

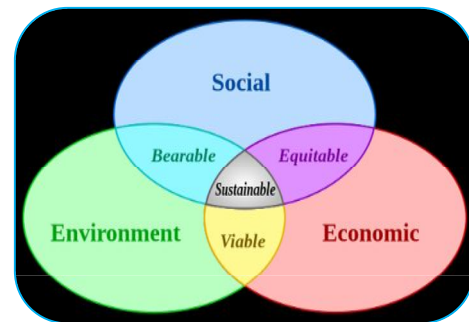


THIS MORAL AND ETHICAL FRAMEWORK: BASE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT:

This Moral and Ethical Framework: The base of sustainable development, therefore, attempts to discuss the concept of sustainable development on the basis of human morality arising from an established ethical system. It discusses both moral and ethical framework highlighting the importance of morality and a moral pluralist approach to remove the dominant trends within environmental Ethics. In the normative sense, "morality" refers to a code of conduct that would be accepted by anyone who meets certain intellectual and volitional conditions, almost always including the condition of being rational.¹



The moral framework explains the concept of moral pluralism that acknowledges the existence of multiple values. In the discussion pertaining to normative ethics, moral pluralism demands the acceptance of more than one value in determining whether an action is ethical or not. The ethical framework highlights Mills's concept of utilitarianism. One of the prime challenges of sustainable development is how the moral precepts can be reduced to practice. However, it is understood that people are concerned with their values according to ethical or moral standards and, are said to be principle-driven. This chapter goes on to elaborate the importance of the Moral and Ethical framework as a base for any sustainable development. A non-anthropocentric approach is required in understanding the importance of Moral and ethical principles as an element for sustainable development. Humans are considered to be moral beings and it is our responsibility to care our natural ecosystem. The moral explanation is important in understanding the intrinsic value of every component of the ecosystem. This chapter thus with various principles pertaining to ethics and morality lays the foundation of sustainable development

In the last decade, a striking upsurge of concern regarding the sustainability of economic development has been witnessed. As a result, a noteworthy effort has been put into designing a framework that guides the policies promoting sustainable growth. This task includes several methodological challenge-from attempting to define sustainable development, to bringing the definition into reality and selecting indicators that can be utilized to monitor it.

There exists coexistence between humans and other species on this planet. Human is the only species which is endowed with the power of reasoning and contemplation is in the position of acting towards the preservation of this coexistence. But the need for this preservation needs to be clearly

¹. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

delineated. Here the concept of environmental ethics comes into the picture. Before proceeding further, two terms constituting the term environment ethics need to be elaborated. The term environment has been defined by various international agencies. The common concept conveyed by all those definitions is that the environment is the assembly of all the factors-physical, cultural and social influencing the life of humans and others organisms on the earth, On the other hand 'Ethics' can be defined as the set of philosophical regulations guiding human actions. Ethics is a living document evolving out of the components of the society. Environmental ethics involves the philosophical tenets directing the conduct of humans towards the environment. It is underpinned by four theories emerged in 1970s- Shallow and Deep ecology, Animal liberation, Eco feminism and Social ecology. Shallow movement philosophically explores the relationship between human beings and environment. Deep ecology highlights the idea that all living beings have their own respective values and requires to be protected from self-driven destructive human actions. The concept of animal liberation suggests that animals require some degree of altruism on the part of humans as animals themselves are incapable of protecting themselves from human actions. Social ecology sifts through the social causes behind ecological problems. Eco feminism brings into the light the relationship between the nature and women and encourages humans to view themselves as a part of natural communities.

*"Environmental ethics lays down the foundation of a much broader concept of sustainability. The concept of sustainability is one of the most important concepts of 21st century. It is a balanced pursuit of achieving both intergenerational and intergenerational goals for ecological health, economic welfare and society equity."*¹⁴

KEYWORDS: *Environmental ethics , protecting themselves, ntergenerational goals, ecological health.*

NEED FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Post-industrialization, rapid development of technology and ever increasing population has led to unprecedented utilization of natural resources and generation of waste and harmful by products leading to pollution, desertification, loss of biodiversity, climate change and other hazards, Stalling this technological evolution entirely in order to save environment would throw the future of human race into uncertainty as well as is entirely unfeasible for the current generation Hence, developing a balanced approach of development that meets the requirements of both current and future generation is of paramount importance.

BIODIVERSITY LOSS

Biodiversity indicates the variety of organisms and their relative frequency and represents the ecological health of our planet and life on this planet in general. However considerable loss of biodiversity has occurred due to habitat destruction and climate change. Biodiversity holds direct importance to humans as well, for it provides a range of ecological services, such as nutrient cycling; forest products; pollution dissipation; and many more.

Moreover, Biodiversity plays an imperative role in maintaining balance between various elements of ecosystem, hence is of utmost importance to the survival of human race as well.

DESERTIFICATION AND ACIDIFICATION

Interfering with natural vegetation cover as well as uncontrolled water usage in arid and semi-arid areas leads to desertification. This phenomenon severely affects to agricultural productivity of the land as well as the water table beneath, rendering the land unfit for humans as well as other species,

EUTROPHICATION

Large scale use of pesticides and fertilizers in agricultural fields and runoff water from those fields eventually end up in water bodies. This leads to over-enrichment of water bodies with nutrients; it is also contributed with sewage discharge in water bodies. This over-enrichment leads to algae bloom

which further creates an anoxic environment in the water body, destroying its biodiversity. This eventually makes it unfit for life-sustenance.

THE ETHICAL CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABILITY

In order to assure its implementation, urgency of sustainability requires to be justified through strong ethical arguments and assumptions. A clear understanding of ethical foundation behind sustainable practices is of supreme importance for their continuation. Illuminating the ethical dimension of sustainability broadens its scope. By discussing this, sustainable practices can be seen as a virtuous acts and not merely a means to an end.

Definition of sustainability in Brundtland report suggests an ethical concept representing the rights of both current and future generation. However, intergenerational conflict of interests poses certain questions, such as whether it would be feasible to address the needs of future generation while we fail to meet the requirements of current generation? What parameters should be included to determine the basic needs for both current and future generation? How can justify the obligation of current generation towards future generation? In the absence of any social arrangement with respect to future generation, assuring the rights of future generation to access natural resources requires strong ethical foundation.

RIGHT OF FUTURE GENERATION

The basic right of future generation to food shelter and clothing ought to be acknowledged. And unless we provide a functional ecosystem to our future generation, they won't be able to meet their requirements. This interdependence needs to be realized and respected.

PRINCIPLE OF OBLIGATION

One view suggests that we enjoy a better quality of life today by virtue of our ancestors; hence the legacy should be passed on. According to Japanese concept 'On', one ought to pay tribute to his ancestors by taking care of the needs of future generation; this can be seen as the repayment of the debts owed to the ancestors. This can be done by passing on the benefits to the future generation and refraining from the activities that might promise short term gains but could prove disastrous in the long run.

INTERGENERATIONAL JUSTICE

Following upon Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative, guiding principle of human action should be applicable to one and all such that it benefits everyone. Even Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian ethics also analyses any action according to its range of applicability. The principle behind this is to ensure greatest happiness to greatest number of people. Predominantly spatial extension of the ethical concern has been often mentioned but the idea of its temporal extension has ever been implicit in this concept. Justice is usually defined as equitable destitution of resources among all. Intergenerational justice can be logically extended to intergenerational justice as well, John Rawls suggests that justice involves decisions that are indiscriminate in nature i.e. they should not depend on any chance attributes of one and all. According to Rawls, "justice involves decision making from an original position, where one is situated behind a veil of ignorance. So considering the veil of ignorance, we as a generation are unaware of our actual worth in nature as well as the worth of future generations."²¹ Consequently while considering the idea of justice, we should not blindly decide in the favor of current generation. Otherwise decisions would not be considered just for it would be based on the chance event of birth. Rawls mentions, we are not allowed to treat generations differently solely on the grounds that they are earlier or later in time.²²

THE PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE

Since times immemorial, aphorisms have been conveying the idea of Precautionary Principle, Some of them are - A stitch in time saves nine; better safe than sorry; Precautionary principle proposes

prudence as an important virtue that helps evading catastrophes and prepares one to cope with them. Consequentiality nature of precautionary principle helps in thinking beyond the myopic self-interests and taking more sustainable decisions. This idea has been widely endorsed by elder statesmen. This principle though is more centered on the self-interests of the current generation and does not highlight the sustainability as a virtue in itself.

DISTRIBUTIONAL PRINCIPLE

The concept of justice entails the concept of fair distribution as well. According to John Rawls, basic rights need to be upheld and the social advantages ought to be equitably shared. Imploring the idea of Justice, we find that it not only incorporates the fair distribution of social advantages but also social disadvantages. Decision making on this principle involves the selection of recipients of advantages and disadvantages on the basic tenets of justice. This principle provides insights towards the various faulty social practices like corruption, oppression, inequity of wealth and social advantages.

CONCLUSION

More research – employing different methods (e.g. ethnographic research) – is necessary to unfold the empirical role of religion in these transformation processes. Research on the relationship between religion and sustainability can contribute to a more encompassing and inclusive understanding of sustainability transitions, and may reveal new possibilities for advancing these transformation processes (Tikjoeb, 2004; Tucker, 2008). However, it remains to be explored if religion does in fact form a relevant functional subsystem for sustainability transition processes or whether other subsystems fulfill the potential functions of religion in a more effective manner.

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