands, rivers etc. for providing basic needs to the people. So it is difficult at the same time to curb hunger and create a pollution free environment. Explosion of populations badly affect to the sustainable development. As the natural resources are foundation of all developments so how it would be possible to maintain both of pollution free environment and development? Long term development is called sustainable development that is linked to environmental quality, social equity and economic development. Sustainability is related to the well-being of human societies, sufficiency of natural resources, and preservation of ecosystems, that refers to continuity, the renewable natural resources have been central objects in its conceptual development. Sustainable

development requires balanced integration of economic, social and environmental dimensions. In 1993, Mohan Munasinghe said "economic – maximizing income while maintaining a constant or increasing stock of capital; ecological – maintaining resilience and robustness of biological and physical systems; and social-cultural – maintaining stability of social and cultural systems."³

3. Economic sustainable development

Economic sustainable development ensure the economic welfare to the future generation as per their needs with providing of present time. Economy is an important part of sustainable development or sustainability. It deals with natural resources (air, soil, water etc.) human-made resources (metals, cement, solar energy etc.) and human capital (knowledge, education technic etc.) which develop both economy and society. It maintain the natural resources and capital for required commodity to the society and its people. Economic sustainability is a development that must include human rights, needs and responsibility towards environment. Economic efficiency, equity, and environmental sustainability plays main role for achieving sustainable development. Economic sustainability aims to maintain the capital intact and to improve the standard of living. Natural resources are unlimited and placed is overcrowded than the capacity of the market to allocate resources efficiently. Economist assume that economic growth may able to bring the technological capacity and helps to supply resources to the people as per their needs. Actually traditional production process has destroyed natural resources, so the storage of resources in the nature has become empty. It was the feasibility of uncontrolled growth and over rate of consumption, so the commentator, Goodland, speaks it is necessary to 'extrapolate the definition of Hicksian income from (its) sole focus on human-made capital and its surrogate (money). . . . to embrace the other three forms of capital (natural, social and human).'⁴ In accordance of economic sustainability economic development system respect the environmental sustainability and to ensure the storages of natural resources, that emphasis on economic sustainable development over mere economic growth.

4. Social sustainable development

Social sustainability maintain the relation to the duty and responsibility to the peoples of the communities, cultures and globalization. It focuses on maintaining and improving social quality with concepts such as cohesion, reciprocity, honesty and the importance of relationships amongst people. It establishes the interrelation between social conditions and environmental decay. It deals with the notions of equity, empowerment, cultural identity accessibility, participation and institutional stability etc. It tries to alleviation of poverty with growth of economy and the same time it preserve the environment. It ensure human rights, equality, preservation of cultural identity, gender, cast, races, religion, involuntary resettlement, poverty reduction, etc. though It is difficult for developing countries to maintain the economic growth and healthy environment with meet basic needs for the people in the society.

5. Environmental Sustainable Development

Environmental sustainability aims to improve human welfare through the protection of natural capital (e.g. land, air, water, minerals etc.). Present and the future generations are depending on the long-term functioning of the ecosystem and its natural resources. The concept 'environmental sustainability' has emerged from the observation of the importance of the raw materials of the environment for long-time availability to the generation to generation of humans. It deals integrity of ecosystem, carrying capacity and biodiversity. Human should avoid disturbance regionally and globally to the ecosystem. Human activities should be limited within the circle that is allowed by the ecosystem. Do not have any right to drain the natural resources, those are necessary for needs of future generations. The principle of equity states "*in a sustainable framework, every person, including those from future generations, has the right to the same environmental space⁴, that is, the right to access the same amount of natural resources*".⁵

Environmental sustainability requires maintaining the balance between input and output of natural capital. Harvest rates of natural resources must not to be more than the regeneration rates of resources. Output or outflow of waste from industry must be controlled and not to be exceed from the capacity of assimilating by environment. Sometimes it is thought that the more important and necessary task of the sustainability to be focused on economic development and alleviation of poverty in developing countries, that brings an unprecedented threats to environment globally. Future generation of the society depends on the long-term functioning, the quality and productive capacity of the nature or ecosystem.. In Design for Environmental Sustainability it is written "systemic conditions where neither on a planetary nor on a regional level do human activities disturb the natural cycles more than planetary resilience² allows, and at the same time do not impoverish the natural capital³ that has to be shared with future generations."⁶ We must live and planning process must be with the limitation of biophysical environment for ensure of environmental sustainability. The bad impacts of development should minimize to the environment. Social, cultural and economic improvement and opportunities should analyzed and to be integrated with environment. The quality of life is depending on integration of nature and humanity. So the proper environmental policy derived from the integration of social, economic and ecological factors. In the developing countries it is affordable for the poor people in the society on environmental based policy and social and economic issues based policy; efficient public transportation, urban greening, recycling schemes, free medical, dental and child care etc.

Though the habit with uncontrolled growth of production and excess consumption are the main threats to ecosystem. Advances technologies are not sufficient to achieve sustainable development until decreasing the consumption of resources.

6. Conflict between Development and Sustainability

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development underlines a global commitment to "achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions—economic, social and environmental—in a balanced and integrated manner."⁷ There is confusion about the contrceptory between development and sustainability. Generally it is thought that the development of

society is depend on the economic growth, but the way of economic growth or development harmed to ecosystem. Therefor sustainability may decreased. According to Sharpley (2000), sustainability and development may have possibility counterproductive effects. But neoclassical economists claimed that there is no such contradiction between sustainability and development, they are depends one another and their progress are possible equally. According to the contemporary thinkers, the aims of the development are to increase the self –sufficient capacity, improve the quality of life in the society, and improve the strength of the technology and global relationship. Development process should proposed to create pollution free healthy environment for the people, where people enjoy their creative and healthy life. In sustainability the carrying capacity and natural resources do not exhaust but the development will run with renewal resources for long time.

Vandana Shiva (2010: 240) think that the sustainability is contrceptory to the development. according to her general understanding of sustainability does not respect limitation of the natural resources, so it is dangerous for the environment, therefore, sustainability and development no to be coexist.

We found different perspectives of sustainability; weak sustainability and strong sustainability. Weak sustainability endorse to the technology, manufacturer to produce for the people of the society. For the increasing production it may compromise with destruction of natural resource. It is the utilitarian perspectives, where natural resources are treated mere commodity. In such perspectives, natural capital can be substituted by the manufactured capital that contribute to economic growth and welfare. On the other hand strong sustainability is influenced by perspectives of ecoentric whole. It endorse green economy, which preferred the first and foremost the protection of ecosystem. It claim resources should be used in present and to preserve as per needs for the future generations with maintaining sustain biodiversity and respect of its intrinsic value.

7. Ecocentric perspectives of Environmental ethics.

Environmental ethics is concern with the value and morality related issues of the personal, relational and policy level. Ethical theories providing guidance to the people for accepting right actions, policies and practices, those will help them to become a wellbeing. Our actions to the nonhuman world are harming and decreasing beauty and diversity of nature. Environmental ethics will help us to improve our relations and actions to the nonhuman world. We should clearly understand the environmental ethical issues. Therefore it can be said that main aims of environmental ethics is to explain the moral relationship between ecological and biological world. The emergence of environmental philosophy depends on many factors. First of all, we depend on the ecosystem, their services and the natural resources. We need water, air, soil etc. for surviving in the world, so we should keep them clean and fresh. Another is our home, road, electronics, industries --socio-economy etc. depends on the environment. Finally environment can protect us from diseases, disaster and many different problems, but we are destroying environment by various unsustainable actions. However there are many moral issues in environment ethics. Some basic issues of environmental ethics are:

1. The proper way of understanding of the relation between human and nonhuman world.
2. The principles and rules, which are guiding human actions, practices and policies to apply and justify as environment valuable.
3. To define the value of the environmental entities and the value of the relation between human and nature.
4. What activities are right or wrong to the nature by the human?
5. What human's behavior are consistent to the sustainability of the environment?
6. How to resolve the environmental problems, which is harmful for future generation? Many crucial environmental challenges are arising in the recent period; like population control and remedies, distribution of resources, species conservation, deforestation, wildlife protection, ecosystem management etc. Our food choice and lifestyle are responsible for the imbalance of ecosystem. For example we prefer chicken and other meat rather than vegetables. But the production of such kind meat need more energy and water, on the other hand for the same amount of nutritional and caloric output vegetables need less energy and water. For the sake of healthy environment we should minimize unnecessary uses of natural resources. In this way Paul Rich said "Americans must also change their way of living so as to minimize their impact on the world's resources and environment. Programs which combine ecology sound agricultural development and population control must be established and supported in underdeveloped countries."⁸

We built house, but what size of house we need. How many children we should take, when we travel, how much energy we have, how and when we use natural resources—these personal and public issues are concerning study of the environmental ethics. Environmental ethics has an important role for ensuring current policy, principles, those may help to constitute a good and healthy environment to the future generations. Industrial revolution changed the human lifestyle and practices in the nature, resulted depletion of environmental resources, population explosion, change of geographical mobility, degradation of forest, harming of the land and deterioration of the relationship between human and ecosystem. Human beings are using uncontrolled and excessive natural resources, destroying environment and resulted instability of the entities in natural world. We should uses natural resources on essential, because all members of the environment depends on it.

8. Land Ethic

There are two main perspectives on environmental ethics, anthropocentric and ecocentric.

Anthropocentric moral perspectives address moral issues mere interest of human at crucial cost of the nature. Ecocentric moral perspectives considers moral responsibilities to non-human spices, plants, land including every entities in the nature. It believes that we are not to be able to live completely separated from other entities in the nature. In Leopold words "He asks us to imagine that we are members not only of a

human community but of a *biotic community*: the collection of plants, animals, and their interconnections that form the ecological context within which humans live and on which they depend.”⁹ In discussing the ecocentric worldview, we will first discuss land ethics. In Land ethics 'Land' has been mean as the centre of life without treating at the inanimate world in the form of mere soil. And all the member of this land are valuable. Human being, animals, plants, sand, rock, mountain etc. are simple member of the land community. Aldo Leopold in his famous work *A Sand County Almanac* mentioned “the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such.”¹⁰ According to Leopold Land is like a unite body and we are parts of it. We have direct moral responsibility to the land and its members, who are intrinsically valuable. We should do the right thing for the Land and avoid the bad thing. In his word “*a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.*”¹¹

9. Gaia hypothesis

In 1970s, the Chemist James Lovelock formulated the Gaia hypothesis in a journal article followed by a book titled *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* published in 1979. He promoted the Gaia Hypothesis. According to the Gaia theory, all organisms as living and non-living being are closely interrelated to form self-regulating complex system for life on the Earth. Its various parts are alive through interaction with each other. Specifically, the Gaia hypothesis showed that homeostasis is maintained automatically by constant operated the balance of the temperature, oxidation state, acidity, rocks and waters etc. in the biota. Gaia hypothesis believe “Life and its environment are so closely coupled that evolution concerns Gaia, not the organisms or the environment taken separately.”¹² According to the Gaia theory this planet is the body of the Gaia, if any part of the body is damaged, it recovers itself with the help of other parts. Earth's objects are not self-sufficient enough to survive themselves independently in the earth. The Gaia hypothesis focuses on decreasing the global temperature of the biosphere and evolution of life-forms for contributing to the stability and balanced of entities. This ecocentric perspectives inspired for respecting the earth as single living unit. Lovelock claimed that there is no real basis for the difference between the living and the non-living being, but the mutual cooperation of living and the non-living being maintains the balance on the earth.

10. Systemic Holism

Holmes Rolston-III popularized his 'Systemic Holism' through giving more importance to collective entities, like species, ecosystem, etc. Rolstone said that though the oak, unlike the hog or the lion, even lacks consciousness of any kind, but if we review the history of these entities and its associated activities we can understand that they have telos and they are goal-oriented or “teleonomic”. Rolston argues “species have their own telos, for the genetic set is as much a property of species as of individual organisms.”¹³ These entities are not haphazard and random, but with see of the coherence and unity of the entities it could be understood in terms of its need to survive and to reproduce. So it is clear that every entity is contain own value, which is not depend on the

human needs. This coherence and wholeness help to prove for individual entity or organism exists “for itself” and that it is valuable “for itself.”

11. Deep ecology

Deep ecology is consider one of the ecocentric world view to the environment. Arne Naess's Deep Ecology is most influential worldview of environmental ethics. In deep ecology the moral consideration apply to the all members regardless of biotic and abiotic community of the biosphere. It accept intrinsic value of non-human species including whole ecosystems. Organisms create a complex net among them in the biosphere. Members of the ecosystem are interdependent, integrated and interrelated. So they have no existence separately. Without the relation to the biosphere, things are no longer the same things. Their existence to be meaningful with relation of others members of the biosphere. Such relation is called intrinsic relation. Naess said “An intrinsic relation between two things A and B is such that the relation belongs to the definitions or basic constitutions of A and B, so that without the relation, A and B are no longer the same things.”¹⁴ In this context Arnae Naess said no one can be exist from separate of such complex relation among members of the biosphere. But both are exist together. So it is clear that the speciest anthropocentric world view is not compatible with the ecofriendly environment. Deep ecology will help for the promotion and protection of biodiversity. This total-field model reject not only human chauvinism (Human species is superior to others, as they are superior so they have moral right to dominate and oppress other species' member), but also the concept of pure, absolutely autonomous individual. So we should accept the principle of 'relation, total field image' for the biosphere. According to deep ecology, the creator of value can never be human or it does not depends on the relative complexity of the organs. Each entity is inherently valuable. All the entities or members of the biosphere are equal rights. These environmental ecocentric worldviews help humans to respect nature and understand the feelings of other members on the Earth. All members on the Earth are equally effective and important to the environment. Ecocentric worldview helps to awaken moral empathy towards other members. Consequences it plays important role in empathizing with others and behaving in a friendly manner. Which can play key role for making proper sustainable development not only for man-centric but for protecting interest of each members on the Earth.

12. Conclusion:

Sustainable development is anthropocentric in nature, which is promoting and protecting human interests at the high cost of nature. It is important to protect environment for sustaining long-term goal of development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Though it can be admitted that holistic moral stance is absent in sustainable development due to the thought of economic growth. In fact, ethical stance is a must in the sustainable development. Development is never possible without economic development and this development is detrimental to the environment i.e. simultaneous preserving of natural resources and economic development are to be difficult. Generally the problem is, how

the sustainable development in true sense will be possible? In addressing this dilemma, it is necessary to re-conceptualize the sustainable development based on values and ethical insights. In other words, if sustainable development is to be a useful concept, it must embrace the ethical dimension of sustainability rather than fundamentally targeting its classical anthropocentric aim of meeting “the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” In this context, we should acknowledged the impotence every

member of the society and the environment. Those who help us to meet basic needs are considered less important and less respected. Maybe they are farmers, carpenters, fishermen, other working people, nonhuman species, plants, river etc. They are protecting the human and nonhuman members on the Earth through their relentless work. So we should respect every members on the earth. Proper sustainable development is to be possible in the process of development by respecting of every member in the environment.

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