

Preserve the biodiversity: An ethical analysis

¹Dr. Mrinal Kanti Sarkar, Associate Professor in Philosophy, Bidhannagar College, West Bengal

²Sukhen Barman, Research Scholar, Department of Buddhist Studies, University of Calcutta

³Rahamotulla , Research Scholar, Department of Philosophy, West Bengal State University

Abstract

Environmental issues, particularly biodiversity loss, are among the most urgent challenges facing humanity today. Biodiversity—derived from "bio" (life) and "diversity" (variety)—is a cornerstone of a healthy environment. In philosophical terms, biodiversity encompasses a wide array of ethical questions and responsibilities. Human behavior, which is shaped by ethics and morality, has direct consequences on the preservation or destruction of biodiversity. This article explores various ethical, cultural, and religious perspectives on biodiversity preservation and presents some contemporary debates regarding the moral responsibility of humans to protect other species. Key topics include anthropocentric vs. non-anthropocentric views, the ethical role of self-motivation in environmental stewardship, and the challenges faced in preserving biodiversity amidst human growth and urbanization.

Keywords:

Biodiversity, anthropocentric, non-anthropocentric, self-motivation, psychological egoism, animal welfare.

Introduction

Ethics and morality are pivotal in determining the common good, and the preservation of biodiversity is an ethical issue that demands our attention. In our modern, overpopulated world, however, the issue of biodiversity is often overlooked in favor of more immediate human needs. There are two primary ethical perspectives that help guide our understanding of biodiversity preservation:

1. Anthropocentric View
2. Non-Anthropocentric View

For the understanding of the basic motives between the two ethical standards in the context of ethical consideration, views are. In contemporary environmental ethics, these two views holds that humans are superior overall the members of other species, which is generally known as Anthropocentric. On the other hand, Non-anthropocentric ethics rejects the idea that humans alone possess moral priority and instead recognises intrinsic value in non-human life forms.

In this context, reconcile anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric views and show how we can preserve biodiversity by doing so. Nowadays, preservation of endangered species is one of the central issues in the environmental movement, because when animals, birds, and plants and other valuable elements vanish from our landscape due to our simple mistakes, this ought to raise public concern; we are not bothered about nonhuman beings during daily life. But in recent years, we have suffered another new problem that is care has emerged to other levels of biodiversity, like Varsity of biodiversity, Varsity of ecosystems at the regional level, and genetic diversity at the microbiological level.

Anthropocentric Ethics in Biodiversity Preservation

In an anthropocentric view to 'savingspecies' depends on or for people's interest. A reason for protecting species that emphasises their value to humans is anthropocentric. Where species have instrumental value. According to Joel Feinberg-

"We do have duties to protect threatened species, not duties to the species themselves as such. But rather duties to future human beings' duties derived from our housekeeping role as temporary inhabitants of this planet."

Non-Anthropocentric Ethics: Beyond Human Interests

Without the value of biodiversity, there are other forms of value: indirect use value, which is the loss of a few species; and, more broadly, the loss of many species imperils the resilience and stability of ecosystems on which humans depend. Species also have other values, like recreational, aesthetic, and curiosity value.

Otherwise, if we follow the no- anthropocentric view, all human duties concerning the species are analyzed as duties to a person. In many cases, endangered species have no immediate resource value, yet they are also important for other purposes. Now the question is are they really worthless species? If it happens, then is there any justification to save worthless species? Primarily, an environmental ethics answer will hold that species are valuable in their own right, regardless of whether they benefit humans.

As rational beings, our aims should be not only to focus on anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric perspectives. Rather, as human beings are defined as rational, moral, and also care about our future. Natural resources are finite, whereas the growth of population and human demands and interests are increasing. So we need to develop a holistic view on the environment.

Can ethics serve the environmental issue?

Ethics plays a crucial role in addressing environmental issues, particularly when it comes to preserving endangered species. At its core, ethics is about obligation—human beings have a moral responsibility to protect species at risk of extinction. This duty is not only theoretical but also urgent in practical terms, as the loss of biodiversity affects the health and stability of ecosystems that humans rely on. In the broader context, preserving endangered species raises essential philosophical questions about the moral value of non-human life and the role humans play as stewards of the Earth. Beyond species protection, we must consider our obligations to entire ecosystems, as their degradation can have profound consequences for future generations. Thus, ethics guides our actions and decisions regarding environmental preservation, urging us to act with responsibility and foresight to safeguard life in all its forms.

Common Challenges

In the 21st century, there are already many solutions for the preservation of biodiversity. But sometimes these solutions are not enough. Because sometimes people failed to fulfil the basic

survival needs. Basic needs are prioritized, and preserving biodiversity or the environment is secondary for the general public. It is true that after fulfilling their basic needs, man ignored the environment; other reasons, like poverty, lack of moral sense, ethical thinking and also ego. These play the important roles as they are related to human negative impacts, as human beings loss their power of self-motivation and are the reason for many kinds of social crime, environmental crime, political crime; etc. however, one of the important case is ignorance about environment, the basic knowledge about the environment and also biodiversity, which is the key concept of environment

Animal welfare and animal rights depend on the value of biodiversity

If we consider the preservation of biodiversity, two additional important elements also need to be defined to relate to biodiversity. The term biodiversity is not only a single concept but also a complex combination of numerous elements and the so-called variety of life. Animal welfare and animal rights are also is important for the preservation of biodiversity. It helps balance the food chain in biology through this philosophical discussion, elucidating how ethical reasoning is involved in extending moral standing to animals and how this relates to human moral function. And also define what is the non-anthropocentric views moral status of animals.

The moral status of animals is not only relevant to biodiversity but also to global environmental policy making. The effect of climate change on human beings provides one sort of ethical reason for mitigating it. Now, the question is- do its effects on animal habitat and animal welfare provide an additional ethical reason for policies that mitigate climate change or biodiversity change?

The moral status of animal is relevant to policies regarding animal agriculture. Should we band, or heavily regulate, factory farming, to increase the welfare of farm animals? And many other ethical question related to animal welfare which should do or should not do. The moral status of animal is relevant to polices regarding scientific experimentation on animals. Under what conditions is it morally permissible to use animal in medical research? The moral status of animals is relevant to policies regarding the hunting and trapping of wild animals. For that forest diversity also disbanded by many reason. And this ethical question also raised is morally acceptable hunting the animals for the human interest or not?

Another important interest related to the animal with human that is policies regarding the human use of animal for purpose other than food. This type of ethical question's finding the

answer is not emergency for the preservation of biodiversity. This kinds of ethical question also related our moral obligation of animals and this ethical questions also helps the people to think about animal's rights also the animal's welfare which is helpful for biodiversity.

Biodiversity preservation and moral standing of animal

As we deal with the preservation of biodiversity and the difficulties involved, it is important to ethically define the moral standing of animals. Different moral thinkers explain the moral standing of animals in various ways. For example, through ethical egoism, where the self is the main and central feature required for moral standing. Hedonistic utilitarianism considers psychological experiences and sensations as the basis for moral standing. There are also other theories such as preference satisfaction utilitarianism, teleological consequentialism, common good consequentialism, the will theory of rights, subjective interest rights, and objective interest rights. Each theory has different criteria for the moral standing of animals. Currently, many complex animals appear to experience pain and pleasure. Is this sufficient for their moral standing in hedonistic utilitarianism, or do they need additional features? If the capacity for pain and pleasure were enough to confer moral standing to humans, would it also suffice for animals? Let us suppose, for example, that the morally relevant feature is the capacity to form family ties. Humans can do this, mammals can do this, most birds can as well, but fish and many reptiles cannot. Therefore, if the capacity for family ties determines moral standing, then humans and dogs would have it, while salmon would not. Even if we successfully argue that some animals possess a feature adequate for moral standing, there remains the problem of determining which animals have this feature.

Animal rights:

In the contemporary environmental ethics, there are two influential forms of argument regarding the moral standing of animals. One is the utilitarianism approach of Peter Singer, which is concern with animal welfare. The other is the deontological approach of Tom Regan, which is concerned with Animal Rights. One difference is that the animal welfare approach permits a trade-off between the interests of humans and the interests of animals.

In the preservation of animals and biodiversity, animal welfare is important, and human moral obligation is to maintain biodiversity. It is commonly said that without the moral obligation of humans towards nature, it is not possible to preserve it effectively in the twenty-first century.

The term 'right' is very essential element for every living object including man. As for example, men have fundamental biological demand and then other living purpose fundamental demands. By nature human being was not aware about other right until it's creates crises. But animal right turn into important right for the preservation of biodiversity in the whole world.

The animal welfare position is justified by utilitarian principles. According to Peter Singer, utilitarianism should give equal consideration to the interests of both animals and humans. Interest-utilitarianism works by aggregating a measure of satisfied interests for each alternative policy that aims to maximize total satisfaction. Due to this aggregation, utilitarianism allows us to trade off human interests against those of animals or resources for one another. Under this principle, animals can be compassionately treated and painlessly killed if human interests, such as in meat-eating, outweigh any discomfort to animals. Human interests in medical research, hunting, etc., can also outweigh the interests of animals, such as in hunting, where clear shots are rare. The animal welfare objection to these practices cannot be based on principle but must be addressed practically, by highlighting the difficulty of painless killing and the infrequency of clear kills by hunters. Tom Regan argues for the total abolition of scientific experimentation on animals, the complete dissolution of commercial animal agriculture, and the total elimination of animal hunting and trapping.¹

Protect biodiversity and defend cultural, spiritual and religious values

Culture: Biodiversity issues now become variable problems. When considering the preservation of biodiversity, we find many kinds of cultures in every society that are directly or indirectly related to biodiversity conservation. This has been happening throughout the development of human civilization. Preserving biodiversity through cultural, spiritual, and religious means is not a new approach. Traditional ancient systems are changing due to high technological intervention, and humans tend to inadvertently destroy the environment. As human beings, our goal should not only be to discuss problems but also to provide philosophical and ethical solutions for biodiversity. We should take responsibility for our actions that threaten the environment. It is also true that humans are not only one entity but consist of physical, mental, and spiritual elements. These three aspects form a holistic human persona, and through the environment, humans become complete individuals. When

¹ Louis P. Pojman, *Environmental Ethics: Readings in theory and application* (Belmont, California 94002USA): Wadsworth (2001),p-41.

individuals are formed—encompassing physical, mental, spiritual, social, cultural, and religious aspects—they can contribute to environmental preservation through diverse cultural practices. Through this discussion, I want to focus on how cultural, religious, and spiritual aspects relate to preserving biodiversity and ecosystems.

Cultural and spiritual values related with our nature in such a way that sometimes we cannot understand but the effect is always good for our nature. The cultural importance of natural ecosystems not only consist of real goods and services, but also includes many often unreal, non-material or informational services. These nonmaterial and spiritual values are pear of local people's cosmogony and play a pivotal role in shaping their perception of nature. The way people perceive nature depends on culturally defined values and belief systems that form an important often intergenerational, source of information, some of this valuable information, relating in particular to its spiritual dimension may not yet be consideration in current ecosystem management.²

Culture and ecosystem: ecosystem is not only build of physical attributes, they are subjected to and influenced bicultural perception as well. Ecosystem not only single component it also multi component. The cultural and spiritual values of biodiversity related to the importance of a culture's own management and governance system of that, their languages, knowledge bases and expression in arts and traits. Through this discussion cultural and spiritual values of local and internal people in relation to nature conservation and ecosystem management. These cultural and spiritual values flow through like within a chain, like people who believe in spiritual values that are shared or group values and to a great extent, more precisely. It is concerned with non-material values, including spiritual values. Cultural groups share that and may thus be regarded as cultural. The importance of such intangible values has been increasingly recognised by various sectors and institutions from local to global levels.

From the above discussion, cultural services are often untouchable, and information services. Information services are those non- material, often intangible benefits derived from human interaction with ecosystems. Such as inspiration for, art, development of ecological knowledge for the future and spiritual health. The UNESCO Convention on Intangible Heritage has defined such intangible heritage as-

² Ibid,p-85.

The practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills- as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts, and cultural spaces associated with them - are recognised by communities, and in some cases individuals, as part of their cultural heritage.

In many cultures, the spiritual significance of rivers, mountains, animal species has leads to their recognition as sacred natural sites, place that are known for their high biodiversity values.³ These places are traditionally managed based on ancestral principles and spiritual values, believes that in many cases ensure cultural continuity and environmental management. The spiritual values of SNSs may be important enough to local people to conserve natural ecosystems, even though as economic cost-benefit analysis may advise, conversion of the natural ecosystem through resource development, such as mining or agriculture.⁴

Conclusion

Environmental problems are not single-handed. Among the entire preserving system, biodiversity problems are not only part of the environment, but they're also deals through various cultural, religious and indigenous practices over the decades. With the existing practices to preserve the biodiversityWe must use the entire mechanism properly and make a better environment for us and also for future generations. If we really want to do so, then not only biodiversity, but many other problems will be solved through the right theoretical, ethical, and social practices. Achieving self-motivation through basic education about biodiversity can also be handled. These are the most important elements for a rational being.

³ Ibid, p-299.

⁴ Ibid,p-300.

References:

- Chang, M., & Gupta, A. (2011). *Ethics and biodiversity*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
- Gaston, K. J., & Spicer, J. I. (2004). *Biodiversity: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Blackwell Publishing.
- Jamieson, D. (Ed.). (2001). *A companion to environmental philosophy*. Blackwell Publishers.
- Kernohan, A. (2012). *Environmental ethics: An interactive introduction*. M. Martin.
- Low, N. (Ed.). (1999). *Global ethics and environment*. Routledge.
- Naji, E. S. (2004). Impact of overpopulation on the biological diversity conservation in Boki Local Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. *American Journal of Environmental Engineering*.
- Pojman, L. P. (2001). *Environmental ethics* (3rd ed.). Ruth Cottrell.
- Ramadoss, A. (2011). Biodiversity conservation through environmental education for sustainable development. *International Electronic Journal of Environmental Education*, 1(2).
- Verschuren, B. (2009). An overview of cultural and spiritual values in ecosystem management and conservation strategies. In *Endogenous development and bio-cultural diversity*.
- Wilson, E. O. (2001). *The diversity of life*. Penguin Books.
- The Times of India. (2018, November 17). Article on biodiversity/environment. *The Times of India*, p. 5.