



Research Paper

The extension of 'good' – approaches in moral theories

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Abstract- Ethics is primarily concerned with to determine what is right and wrong action, what ought to be and what is good in human conduct. Anthropocentrism, Ecocentrism and Biocentrism are the three theories related to human approaches to deal with the environment. Anthropocentrism in environmental ethics is a belief system that prioritize the value of human beings over and above of all non-human beings including plants. Conventional ethics emphasizes on the human behaviors in human relationship which is considered as inadequate ethics with the advent of new moral theories of ecocentrism and biocentrism. The issues of animal rights, equal respect to all non-human creatures, sustainability, climate change, restoring biodiversity has extended the ethical discourses and create new area of ethical studies in modern time. Now ethics is not restricted to deal only with the one-sided approach but for the overall 'good' for all creatures of this world. 'Reverence for life' is a concept introduced by Albert Schemizer in modern western ethics as the same approach is observed in the first percept of "Panchasila" in Buddhism. The Vedic view also emphasizes on the holistic understanding of existence, interconnectedness of all beings and inspires to live harmoniously with nature. The paper is an attempt to critically analyze the ethical span of the three theories and to evaluate the theories in modern context.

Keywords – human , non-human, intrinsic, eco-system ,bio-ethics

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I. Introduction-

The conventional ethics determine the right and wrongness of normal human conduct. It is related with the theories that focus and prioritize to determine the human centric ethical norms. By doing this ethicists has evolved new theories but it is limited only to determine the ethical code of conduct related to human-to-human relationship, not beyond it. The 'good' that it tries to discuss is related to good life only for human beings, not with the other creatures of the world. So, it naturally advocates anthropocentrism. It discusses only of the human ethos over and above of all existential beings in this world. This theory believe that human beings are the most important one in the world, has greater value than all other natural components and non-human conscious beings. Human beings have intrinsic values and all remaining other living and non-living components have instrumental values. This theory hold that all other living and non-living creatures are the resources for the use and benefit for human beings.

There is sufficient ground for which anthropocentrism developed in the ethical discourses of conventional ethics over the centuries. In any form of anthropocentrism human existence is considered as prime and unique one. It reflects the superiority of human beings to act more intelligently than any other living species of the world. It interprets the world in terms of human values and human interest. Anthropocentrism has a long dominating history as reflected in the human activities on this earth. Darwin's theory of the 'survival of the fittest' also indicates the competition of acquiring the power of dominance for survival and self-preservation among the species. The Judeo-Christian-Islamic religious traditions also sanctioned the highest value of human beings as the representation of God's image on this world. It holds that the God given decree is that human beings is created to govern over all the species on this world. The Hebrew and the Greek traditions put human at the center of the moral universe. The Hebrew in the biblical story of the creation in *Genesis* placed human beings in the divine plan just next to God. Of course, in eastern religious and philosophical teachings the effort to give due respect to the other creatures of mother nature that nourish human beings and advocate to maintain harmonious co-existence with other non-human species on this earth. In Buddhism, the first percept of 'panchasila' clearly instructed of abstaining from taking life which means avoid of killing or harming any living

creature. Jainism also considered killing as serious offence and prohibited killing and harming of any living beings. Though in the early Vedic texts animal sacrifices was sanctioned a part of Vedic ritual but later on in the Vedic texts (pre-500 BCE) the core value of non-violence was emphasized to avoid killing and harm of all living beings with exception of taking life for the sake of self-defense in certain circumstances.

But the spirit of anthropocentric approach remains intact in western world. Protagoras, the Greek sophist philosopher remarked as, "Man is the measure of all things, of things that are that they are and of things that are not that they are not." Aristotle stated that "all animals must have been made of nature for the sake of man" that clearly placed human being in higher position over the non-human beings. Human beings have got special status in the entire creation with the flavour of the representation of the image of God. Rene Descartes in his book *Meditation* sanctioned humans' privilege because of rational entity over and above of animal beings in the world. Immanuel Kant stated that it is the human understanding that makes nature. The power of vast knowledge of the world is reserved with human beings and has the sufficient justification to exercise that power on other non-human, plants and minerals of the world. The dominance of anthropocentric approaches in different activities of human beings are well observed till today.

But the advent of ecocentrism and biocentrism in environmental ethical studies which drastically changed the whole scenario in ethical enquiry and to rethink again about the study area of ethics. For many ethicists biocentrism and ecocentrism is the extension of anthropocentrism. Some ethicists considered that these two new ethical trends are adverse response to the long dominating trend of anthropocentrism. In both these new theories the status of moral objects is almost changed. Now ethics is not restricted only to discuss the moral consciousness and offer moral judgement only for human beings but it will cover the whole environment and emphasizes the equal value of other creatures of the world. Whereas previously the life of human beings is considered as the most valuable one. But biocentrism replaced this view considering the life of all creatures of the environment as equally valuable along with the life of human beings. Aldo Leopold in his famous essay 'The Land Ethics' advocated environment ethics pointed out the environmental crisis in all part of the globe. All creatures are sentient beings. All sentient beings have the equal moral right to live their life accordingly in the environment. Definitely, biocentrism and ecocentrism brought that revolution that extended the moral consideration to animal life, plants and to all non-living resources and living beings of the environment.

Biocentrism focuses to build responsible human being who act more rationally and morally, conscious about all other living things of nature. It emphasizes to build organic individuals and environment friendly sentient beings. It challenges the anthropocentric view that human beings are superior and the nature is made only for the human benefit and consumption. It extends moral concerns to all living organism with equal insights irrespective of any differences. All living creatures has their own intrinsic values and distinctive place in the lap of nature. Human beings are not the sole beneficiaries of nature but other beings have the right to use the natural resources as per their needs and demands. The world and its resources are not the sole property of the human beings but other living organisms have the freedom of equal rights to live their own life. Biocentrism emphasizes the interdependency among the all-diversified organism of the nature. No one can claim the superiority and no one is inferior. It discarded the view that only human beings have intrinsic value and other living creatures has instrumental value. Bio-ethicists thus propounded new extension and dimension in the ethical arena by coverage all the non-human beings and placed respective and desirable place of their existence. Thus, the long run conventional ethical studies are shifted and open new area of study for the ethicists which brought positive impact for the entire living human and non-human community of the world.

Ecocentrism in parallel to biocentrism opposes anthropocentrism but it proceeds more aggressive for the conversation of the ecosystem. It rolled out the human interests rather emphasizes to safeguard the wilderness and biodiversity of the whole eco-system. Only the ecosystem has the intrinsic value and of moral consideration regardless to the interest of any human or any non-human beings. It advocates deep ecology and holds that the nature encapsulates everything. So, beyond the ecosystem nothing is more important and primary consideration. It prioritized the conservation of the biosphere for a sustainable world for future generation and agrees with biocentrism that there is always an interconnectedness among the living organism of the nature. So, it is more interested to restore and safeguard the eco-system as a whole.

Objectives- the objective of the study is to find out the suitable ethical approach that can helps for a sustainable futuristic world.

Methodology- data are collected from the secondary sources. The method of the study is descriptive and analytical.

II. Discussion-

The human centric ethos plays the dominating role in human activities in this world as already patronize by some organized religions and other social ethos in different parts of the world. Human relation with the environment was already fixed by those pre-establish notions that recognized human beings are much more important and decisive force on this earth. The nature of dominance and self-preservation are the two key

factors that determine humans to treat with the nature. Although nature has given ample opportunity for every species to live in this world but it is due to the excessive interface of human fueled by anthropocentric ethos that always consider that human world is quite separated from the natural world. The growing activities of human world has already made this natural world as a place no more than a dustbin. Human centric ethos is the main determining factor that cause degradation of the environment around the globe. Gandhiji rightly said that, "Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed". Human activities rapidly harm the whole environment and creates new issues for the survival of other creatures of the world as it also invites threatening to the human world also.

Before the advent of liberalization and globalization in the later part of the twentieth century the issues of global warming, de-forestation, extinction of species, iceberg melting, air pollution, soil pollution, sound pollution, carbon emission are not serious problems that create threaten to humans as well to the environment. Now everything surrounding us is polluted in a massive way. In an unhealthy and unethical competition of building more space for human habitant, comfort and fulfilment of excessive desires human beings engross the natural habitant place that reduce the natural habitant place for the other species and it automatically cause the degradation and rapid decrease of the real treasure of the eco-system. In the name of so-called development only for the sake of benefit for human beings cause the real destruction to the whole eco-system around the globe. It is the excessive human intervention that is responsible for such environmental degradation and obviously anthropocentric approaches can directly be blamed for creating such a situation.

Conventional anthropocentric ethics only deals with the human behaviors in terms of human relationship, thus representing interpersonal ethics. That ethics never focus on the reverence of life to other non-human creatures of this world. Thus, it is purely human centric ethics. That ethics is not at all ethics that never consider the moral values of other creatures' co-existence with human beings in the environment. If ethics is concerned to determine 'good' that should not restricted only to human beings but to spread that "good" for other non-human beings. Albert Schemitzer rightly said that, "Man's ethics must not end with man, but should extend to the universe. He must regain the consciousness of the great chain of life from which he cannot be separated. He must understand that all creation has its value. Life should only be negated when it is for a higher value and purpose not merely in selfish or thoughtless actions. What then results for man is not only a deepening of relationships, but a widening of relationships." So, a new ethical foundation was set up by Schemitzer which he coined as 'Reverence for life' that means 'respecting life' which gives the moral status and dignity to all living organism of the environment. All forms of life are sacred without any distinction according to Schemitzer. All animals are conscious being as they can feel pain and pleasure. All species has their own society and intelligent enough to live their life though it is limited in nature. Therefore, harming and killing of those non-human creatures is obviously unethical and unjustifiable as it stops and destroy the right of living. Killing or taking life of the non-human life is an act of ending pleasant life in painful manner. Above all it never produces any 'good' for the non-living beings which oppose the judicious purpose of ethics. Therefore, the moral care to all living beings attributed with kindness is necessary to be truly an ethical person. This new ethics thus transform the nature of ethics and establish a positive worldview for all the living beings.

Human's activities have already converted this world a post natural world. Humans' excessive interference and dominance plays key role to occupy the natural resources and inhabitant of the other animate and non-animate species who has the equal rights to live on this Earth. Human demographic exploitation reduces the space for other creatures, forced the other species not to live freely but in accordance to the wishes of human beings. Only human beings are considered as valuable and the value of other creatures is measured and determined as per norms that human world has built. It is not a proper justification to the non-human beings. On the one hand nature has its own laws and human beings have forms laws time to time to deals with the nature as per their own interest. The inter dependency and inter relationship among the species is not a prime matter of consideration for human beings. The primacy is given to human beings as much more valuable than any other beings. In the name of so-called development and modernity human beings acts aggressively against the laws of the natural world. The whole eco-system is thus disturbed, polluted and is in imbalance position resulting global warming, climate change, rapid melting of the glacier are the big confronting issues that cause threaten to all creatures not excluding human beings. The unethical approaches of human beings are solely responsible for it. It is evident that the human centric ethos is quite inadequate to deal with the nature in proper way.

For instance, the making of big dam is purely an anthropocentric approach. The dam will generate electricity only for use of human beings. The dam definitely has created environmental issues as it disturbed the natural flow of the river, adverse impact on the living species of the river, flora and fauna living in the bank of the river and helps to destroy the wilderness of the area. The dam causes the real damage to the ecosystem and bear the possibility of causing flood in case of collapse of the dam that will invite the death to uncountable creatures including human beings. It will be a big loss which is much greater than the cost and building of the

dam. So, from the ecocentrism point of view the ecosystem is much more important than we put any value to the interest to any particular creature of the world.

It is evident that at present we are living in a post natural world in the name of living of modern lifestyle. Immense damage has been done to the entire natural ecosystem and the biosphere in the name of so-called development, building of artificial human concrete cities by exploiting the natural resources and eventually it caused a drastic and dramatic imbalance that adversely affect the wilderness of the nature. The anti- natural activities of human beings in this earth create a serious threat as many endangered species has loss their desirable right to live along with human beings in this diversified world. Human consciousness has yet to cultivate that all the species are interrelated and interdependent to each other. This world is not designed only and only for the human beings but essentially for other creatures also. Climate change, global warming and other significant problems related to the degradation of the environment is caused only and only by human's excessive interference and unnatural activities in this world. The challenge for the human beings is to act more rationally, sentential and morally so that their activities will cause less or no harm to the environment and to all other species so that this earth can sustain for the future generation. A new form of global ethic is required for conservation of the environment and wilderness as well for a better future of this world.

There are arguments to safeguard anthropocentric approach as Hayward (1997) said that it is due to the conceptual misunderstanding for which anti-anthropocentrism grew up. He pointed out that 'a human can only think as human' – that analysis does not necessarily mean human has the privilege excluding other natural phenomena. So, obviously the development of biocentric and ecocentrism approaches is not anti-anthropocentric in nature as it starts from the perspective of human consideration. There is of course sound logic for such consideration but above all biocentrism and ecocentrism gained more interest and significance in present context as these two theories that detect the deficiency of anthropocentrism. Biocentric approach can be considered as layer one positive ethical movement that should be welcome by everyone for the greater interest of all creatures and ecocentrism can be considered as the layer two protection for restoring biodiversity of the world without human interference. Both these two theories have its own significance in its own place.

III. Conclusion-

Definitely there is drawbacks in anthropocentric ethical approach as it limit itself to determine and focus only on the interest of human beings. But we should consider it at the starting point from where biocentrism and ecocentrism developed to sort out the drawbacks of human centric ethos. By and large biocentrism and ecocentrism evolved from anthropocentrism due to the need and demand of time. Considering the drawbacks of human centric ethical approaches and the need of new ethos for a substantial world where human beings can really act as a sentient being with the nature, consider them as a part of the nature and focus on the conservation of the wilderness to restore the ecosystem for the benefit of all species and for a substantial world. Biocentric ethics is a better concept than conventional anthropocentric ethical guidelines that humans must follow for a better futuristic world and respect to the environment where all living creature's breath and live harmoniously. Ecocentrism is necessary for the conservation of nature's wilderness where non-human species can be protected and safeguard without human intervention. The extension of moral consciousness and consideration to nature in a holistic way is more important beyond the interest of human benefit. There is no doubt that the function of ethics is extended by the new development of ethical boundary where ethical enquiry has got more valuable in present time. With this revolution of ethical consideration helps to increase the moral responsibility in human beings as well to realize that each creature has its own 'good' and have the freedom of right to live accordingly. Human should understand that there is no option left but welcome and adopt this new form of ethics by supersede the lone human interest.

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