

Environmental Ethics in Corporate World: Some Issues



Commerce

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Dr.shivanand. S. Hungund

Asst : Professor, Dept. of Commerce, HKES S.P & JMB College, Shorapur – 585224, Dist: YADGIR - KARNATAKA

ABSTRACT

Theses days, protection of environment has become a key issue all over the world. Though swift industrialization is an essential pre-requisite for overall economic growth, yet it is damaging the environment drastically, water pollution, air pollution, solid and toxic waste pollution and other environmental contamination are common in many production processes. The inspiration for environmental ethics was the first Earth Day in 1970, when environmentalists started urging philosophers who were involved with environment groups to do something about environmental ethics. Environmental ethics is a subject without definition and without consensus. And yet, every person on this planet makes everyday decisions that relate to environmental ethics. Questions as simple as "what should I eat?" or "How should I move from place to place?" all raise environmental and ethical issues. Environmental ethics is very recent as an academic discipline and there is much to studied an acted upon. The need for an environmental ethics is, however, critical. Recognizing that environmental ethic alone is not enough; we must all live the environmental ethical way.

Introduction

In the last two decade there has been increasing concern with the threat to the environment caused by economic growth and its more undesirable side effects. This concern was expressed much earlier in the developed countries. Rapid industrialization, in spite of its positive effects on economic development of the world, has very seriously threatened the world's natural environmental balance. There is a growing pressure from environmentalists, government, society, customers, employees and competitors on business firms to be environment friendly. These days, protection of environment has become a key issue all over the world. Several factors and forces are responsible for destruction of environment. Of these growing hazardous industrialization is a major culprit. Though swift industrialization is an essential pre-requisite for overall economic growth, yet it is damaging the environment drastically, water pollution, air pollution, solid and toxic waste pollution and other environmental contamination are common in many production processes. Environment and development are considered as two sides of the same coin. The environmental degradation, in fact, started with the propagation of human race. This process of environmental degradation was accelerated with the development of socio-economic activities i.e. agriculture, industrialization, drugs and pharmaceuticals, transport, civil construction including roads and buildings etc. with growing population, the requirements of food grains and other consumer items increased greatly, leading to further degradation of environment.

Three decades ago the international community gathered in Stockholm for the United Nations conference on human environment to sound an alarm about the perilous state of Earth and its resources. That landmark event is widely credited with environmental issues being placed on the international agenda, leading, in turn, to the establishment of environment ministries at the national level, and increased awareness of the impact that even local decisions can have, on the global environment. Every activity generates unavoidable environmental impact of some kind or the other, but the ability of people and societies to adopt themselves to and cope with the change is varied. Environment degradation results to poor health and reduced quality of life.

- Poor environmental quality is directly responsible for some 25% of preventable diseases.
- Air pollution is a major contributor to a number of diseases.
- Globally 7% of all deaths and diseases are due to water, and lack of sanitation and hygiene.

Conflict between the enterprise and the community or government may result from incompatible values and goals or scarcity of resources. Successful environment management internalizes environmental concern through measures taken at the decision making stage. Environment management is not "Management of the environment" it is the management of activities within

tolerable constraints imposed by the government with full consideration of ecological factors.

Sustainable Development: A Remedy

The issue of environment and sustainable development is certainly on the top of global agenda. While environment and related problems have been discussed by expert over a decade, the concept of sustainable development was popularized by the Brundtland Commission Report in 1987 and later by the Rio declaration in 1992 in the present era of rapid urbanization, over population and unabated industrial growth all around the world, a constant need a shift focus from development to sustainable development has repeatedly been felt.

Sustainable development stands for sustainability and it represents an approach to development which is concerned with such fundamental human concerns like poverty, environment, equality, democracy development and peace. The term sustainable development was coined by Barbara ward, the founder of the international institute for environment and development. Sustainable development is also often defined as development that improves health care, education and social well being, which is necessary for economic development. Human resource development report, 1991 of the United Nations Development Programme says "Men, women and children must be the centre of attention with development woven around people not people around development".

Implications of Sustainable Development

- ❖ The development work undertaken by a state must be related not only to the present but also to the future. That is, the decision makers should keep it in their view that today's development does not become a disaster for tomorrow.
- ❖ Development work should be total or comprehensive. That is, while undertaking development in one direction; other directions must also be taken into account.
- ❖ The development work of a state should keep in view its effect on other countries. Thus no state has the right to make its development at the cost of the interest of other countries.

Environmental Ethics and Corporate world

"A decision is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tend to be otherwise" this is how Aldo Leopold, a naturalist, defined environment ethic. The birth of environmental ethic as a force is partly a result of our concern for our own long term survival as well as our realization that humans are but one form of life and that we should share the earth with our fellow human beings. One of the first to recognize the degradation of the environment and to voice the concern for nature was Henry David Thoreau, the well known American writer and naturalist.

Environmental ethics deals with the following topics genetic engineering, cloning, resource allocation, animals and Vegetarianism, air and water pollution, radiation, ozone crisis and global warming, population and environment, econ-feminism, indigenous peoples, and spiritually and the environment.

We believe that we should care about non-human life and the natural environment, not for our selfish personal ends but because it seems to be the right thing to do. But there seems to be no ethical theory that explains this attitude. Perhaps the solution to these problems lies in expanding the moral community. If we can include animals and the environment generally in our moral community, perhaps we can learn how to treat them ethically. Environmental ethics that does not bother to find reasons for preserving "non-living" Nature should review its position.

Environment policy in Coca-Cola:

The **Coca-Cola India** is in the business of beverages that refresh people. It will carry out its operations in ways that **Protect, Preserve and Enhance the Environment**. Its activities are guided by **Coca-Cola eKOsysteM**, which provides a framework to transform this principle in actions. Towards this objective, it shall endeavor to:

- Establish, maintain and operate facilities to comply with all applicable Environmental Safety and Health laws, Statutes and Consents.
- Formulating sound environmental objectives and targets and integrate a continuous process review in all essential elements of corporate management.
- Conservation of natural resources specifically in water, energy and fuel by continually improving its usage and reducing wastage.
- Working as catalyst to enhance collection of post consumer PET bottles through awareness programs and synergizing relevant agencies for getting better pricing to the consumer.
- Seek co-operation with Public, Private and Governmental Organizations in identifying solutions to relevant environmental issues.
- Advertising initiatives are to be critically evaluated while advertising in eco-sensitive areas; not put advertisement on Historical Monuments, Religious, Political Buildings & Structures and other specially protected and sensitive areas.
- Using cooling equipment with environmentally friendly technologies.
- Managing fleet operations in a manner to minimize environmental impacts by ensuring good maintenance, improving & tracking fuel efficiency and effectively managing wastes.

Environment policy in Hero Honda:

Hero Honda is committed to demonstrate excellence in its environmental performance on a continual basis, as an intrinsic element of its corporate philosophy. To achieve this it commits itself to:

- Integrate environmental attributes and cleaner production in all our business processes and practices with specific consideration to substitution of hazardous chemicals, where viable and strengthen the greening of supply chain;

- Continue product innovations to improve environmental compatibility;
- Comply with all applicable environmental legislation and also controlling our environmental discharges through the principles of "alara" (as low as reasonably achievable);
- Institutionalize resource conservation, in particular, in the areas of oil, water, electrical energy, paints and chemicals;
- Enhance environmental awareness of our employees and dealers / vendors, while promoting their involvement in ensuring sound environmental management;

It will communicate this policy to all its employees and would make it available to interested parties. In 1989, the Institute of Petroleum Safety, Health and Environment Management (IP-SHEM) were established with the objective of promoting standards of safety, health and environment in petroleum sector in India. The Institute is committed to upgrade and develop human resources with a view to minimize the overall risk to human life, damage to property, process and the environment.

1. Environment Monitoring - offshore and onshore.
2. Ambient Air Quality Monitoring
3. Environment Baseline Data Generation
4. Environment Auditing
5. Environment Impact Assessment (EIA)
6. Environment Database
7. Oil Spill Modelling
8. Environment Management Plan (EMP)

Environment policy in Tata steel:

Tata Steel reaffirms its commitment to provide safe working place and clean environment to its employees and other stakeholders as an integral part of its business philosophy and values. We will continually enhance our Environmental, Occupational Health & Safety (EHS) performance in our activities, products and services through a structured EHS management framework. Towards this commitment, it will;

1. Establish and achieve EHS objectives and targets.
2. Ensure compliance with applicable EHS legislation and other requirement and go beyond.
3. Conserve natural resources and energy by constantly seeking to reduce consumption and promoting waste avoidance and recycling measures.
4. Enhance awareness, skill and competence of our employees and contractors so as to enable them to demonstrate their involvement, responsibility and accountability for sound EHS performance.

Conclusion

Finding for environmental protection is the best way for a nation to avoid the need for costly environmental regulations. The Environmental ethics is new and, like a; the vital issues, it will undergo transformation as new data are made available and we are able to interpret rationally and live with nature. Education of the public to environmental problems and solutions is of prime importance. Recognizing that environmental ethic alone is not enough; we must all live the environmental ethical way. We must also recognize the power of nature and feel humble in the realization that we are just a very small part in a wonderful and still mysterious system.

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