



Indian philosophical perspectives: Applied ethics in ancient period

M Vijaya SM Indira¹, K Remi Rajani^{2*}

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Philosophy, Andhra University, Andhra Pradesh, India

² Professor, K.S.M. Centre for Religious Studies, Department of Philosophy, Academic Senate Member, Andhra University, Andhra Pradesh, India

Abstract

Applied ethics is one of the most influential branches of philosophy and it has become a useful tool of decision making in society. So more than working in the realms of academic moral philosophy, applied ethics, surpasses academic moral philosophy and achieves the status of philosophy of social purpose. This working of applied ethics as fulfilling the demands of social purpose is regular, systematic and continuous.

Applied ethics is viewed as the reflective philosophy of the modern age. It gives importance to reflective actions of human beings, both as an individual and as a group, so as to reduce the negative consequences of actions, The historical reasons for the development of applied ethics are rather complex and diverse. The main point behind developing applied ethics is that 'how best we can do those things that we all agree ought to be done'. In all the Indian Philosophical systems there is not a single instance of antagonism towards nature. Whether it is Vedas, Upanishads, Ramayana, Mahabharatha or Puranas, all preach about the holy relation between man and nature.

Keywords: applied ethics, nature, man

Introduction

Philosophy and philosophical systems are commonly perceived as pertaining exclusively to spiritual and metaphysical content and it has nothing to do with man's affairs today.. In contrast to this, science and technology are viewed as systems to develop man's material progress and have no connection with spiritual process of man. So the compartmentalization and spirituality created the crisis.

This crisis is deep rooted in ecological problem because value is attached with spirituality or philosophy and practice is attached with science or materialism. So the crisis mounts when science aims at only material progress without any due care to value system. Now, we are in a paradox that our science and technological systems fail to give basic material facilities.

Indian culture lived in a world of unity, our religion, culture and literature, everything voiced unanimously to pay respect to nature. Indian spirituality can be characterized as nature based spirituality.

Ancient Indian literature speaks about divine relationship between materialism and spiritualism. In modern society, the concept of satisfaction is limited in materialism alone. But it was not the case the past, we lost spiritual peace and were stuck up in materialism. A return to the former state is possible only through reading of ancient texts.

Almost all the Indian Philosophical systems teach that man is part of the divine, an integral part of the divine being. There is also an integral bond between nature and divinity. Since divinity is an integral part of both man and nature, Indian philosophical systems maintain a harmonious and holistic relation between man and nature.

Indian literature is rich with vivid description of nature, throughout the time, from ancient period to present day," We never had merely a utilitarian relationship with nature. our bond with nature was not founded merely on the general

qualities of its green way and the comforts accruing from it. In India the meaning of the term 'nature' is not just restricted to the world of vegetation's, or to the physical world. We have comprehended nature as a cosmic system and that is why we have always tried to be natural in all our activities^[1]. The resources of earth are replenishing fast and science and technology stand helplessly to refill the resource basis. so this situation is a chance to reappraise our traditional philosophical and cultural attitude toward materialism in general and ecology in particular.

The essence of Indian philosophical tradition is that it teaches us to live in partnership than exploitation. In all indigenous Indian culture, the earth has a sacred role, the role of a mother who nurture and preserves.

According to Rishis

*"Sapiadbveepa Nivasinam
Praninam akshaiyamupanistatu"*

"Let all the living creatures in the seven countinents be blessed"

According to Indian philosophical tradition, the world of man, animal, the flora and the fauna, everything is exists only because the elements made of everything is similar. They comprise the sky (akasa), air (vayu), fire or energy Agni, water (jala) and soil (Prithvi).this concept stands for the crucial lesson of ecology, i.e. harmonious balance of all beings.

So these are the life supporting systems of whole earth. "Man's urge to participate in the cosmic drama is expressed daily through gestures by offering water with folded hands to the sun God, by kindling the sacred fire, by attrition of the two aranyas or lighting the home fire, by pouring ghee on fire, by fumigating the house, by pouring water at the foot of trees, by ritual bathing in rivers, by the conservation of sacred

groves, by garlanding of domestic animals in fact, by all acts of daily life that become rituals in that they associate man with Nature ^[2].

So an investigation into the traditional Indian philosophical systems reveals two crucial aspects in relation with ecology.

1. All the traditional systems prescribe man's relationship with nature/ environment as a mode of sustenance and material prosperity.
2. Such prescription is also important from the point of view of harmonious balance between all creatures. This also provides social harmony and peaceful co- existence.

Indian philosophical systems provide an environmental philosophy based on ethics and a cultural system which cares for all natural entities, our great seers foresaw the dangers of environmental crisis even when there was no chaos. They prescribed certain rules for the protection of environment in relation with religion, so that men may follow these rules in the fear of God. But with the impact of west, we ridiculed such practices as dogmatic. If we look back to Indian systems of Philosophy, we can see that they can contribute much to the environmental philosophy. religious traditions have a dual role in the search for peace in contemporary times. At the level of resource use they can provide the value framework which makes prudent and hence, sustainable use of resources possible and thus create the material conditions for peace. At the level of social conflicts, they can prevent the social consequences of resource degradation from taking on a command and sectarian form by reminding the religious communities that all religions been more alienated from society and never before has the need for their guidance been greater ^[3].

The indigenous peoples of India have developed effective methods of land and water harvesting system that have been sustainable over many countries.

They owe their experience and knowledge mainly to the cultural philosophy which they were following through centuries. Such traditional peoples still hold rare wisdom about natural resource usage by keeping a harmony with ecosystems like forests.

The belief of ancient people that culture was born and developed in the forests and forests stands as a resource for human survival made them to have respectful attitude to nature. The forests played a vital part in evolving cultural patterns of India. Most of the ancient books like Vedas, Puranas, Brahmanas and Aranyakas were written by Rishis living in forests. They are three main types of vanas of ancient times i.e.

Mahavana, Tapovana, and Srivana

Mahavana was devoid of human habitation and the human interference was therefore negligible. Such forests were dense, virgin and natural covering large mountainous and low lying areas Lord Siva is believed to be the presiding deity of these forests.

Tapovanas was the forests where the sages did tapas. Our Upanishads and Aranyakas were written in those forests. Most of the Tapovanas are extinct now. These forests were actually full of plants and trees which gave edible and medicinal leaves, roots, fruits shades and soothing climates, Srivanas were local forests and were managed by village and town panchayats. They were full of various kinds of trees, depending on soil, climate and other environmental conditions and local needs. Thus the concept of social

forestry was born to Indian even in that hoary past.

The entire ecological crisis in present day society is mainly because the so called modern society is built in parallel to industrial society. In the past, Indian society was deeply rooted in nature and Indian civilization is a major contribution of nature. In contrast to this, the present day society has an antagonistic attitude towards nature. Although we can generally reach the conclusion that Indian environmental crisis is only the result of global crisis in environment, but being a unique country in its own, India failed to keep its uniqueness in nature; when a country attains freedom, it means that it has ceased to be a dependent country, but we continue to depend mentally on westerners and follow western planning process. Western history, religion and culture were rooted in exploitation of nature. But Indian history, religion and culture are rooted in peaceful co-existence It is high time that we rediscover and reacquire the lost wisdom of India. Hence the primary duty of all Indian is to rediscovered and reacquired the lost wisdom of ancient India It does not mean that we should go back to Vedic period. It also does not mean that we should follow spread or religious tenets.

Wisdom is high above all the religions. As the only cultured animal, man has the duty to show the traits of culture by recognizing the value of everything. Indian spirituality is wisdom oriented and this wisdom is not limited to books and laws. It is within every one of us. Consciously or unconsciously we are following it. Our approach to nature is a unique one with worshipping trees and animals in all forms. Such an approach which takes into consideration everything should be followed by everyone. Such wisdom is lost in cities and modernized societies. Modernization should occur in car mind structure. also. Rediscovering past does not mean that we should follow the cultural patterns which were practised in past. Custom is not constant. When a past custom does not fit into the present situation we should discard it. Wisdom lies in accepting appropriate selection.

References

1. Banvari, Pancavali. Indian Approach to Environment" Sri Vinayaka Publications: Delhi, 1992.
2. Marta vannuci. Tradition and Change in Geeti sen, ed., Indigenous vision sage Publishers: New Delhi, 1992, 25-26.
3. Krishnamurthy BV, Schoetti VRS. Environment in India's Religious and cultural Traditions in J.Bandyopdhyay, ed., India's Environment -Crisis and Responses (Dehradun: atraj Publishers, 1985, 160.