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Development of Technology and Sanctity of life: An Ethical Perspective

KEY WORDS: biocentrism, sanctity of life, harming, life value, earth community of life

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ABSTRACT

In the modern scientific technological world where machines have been humanized man has been dehumanized and mechanized, the need for resurrecting values has become an imperative in maintaining the harmony in the society and environment. Science has always been better positioned because of its quantification which is weak in human sciences. However, the sense of qualification gives the guarantee of superiority in humanities. Unlike the past, there is no doubt in ringing the bell that the relationship between philosophy and science sharing a different ground. Here, an attempt is made to discuss various philosophical issues that arise in environmental ethics with the advent of science and technology. Environmental ethics is concerned in posing the questions concerning right and wrong of human treatment in the relationship that exists between morally aware humans and the objects in their environment (ecological system). This paper aims at exploring two major concepts of environmental ethical issues concerning biocentrism and sanctity of life.

The religious view of 'sanctity of life' it is believed that life is the precious gift of God and nobody has the right to take his/her life or the life of others. Every religion attempts to adhere to this ethical principle, in Jainism it is mentioned that it is an universal obligation and respect for all other levels of beings for the protection of his own survival. The concept of sanctity of life is the 'value of life' for all the living beings in this world including trees, plants, animals and human beings. Co-existence is the law of nature. The doctrine of sanctity of life calls for the protection of all living beings. If equality and oneness of soul is recognized and experienced by all, then sympathy and compassion towards all life forms can be achieved making life a better and worth living for the present and the future generations. Even though the concepts of biocentrism and sanctity of life emerged in different periods of time, both have same view regarding the human disruption of non- human life. Both the concepts vehemently oppose human activities resulting in environmental pollution causing harm to human beings and non-human beings alike.

Introduction

In the modern scientific technological world where machines have been humanized man has become dehumanized and mechanized, the need for resurrecting values has become an imperative in maintaining the harmony in the society and environment. Science has always been better positioned because of its quantification which is weak in human sciences. However, the sense of qualification gives the guarantee of superiority in humanities. Unlike the past, there is no doubt in ringing the bell that the relationship between philosophy and science share a different ground. Here, an attempt is made to discuss various philosophical issues that arise in environmental ethics with the advent of science and technology. Environmental ethics is concerned in posing the questions concerning right and wrong of human treatment in the relationship that exists between morally aware humans and the objects in their environment (ecological system). This paper aims at exploring two major concepts of environmental ethical issues concerning biocentrism and sanctity of life.

The pinnacle of human intelligence is our impressive science and technology. Science and technology has vastly extended our senses both modern and ancient. It is this technology that has given our modern society with all its comforts, freedom from fear, disease and with its vast opportunities of intellectual and aesthetic expansion and for mind broadening global communication. Though intelligence seemed to be pinnacle of human race it appears that this intelligence seems to be sadly inadequate to handle many of the problems that our society confront with. For example many countries are set against one another in confrontation into a hideous warfare. Excessive religious fundamentalism, or nationalism, ethnic, linguistic, cultural differences result in continuing unrest and violence. Among these achievements it must be admitted some of the fruits of technology are of questionable long term value, as it is witnessed by numerous environmental problems and a genuine technology induced global catastrophe.

Environmental ethics as a branch of environmental philosophy aims at extending the tightened boundaries of ethics from anthropocentrism to include the non-human world. It is defined as how the human beings are interacting with another non-human lives in the living ecological system. It encompasses all living and non- living, human and non-human beings living in this blue planet. This ecosystem provides a harmony in which one being

conceives oneself and its relation to other living being or things in which all are related to one another. In this planet known as 'Earth's Community of Life'. This earth community of life providing a common bond with all different species of animals and plants that have evolved over the ages. Hence one being become aware of the nature and other living beings on our planet and their existence is depending on the fundamental soundness and integrity of the biological system of the nature. Human with their intelligence in technology dominates nature and it is always anthropocentric in questions pertaining towards the preservice and sustenance of nature. This paper tries to explore that human domination through of nature the technology had forgot the value of other living beings. This value of nature is discussed from the perspectives of biocentrism and sanctity of life.

Sanctity of Life

According to the sanctity of life position, the value of life exceeds all other values and all lives are equal. The former emphasises ultimate on the condition of life and to the latter implies equal conditions of life. The concept of sanctity of life is the 'value of life' of the all the living beings in this world including trees, plants, animals and human beings. They have their own life value and their life is precious in the world. It is mentioned that all living being's life is the precious gift of God. So the doctrine of sanctity of life protects all living beings.

The term 'sanctity of life' is often carried with a religious baggage, i.e., sentient life is holy and sacred. The phrase sanctity of life is mentioned in the Holy Bible in Genesis 1:27 (this is the first bible in the Christianity, first lesson and twenty-seventh words). It is discussed that the sanctity of life is important and all life is created by God, man is created in His own image. So the Christian tradition is against killing, they considered killing as wrong through the sanctity of life. A similar kind of sacredness for life is also found in the traditions of Jainism and Buddhism. Jainism believed that all life is sacred and there is no distinction between animal and human life. According to the Jaina concept of life; "The monk must strain his water before drinking; he wears a gauze mask to prevent the unintentional inhalation of innocent insects, the monk is required to sweep the ground before him as he goes, so living beings are not rushed by his footsteps; and always he treated softly, for the very atoms underfoot harbour minute life- monards" (James Rachel, *The End of Life: Euthanasia and Morality*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 20). Based on this opinion the will

to live does not depend on the conscious desire. He said that plants and trees are not having consciousness but they have will to live. His opinion about the sanctity of life is "ethics consists in this, that I experience the necessity of practicing the same reverence for life toward all will- to- live as toward my own" (James Rachel, *The End of Life: Euthanasia and Morality*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 20). The sanctity of life is a religious term as well as an ethical term for prohibition of killing.

Biocentrism:

It is defined as the extension of the value of life from human centric to non- human centric. It is an appeal about appropriate respect towards all things. The main focus is to shift the centrality from human sphere and include animals and other species. It is maintained through environmental ethics for the better treatment of the animals. Biocentrism involves in moral consideration of sentience being subject to life in all the necessary condition. The Nobel Prize winner and humanitarian, a medical doctor and theologian Albert Schweitzer opines in his book *Philosophy of Civilisation about life* as "True philosophy must start from the most immediate and comprehensive fact of consciousness: I am life that wants to live, in the midst of life that wants to live" (Dale Jamieson, *Ethics and the Environment An Introduction*, p.145.). According to Kenneth Goodpaster about the moral consideration about the 'biocentric view of life' gives argument for living beings. It is "(a) all and only beings who have interest are morally considerable, (b) Non-sentient beings do not have interests and (c) therefore, non-sentient beings are not morally considerable. However, every living beings are sentient along with the biological needs. So biocentrism believes that all life has value irrespective of gradation and hierarchy.

CONCLUSION

Once the mark of an educated and ethical person is concentrated on the importance of rights, responsibilities of individuals in the society. However, the mark of a virtuous person today is something more, hence an environmentalist claim today is that it is not enough to be a good citizen for that is only half truth and one sided. We are the residents and dwellers of this landscape hence the call of this century must be more ecological and global. In doing so it is an imperative to extend the tightened boundaries of ethics from human centric to include the flora, fauna, ecosystem and landscapes which reveals the character of individual in that society. We humans are earthlings and care for earth is a developing and an ultimate human virtue. This human virtue should not be seen an imperative imposed on the society but it should be treated as an imperative on the individual himself/herself for the betterment of both society and the individual.

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