

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS---A CHALLENGING ISSUE TO TEACH FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Pradip Debnath, Ph. D.

*Assistant Professor, Department of Education, University of Gour Banga, Malda,
W.B.—732103, E-mail-ugbpdn@gmail.com*

“I don't understand why when we destroy something created by man we call it vandalism, but when we destroy something by nature we call it progress.”-----Ed Begley Jr.

Abstract

The environmental ethics includes not only the human world but also the non-human one. But we the human beings are not behaving properly towards both the environment and the animals. The present paper seeks to study the unethical activities of men which are harmful to the nature, and the essential environmental ethics which are to be developed among the students—the to-be citizens of tomorrow. By following the qualitative approach the study presents the irrational activities of men which are polluting the environment from all angles, and also the essential values that are to be inculcated among the students. The study will help to build an environmental future for the next generation, and also help in instilling environment friendly behavior among the student community who will shoulder the responsibility of the larger society in future.

Key words ----Human, Non-human, Values, Ethics, Environment, Students, Future, generation



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Introduction

The ethical relationship of human beings with the natural environment is the main concern of the field of environmental ethics. Actually, environmental ethics is the part of environmental philosophy that extends the traditional boundaries of ethics; it includes both the human and the non-human worlds. It wants to answer how humans ought to behave towards nature. By the mid-1970s the feminist writers had raised the issue of animals and nature being inferiorized along with the women. Raju (2008) shows that the environmental ethics of the Cuddalore education district is high, that the girl students and the rural students have more environmental ethics than the boy students and the urban students, respectively. Dhawan (2008) shows that the existing teacher education curriculum does not play a significant role in developing environmental awareness among the pupil teachers. Kumar and Patil (2008) establish that the standard environmental education course influences the attitude level of the students towards environmental pollution and related issues.

Related Studies

Dhawan (2008) conducted a study to assess the level of environmental awareness awareness of pupil teachers before and after the training and to investigate the effect of gender on environmental awareness of pupil teachers with the hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the environmental awareness of male and female pupil teachers. The investigation was done through normative survey method. The conclusion suggested that the contemporary teacher training programme does not play a significant role in the development of environmental awareness of pupil teachers.

Mehra and Harjai (2009) investigated the effect of experiential learning strategy for enhancing environmental sensitivity of the IV graders with internal and external locus of control. The sample consisted of 120 students of Rapar. The data were analyzed with the help of two-way ANOVA. The major findings of the study were (1) better environmental sensitivity is exhibited by the students exposed to experiential learning strategy as compared to traditional learning method. (2) Better environmental sensitivity is exhibited by students with internal locus of control than those with external locus of control.

Bharambe (2013) studied environmental awareness among secondary school students. The objectives were to know the extent of environmental awareness among IX standard students, and to compare the same in relation to gender, educational qualification and occupation of their parents. Survey method was adopted for the study. All the IX standard students were the population of the study, and the sample comprised 304 students. Data were collected using multistage sampling method from 4 randomly selected high schools in Jalgaon District. The tool was prepared by the investigator. The findings showed that there was no significant gender difference in environmental awareness of secondary school students and that there was a significant difference between environmental awareness among students in relation to qualification of their parents.

Joshi (2016) investigated the influence of spirituality, environmental concern and ecological knowledge on consumers' green purchase intention. The sample was undergraduate students of the University of Delhi. Using hierarchical multiple regression analysis, the study found that spirituality, environmental concern and ecological knowledge significantly influenced consumers' green purchase intention.

Rationale of the Study

The Earth is called our Mother as she gives everything to us just like a mother does. We get food, air, water, food, wood, flower, fruit, life-saving medicinal plants from our mother earth. But in return to the nourishment provided by the Mother Earth, we are hurting her by destroying the natural resources and animals. Thus we are showing our ingratitude to the Mother Earth in return of her great selfless deeds, and by doing so, we are on the threshold of disaster. Our actions are affecting the environment, and the possibility of self-destruction of human race is growing day by day. So our curriculum must develop a sense respect for the environment for a sustainable future.

Objectives of the Study

The present study was based on the following two objectives---

- (i) To study the unethical activities of humans which are affecting the natural environment; and
- (ii) To study the essential environmental ethics that are to be inculcated among the students.

Questions of the Study

The following questions will be investigated for appropriate and satisfactory answers----

- (a) What types of human actions are responsible for all types of environmental degradation?
- (b) What environmental obligations should humans keep for future generation?

Methodology of the Study

Based on the secondary sources of data, the present study has followed the qualitative approach for treating the data collected for the purpose.

Unethical Human Actions

The following are some of the unethical activities of men which are polluting the total environment-----

- ❖ We pollute pond water and river water by our irrational actions such as washing clothes, cars, utensils, pets and releasing waste materials into the water which contaminates the pond or river water that is often used as drinking water, and which also causes harm to the flora and fauna.

- ❖ The unlimited use of pesticides and insecticides is polluting soil dangerously, thereby affecting us through our consumption of food grains. We accumulate heaps of garbage here and there which spreads pollution.
- ❖ The sound is being polluted by our irrational activities such as blowing horns at high pitch, huge bursting of crackers, using loudspeakers at high volume, etc. We produce sounds crossing the normal limit of 40 or 50 decibel.
- ❖ We are also polluting air without which we will die in a moment. Nuclear explosion, factory smoke, vehicle smoke, etc. are a great source of it. Traffic police pass vehicles not checking the emission rate but checking only the certificate, and sometimes not that also.
- ❖ Cultural pollution is also a great issue. The western culture has affected us negatively. Blind imitation has been our tendency. We accept the negative things more and positive things less.
- ❖ Mental pollution is being observed in the economic, political and religious fields. The rule of the law seems to have gone to the winds; and the rule of might tends to be prevailing. The proverb “Might is right” seems to be translated into reality. We are being concerned only with the personal gains and not with the other matters relating to selfless activity, human values, social service, etc.
- ❖ Speech pollution is another great pollution which is harming the society. From ‘paandokan’ to parliament---everywhere speech pollution is found. The reason may be that we do not think before we speak.

Environmental Obligations for Future

In order to check the prevailing conditions, the ethics of the environment must be followed in the following way----

- The golden rule of environmental ethics is---“Cleanliness is godliness”. We must keep our houses, roads, drains clean. The *Swachchha Bharat Abhiyan* initiated by the Prime Minister of India---Narendra Modi is a praiseworthy attempt that can be cited here.
- There must be a combination of both science and spirituality which we lack. As Albert Einstein said, “Science is blind without spirituality and spirituality is lame without science.” Swami Vivekananda also emphasized the wonderful association of science and spirituality. We must develop good habits and manners so that our

environment can remain pollution-free. More, we should inculcate human qualities and values among the students.

- Normally, we inherit values from family and culture, and they reflect our feelings of responsibility towards other people and the environment; and they can be overtly taught or modeled. In some countries, values and ethics which are related to the environment are taught in schools. Creative techniques like games, field-trip, theatre, etc. are very useful for the purpose.
- We must develop the value of solicitude to care for nature, i.e., our emotion should be functional towards nature. We should be sensitive to pollution and preservation of nature. We must give attention to nature, we must be interested in nature, and we must attend to nature.
- We should develop the value of aestheticism among students. We must keep and enjoy the beauty of nature and not bring ugliness, disorder or discomfort by destroying her. Rather we should bring attractiveness and a good feeling.
- Tolerance is another great value that must be inculcated among the students. The students should accept any comment easily, listen to anything carefully, recapitulate other's point of view and accept other's point of view with open mind.
- Autonomy should also be developed among the students. The students should express their own ideas easily, speak confidently, construct own opinion from others' ideas, think critically to make decisions, etc.
- Positive attitude is also an important value that must be developed among the students from the very tender age. Negative attitude or zero attitudes to the environment and the animals will not help to do anything good for the nature.
- Responsibility or behavior is another classical value which is to be developed among the students who are the citizens of tomorrow. We should plant trees and save water, electricity and other resources through judicious use of them, instead of wasting them recklessly.



Source:: Internet

Implications of the Study

The present study will help us to understand that controlling of physical, social, cultural, mental, or emotional pollution is extremely essential, which can be done with the help of ethics—the science of morals or rules of behavior. It will help us to realize that all the parts of ethics—habits, manners, human qualities, human values, etc. must be integral part of our education starting from primary to P.G. Thus we shall be able to create a healthy India, both physically and mentally, and be able to translate the maxim—“Live and let live” into reality.

Conclusion

We have environmental obligations for the human beings living on earth, for the next generations be-living in the future, and for the entities within the environment. For this, a shared vision of basic values to lay an ethical base for the emerging community is needed. We should follow a common standard for a sustainable way of life; and thus, the conduct of all individuals, organizations, businesses, governments and transactional institutions can be guided properly. As per Buddhist Adage, man should utilize nature in the same way as a bee collects pollens from the flower, neither polluting the beauty nor depleting its fragrance.

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