

Ethics in Engineering Practice
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Lecture – 23
Environmental Ethics and Spirituality

Welcome. Today we are going to discuss about the details of Environmental Ethics and Spirituality. In the last discussions we have discussed about environmental ethics and why like the engineers should be responsible about the environment. And we have discussed this from the utility in perspective, we have discussed this from the rights and justice perspective, and we have discussed this from the care perspective also.

And we have discussed that, it depends on like the more the values of the person, who is making a decision the world view of the person the virtuous nature of the person to who is like taking this decision about the what is the importance of the environment.

And other non-human entities and like what care should be taken upon them, for them, what is the should we provide them any harm or not, and while doing our own projects. And if any harm is done because we understand if we cannot just say like we are not providing any harm. So, whatever we do their interest their always be a conflict of interest between a human and nonhuman entity.

So, if the interest of the non-human entity is suffering, then what extent of care we need to take to see that a harm is minimized. This we have already discussed from the other perspectives; today what we are going to see, because in the last discussions we have mentioned about the virtuous nature of the person responsible for taking this decisions. In today's discussion we are going to focus on how the different aspects or the values which are like that we get from our different religions and spirituality, how it also focuses on environmental ethics.

So, today's discussion will be about environmental ethics and spirituality.

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Outline of the module

- ❖ Introduction to the topic
- ❖ Transcendentalism
- ❖ Deep Ecology
- ❖ Ecofeminism
- ❖ The Gaia Hypothesis
- ❖ The Judeo-Christian Tradition
- ❖ Asian religions
- ❖ Animistic Religions
- ❖ Modern Pantheism

Source: Engineering, Ethics and the Environment , Vesilind and Gunn, Can

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So, the outline of the module for today is introduction, then transcendentalism, deep ecology ecofeminism the Gaia hypothesis, the Judeo Christian tradition, Asian religions, animistic religions and modern pantheism.

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Introduction

It is quite evident that classical ethical theories provide no solid ground for protecting our environment

For eg, building a dam as per Utilitarianism may be justified but if it costs a lot in terms of harming the habitat and the natural ecosystem it may not be justified.

The theorists who neglected the idea of classical theorists and were dominated by the real concern for individual organisms, places, eco-systems and future generations started the search for environmental ethics in spirituality

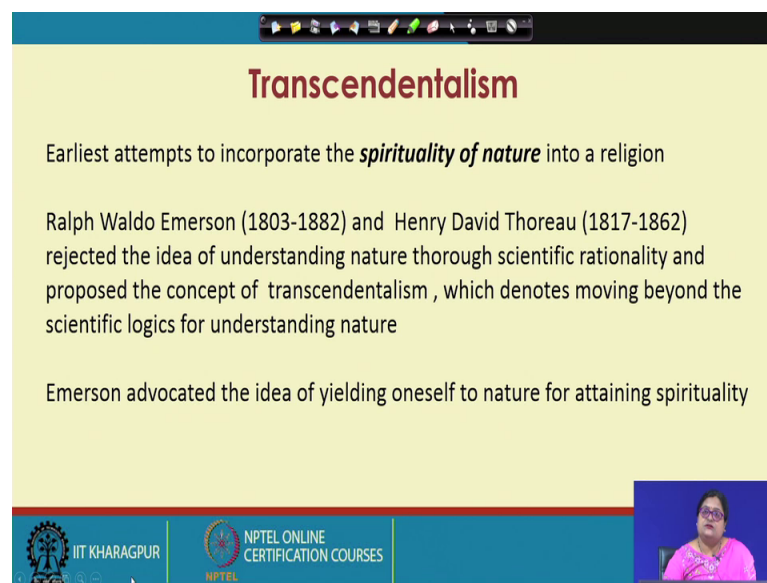
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So, what we find is that there is in the classical ethical theory is there, is it does not provide any solid ground for protecting our environment. So, building a as we have already discussed about the building the dam concept, building a dam in the

utilitarianism may be justified, but if it costs a lot in terms of harming the habitat and the natural ecosystem, it may not be justified.

The theorists who neglected the idea of classical theories and were dominated by the real concern for the individual organisms, places, ecosystems and future generations. They started their search for environmental ethics in a spirituality. So, because it is like how what is the harm provided to the ecosystem, and what is the future generation, how it is getting how the not. So, this search for this meaning comes from spirituality.

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Transcendentalism

Earliest attempts to incorporate the *spirituality of nature* into a religion

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) and Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) rejected the idea of understanding nature through scientific rationality and proposed the concept of transcendentalism, which denotes moving beyond the scientific logics for understanding nature

Emerson advocated the idea of yielding oneself to nature for attaining spirituality

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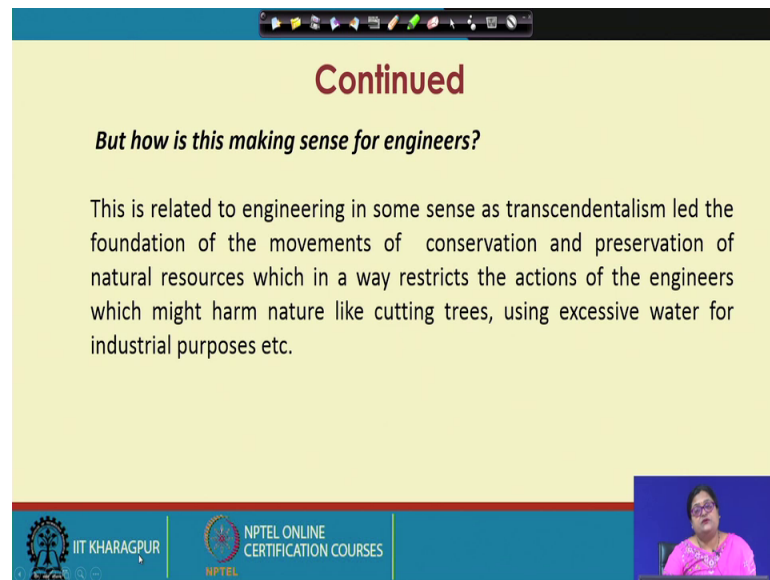
Transcendentalism. Transcendentalism is the earliest attempt to incorporate spirituality of nature in the religion.

Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau rejected the idea of understanding nature, through scientific rationality and proposed the concept of transcendentalism; which denotes moving beyond the scientific logics for understanding nature.

Emerson advocated the idea of yielding oneself to nature for attaining spirituality. So, until and unless we can understand the other like non-human entity by like surrendering to that entity or specifically for the nature keeping oneself in that position, it is very difficult to understand the other entity.

So, Emerson advocated the idea of yielding oneself to nature for attaining spirituality.

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But how is this making sense for engineers?

This is related to engineering in some sense as transcendentalism led the foundation of the movements of conservation and preservation of natural resources which in a way restricts the actions of the engineers which might harm nature like cutting trees, using excessive water for industrial purposes etc.

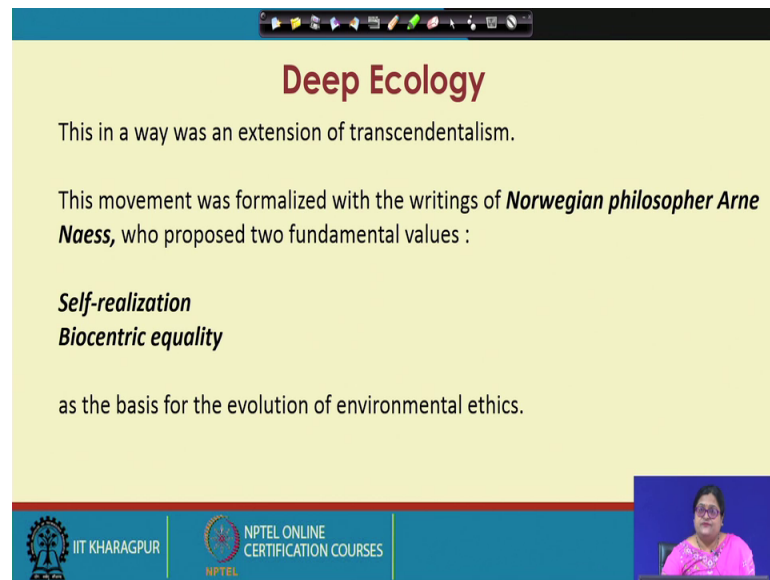
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So, if only we can understand the connectivity of the human and the non-human entity, that is why the name transcendentalism if we can transcend beyond our own small shelf and get connected with the bigger self universal self rather as we call is spirituality.

We understand the connectivity the oneness transcend beyond our own small cell, then only we can understand the from a holistic perspective of the effect of anything that we are presently doing.

But why did not I ask question how is this making a sense for engineers? This may be a philosophical understanding philosophical thought, then how come it is important for engineers. This is definitely related to engineering in some sense, as transcendentalism lead to the foundation of the movements of conservation and preservation of natural resources; which in a way restricts the actions of engineers, which might harm nature like cutting trees using excessive water for industrial purposes etcetera.

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Deep Ecology

This in a way was an extension of transcendentalism.

This movement was formalized with the writings of *Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess*, who proposed two fundamental values :

Self-realization
Biocentric equality

as the basis for the evolution of environmental ethics.

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So, this has a basic connection to the concept of deep ecology. So, when we are talking of transcendentalism, when we are talking of connectivity between oneself and the universal self, the connectivity between the human and the non-human entity of the nature. So, we are looking into ecology we are looking into a deep connection between all the entities of nature so that they can coexist with each other.

It is not only it is not existing myself existing at the cost of other suffering or at the by harm provided to the other, but it is a mutual a peaceful coexistence of both the parties when we are heading towards that. So, this is getting connected to the concept of deep ecology. So, let us see what this deep ecology tells us.

Deep ecology as I have already discussed is an extension of transcendentalism. This movement was formalized with the writings of Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess who proposed 2 fundamental values. Self realization and biocentric equality at the basis for evaluation or the evolution of the environmental ethics.

Now, what is self-realization ah?

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These values defy rational justification and rely more on connecting deeply with ecology.

Self realization relates to the recognition of oneself as member of greater universe, not just as single individual or a member of particular community.

As per Naess, this can only be achieved through reflection and contemplation.

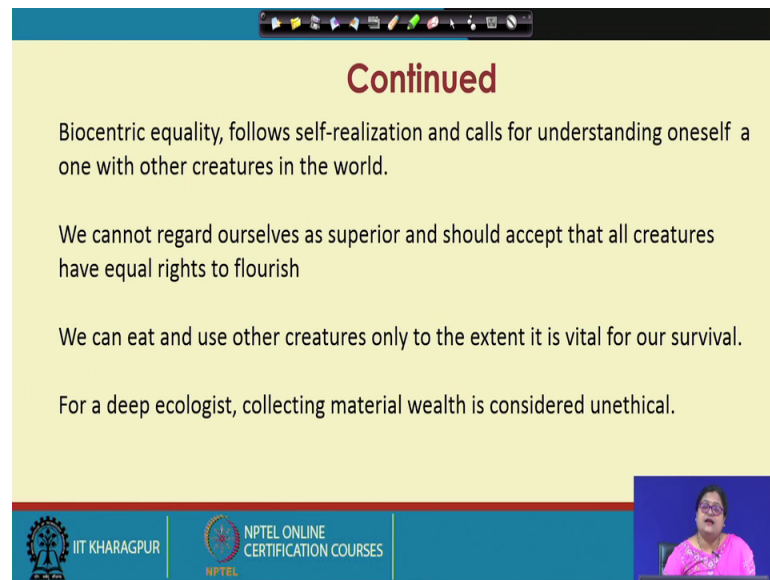
Reflecting in terms of how it would affect us and contemplating the affect of an action on long term

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These values defy rational justification and rely more on connecting deeply with ecology. Self-realization relates to the recognition of oneself as a member of the greater universe not just as a single individual or a member of a particular community. As we were telling it is a connectivity of oneself with the greater universal self,; where my small self is connected with a bigger self as per Naess. This can only be achieved through reflection and contemplation.

Reflecting in terms of how it would affect us, and contemplating the effect of an action on long term. And whenever we are talking of this long term contemplation, we are thinking of the effect of the action that we are doing at present not only on us. And our future generation means human entities, but also other non-human entities also and the nature per say.

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Biocentric equality, follows self-realization and calls for understanding oneself a one with other creatures in the world.

We cannot regard ourselves as superior and should accept that all creatures have equal rights to flourish

We can eat and use other creatures only to the extent it is vital for our survival.

For a deep ecologist, collecting material wealth is considered unethical.

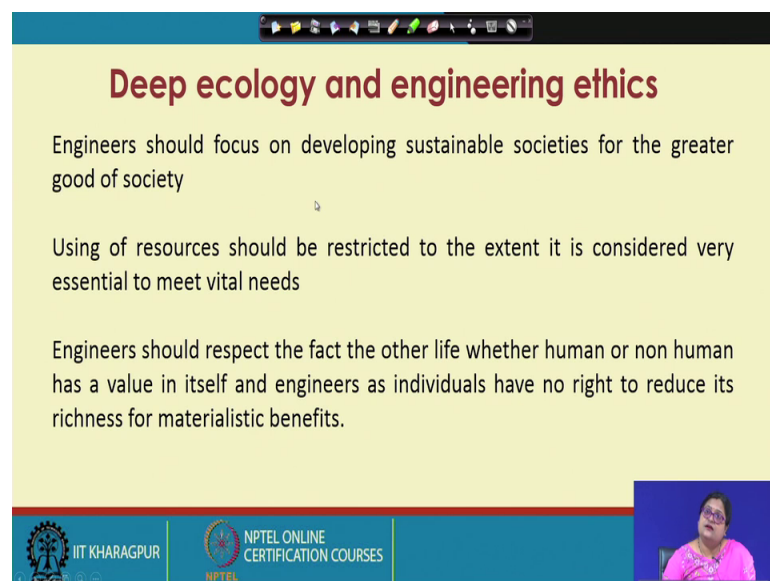
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Biocentric equality follows self-realisation and calls for understanding oneself a one with other creatures of the world. We cannot regard ourselves as superior, and should accept it all creatures have equal rights to flourish. We can eat and use other creatures only to the extent it is vital for our survival. If it is not, then we should not attempt to do it.

For a deep ecologist collecting material wealth is considered to be unethical.

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Deep ecology and engineering ethics

Engineers should focus on developing sustainable societies for the greater good of society

Using of resources should be restricted to the extent it is considered very essential to meet vital needs

Engineers should respect the fact the other life whether human or non human has a value in itself and engineers as individuals have no right to reduce its richness for materialistic benefits.

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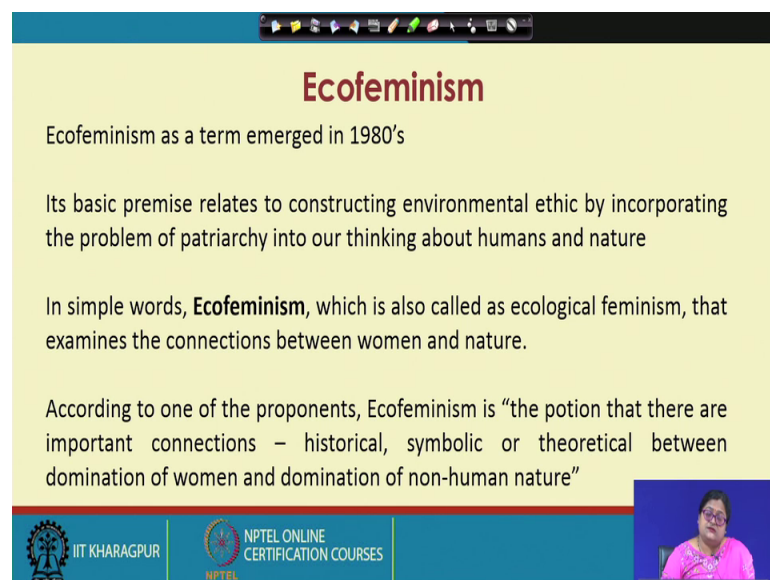
So, deep ecology and engineering ethics. Engineering ethics and deep ecology gets connected when we are talking of a sustainable societies sustainable communities for the greater good of the society.

Using of resources should be restricted to the extent it is considered very important for meeting of the vital means. If we follow the self-restriction on our self, then we will be in a position to preserve some of these resources for the use of our future generation also.

But if you are not doing this, then may be our future generations and will be deprived of some important resources that we are enjoying now. And they will not be able to lead a life, which is of that, that we are leading at present.

So, engineer should respect the fact the other life whether human or non-human has a value in itself and engineers as individuals have no right to reduce it is richness for materialistic benefits. So, every entity on earth whether it is human or non-human has a value in itself and has a right for survival. So, until and unless it is like extremely necessary and it is vital for my design of a product, then we should not provide harm to the other entity or try to reduce it is richness for materialistic benefits for our own self. And we do not have the right for it also.

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Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism as a term emerged in 1980's

Its basic premise relates to constructing environmental ethic by incorporating the problem of patriarchy into our thinking about humans and nature

In simple words, **Ecofeminism**, which is also called as ecological feminism, that examines the connections between women and nature.

According to one of the proponents, Ecofeminism is "the notion that there are important connections – historical, symbolic or theoretical between domination of women and domination of non-human nature"

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Because of this eco deep ecology, because it follows an approach; which is a sort of caring approach, we care not only for our own self, but also waiting to care for other

entities also the total nature and other non-human entities because care is the primary guiding value for deep ecology. This is also called ecofeminism and it is a connection with eco feminism.

Now, why this ecofeminism so, it is more where we called about the between the connections of women and nature in the sense like, what how woman the nature of women in the society and with the values of women. So, ecofeminism draws a analogy between women and the nature of a environment. And so, the it tries to compare and tries to draw certain analogy between these 2 concepts.

It is a term which is emerged in 1980's, it is basic premise relates to constructing environmental ethic incorporating the problem of patriarchy into our thinking about human and nature.

Ecofeminism also called ecological feminism, because it try to establish a connection a comparison and analogy between women and nature. According to one of the proponents, ecofeminism is the portion that there are important connections; like, historical symbolic or theoretical between domination of women and the domination of non-human nature. So, according to this concept, you like women generally have in societies have been dominated in a patriarchal society.

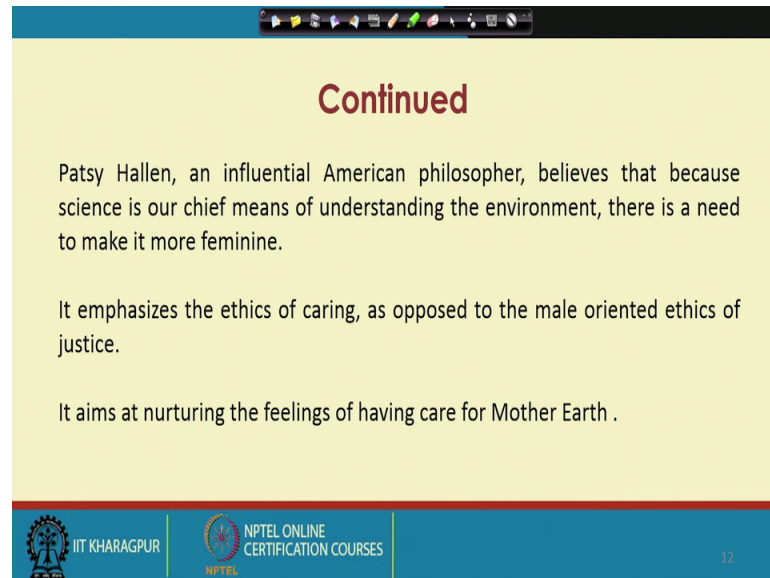
And nature also seen and this domination is for the benefit or for the purpose of the benefit of the patriarchal society.

Similarly, it has been seen like the nature is getting dominated by human beings for the use for their self-interest. That is why these 2 concepts have been like drawn to be analogous where it is found to be like the nature and the position of the woman in society and the nature and the and the way that they are treated have certain similarity of the attitude of human being towards the nature at large.

That is why this is called ecofeminism. Based on how we see the standards of women in a society, what we see their purposes for; like sometimes some we have a concept like women are there to serve the man and to produce children may be like that nature is there to serve the human being. So, this type of connection is drawn in ecofeminism concept.

Which is looking at nature from the patriarchal lens and with their we need to see where we are going wrong and how like women who have a equal right, and equal respect in the society. And so, nature also non-human entities also are not subordinate, and they are at having equal rights for like the human entities for their survival. And we cannot provide any harm to them unnecessarily for the ours narrow self-interest.

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Patsy Hallen, an influential American philosopher, believes that because science is our chief means of understanding the environment, there is a need to make it more feminine.

It emphasizes the ethics of caring, as opposed to the male oriented ethics of justice.

It aims at nurturing the feelings of having care for Mother Earth .

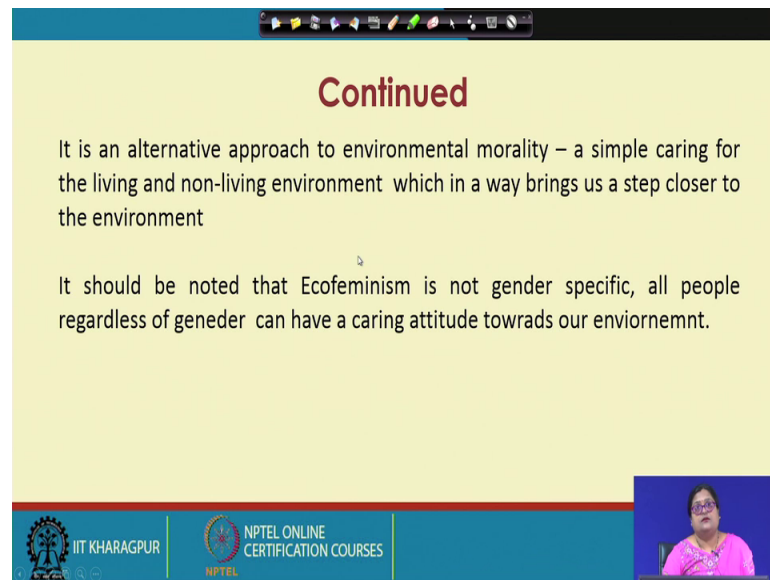
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Patsy Hallen an influential American philosopher believes that because science is a chief means of understanding the environment; there is a need to make it more feminine. It emphasises the ethics of caring as opposed to the mail oriented ethics of justice.

It aims at nurturing the feelings of having care for mother earth. So, that is another way we can look into this concept of ecofeminism; where we understand the major way the real view of women to look to the outside world is through the caring perspective. They care for the relations that there in. They care for the people that there the around, and they want to like maintain a balanced relation so that everybody can coexist.

This caring aspect of the female part has this feminine nature needs to be incorporated in our outlook towards nature rather than from the more male oriented ethics of doing justice. And this talks of nurturing a feeling of having care for mother earth.

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It is an alternative approach to environmental morality – a simple caring for the living and non-living environment which in a way brings us a step closer to the environment

It should be noted that Ecofeminism is not gender specific, all people regardless of gender can have a caring attitude towards our environment.

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So, it is an end like, alternative approach to environmental morality. A simple caring for the living in the non-living environment; which in we brings us a step closer to the environment.

It should be noted that ecofeminism, it is not gender specific anybody irrespective of gender can have like whether a man or a woman can have a caring aspect caring nature to the environment. So, we should not confuse like only women will be caring for the nature males are not.

Ecofeminism is a concept; it is a concept of caring for nature. It is a concept of caring for the non-human entities around us. And it is not gender specific; meaning, it does not tell like women will never be caring and males are not. Anyone, whether male or female if that person has a caring attitude towards the nature and the non-human entity, then it is called ecofeminism.

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The Gaia Approach

In Greek mythology, Gaia means nurturing the goddess earth

It is largely the idea of a contemporary biologist, James Lovelock, who suggested that earth should be viewed as a single organism, Mother Nature, which lives like any other organism

The Gaia hypothesis postulates the idea of preserving earth like a living organism

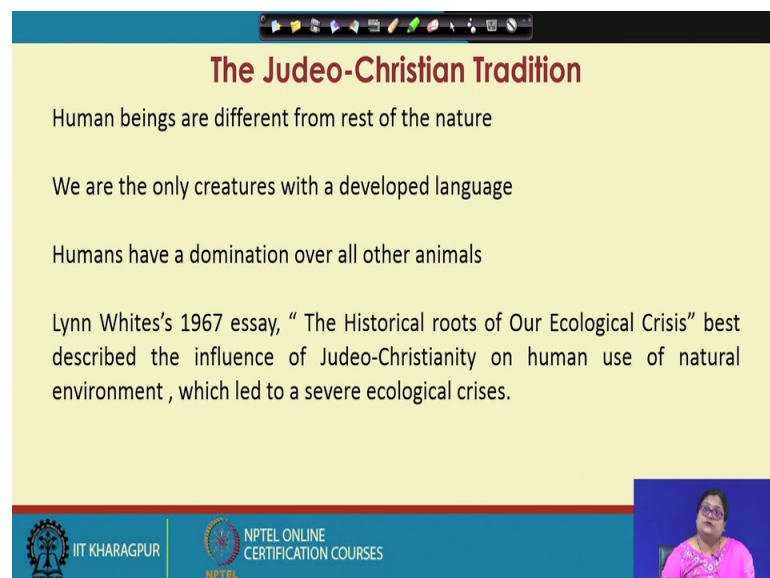
It restricts humans from destroying other creatures that co-exist with humans in the mother earth

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Next we will look into the Gaia approach. In Greek mythology Gaia means nurturing the goddess earth. It is largely the idea of contemporary biologist James Lovelock who suggested that earth should be viewed as a single organism, Mother Nature which lives like any other organism.

The Gaia hypothesis postulates the idea of preserving earth like a living organism. It restricts humans from destroying other creatures that coexisted with humans in the mother earth.

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The Judeo-Christian Tradition

Human beings are different from rest of the nature

We are the only creatures with a developed language

Humans have a domination over all other animals


Lynn White's 1967 essay, "The Historical roots of Our Ecological Crisis" best described the influence of Judeo-Christianity on human use of natural environment, which led to a severe ecological crisis.

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Human beings are different from the rest of the nature. We are the only creatures with developed language humans have a domination of overall other animals. And so, this are some of the ideas that we have which may not be true. So, all are equal and each has it is important place, and each has it is important contribution and each has an equal right of survival also.

So, the Lynn Whittess essay the historical roots of our ecological crisis, best described the influence of Judeo Christianity and human use of natural environment which led to severe ecological crisis. So, these things need to be taken into consideration.

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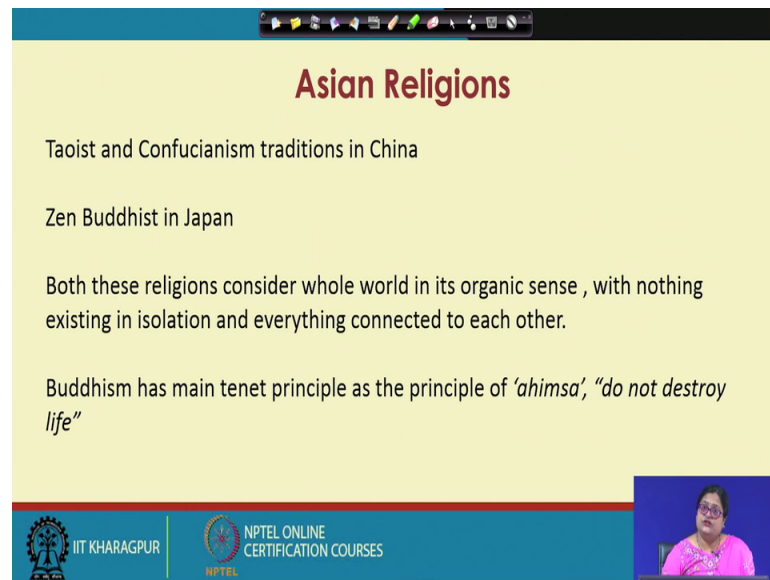
A medieval historian, White (1907-1987) also strongly believed that Judeo-Christianity traditions were largely responsible for exploitative attitude of humans on nature leading to the ecologic crises.

Because of the fact that it never restricted humans from destroying plants and killing animals

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The medieval historian white also strongly believed that Judeo Christianity traditions were largely responsible for exploitive attitude of humans and nature leading to the ecological crisis because of the fact that it never restricted humans from destroying plants and killing animals.

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Asian Religions

Taoist and Confucianism traditions in China

Zen Buddhist in Japan

Both these religions consider whole world in its organic sense , with nothing existing in isolation and everything connected to each other.

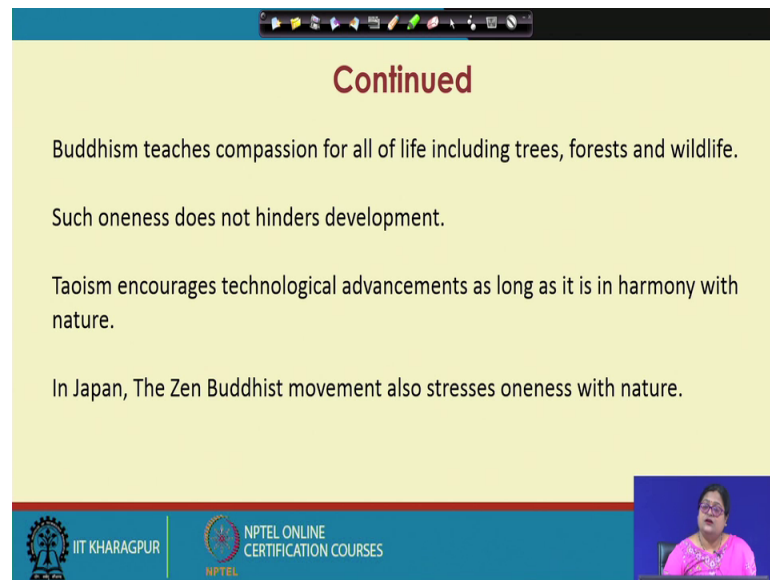
Buddhism has main tenet principle as the principle of '*ahimsa*', "*do not destroy life*"

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Now, let us look into some of the Asian religions. Taoist and Confucianism traditions in China, Zen Buddhist in Japan both these religions consider whole world in its organic sense with nothing existing in isolation and everything connected to each other.

Buddhism has main tenet principal as the principal of ahimsa do not destroy life. So, from the Asian perspective we see it is more connected connectivity connection with the universal self, connection of oneself with the universal nature cosmos. These are the concepts which are embedded in the Asian religions and traditions. And this gives rise to a world view of oneself and with the nature.

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Buddhism teaches compassion for all of life including trees, forests and wildlife.

Such oneness does not hinders development.

Taoism encourages technological advancements as long as it is in harmony with nature.

In Japan, The Zen Buddhist movement also stresses oneness with nature.

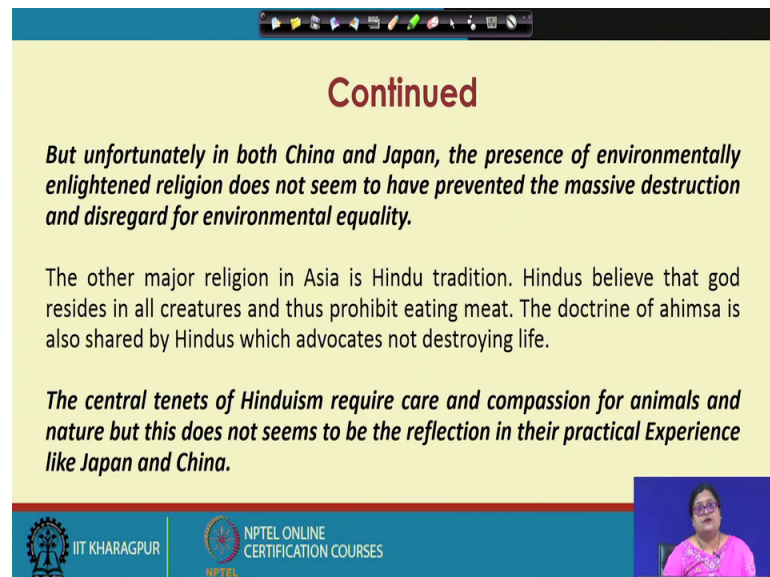
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Buddhism teaches compassion for all life including trees, forest and wildlife. Such oneness does not hinder development. Taoism encourages technological advancement as long as it is harmony with in nature. In Japan, the Zen Buddhist movement also stresses oneness with nature.

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But unfortunately in both China and Japan, the presence of environmentally enlightened religion does not seem to have prevented the massive destruction and disregard for environmental equality.

The other major religion in Asia is Hindu tradition. Hindus believe that god resides in all creatures and thus prohibit eating meat. The doctrine of ahimsa is also shared by Hindus which advocates not destroying life.

The central tenets of Hinduism require care and compassion for animals and nature but this does not seems to be the reflection in their practical Experience like Japan and China.

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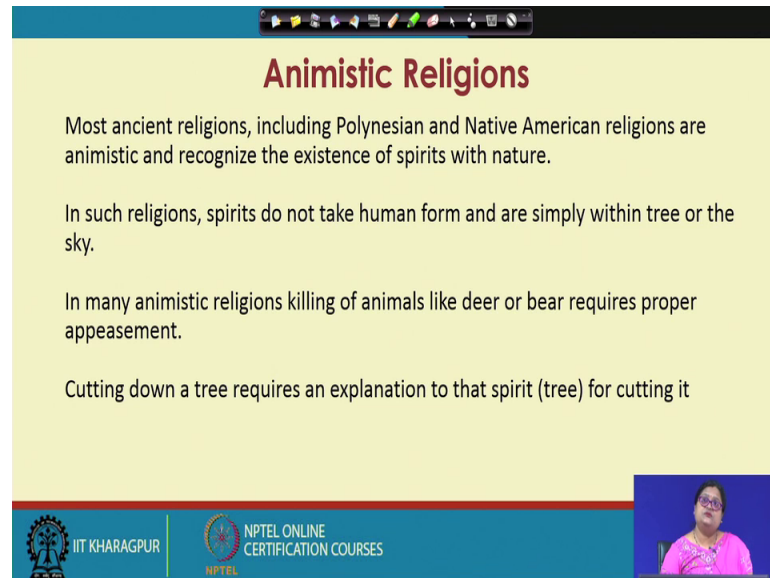
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But unfortunately both in China and Japan the presence of environmentally enlightened religion does not seem to be prevented the massive destruction and disregard from environmental equality.

The other major religion in Asia is Hindu tradition. Hindus believe that god resides in all creatures and thus prohibit eating meat. The doctrine of ahimsa is also shared by Hindus which advocates not destroying life. The central tenets of Hinduism require care and compassion for animals and nature, but these sometimes does not reflect to be the reflection in their practical experiences like in Japan and China.

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Animistic Religions

Most ancient religions, including Polynesian and Native American religions are animistic and recognize the existence of spirits with nature.

In such religions, spirits do not take human form and are simply within tree or the sky.

In many animistic religions killing of animals like deer or bear requires proper appeasement.

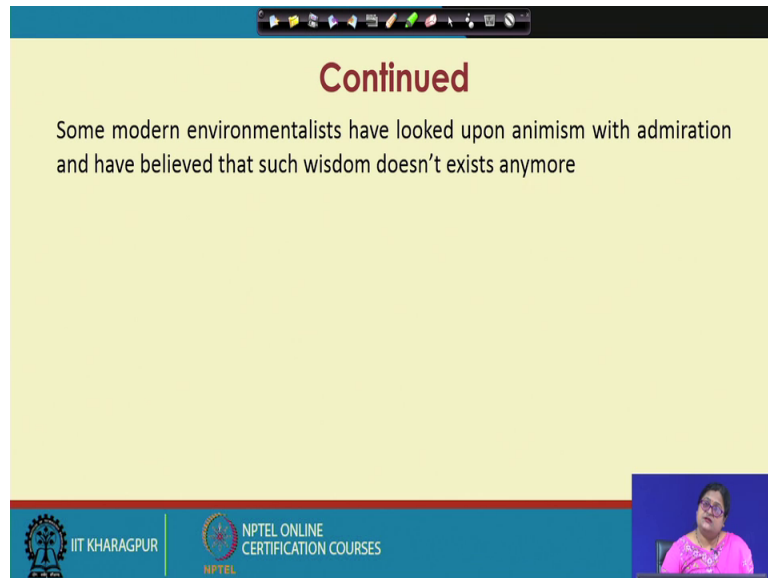
Cutting down a tree requires an explanation to that spirit (tree) for cutting it

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Animistic religions, most ancient religions including Polynesian and native American religions are animistic and recognize the existence of spirits with nature. In such religions spirits do not take human form and are simply within tree or the sky. In an many animistic religions killing of animals like deer or bear requires proper appeasement.

Cutting down a tree requires an explanation to that spirit tree for cutting it.

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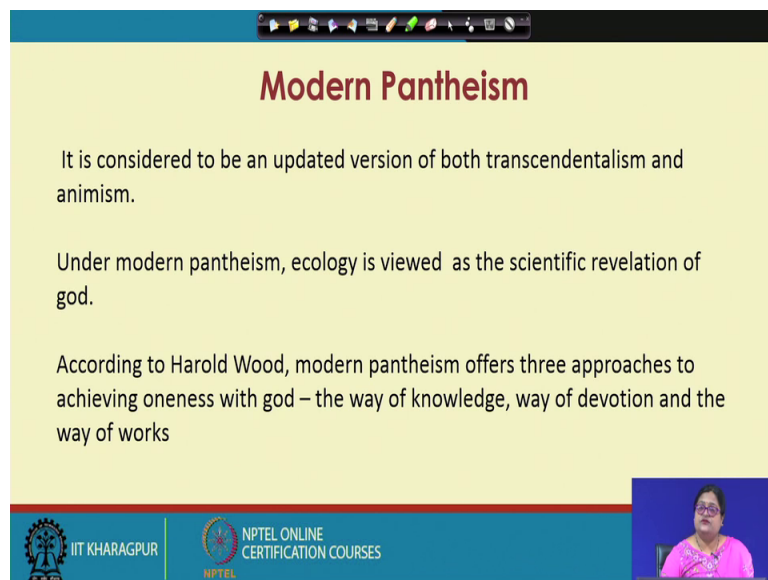
Some modern environmentalists have looked upon animism with admiration and have believed that such wisdom doesn't exist anymore

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Some modern environmentalists have looked upon animism with admiration and have believed that such wisdom such type of wisdom does not exist anymore.

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Modern Pantheism

It is considered to be an updated version of both transcendentalism and animism.

Under modern pantheism, ecology is viewed as the scientific revelation of god.

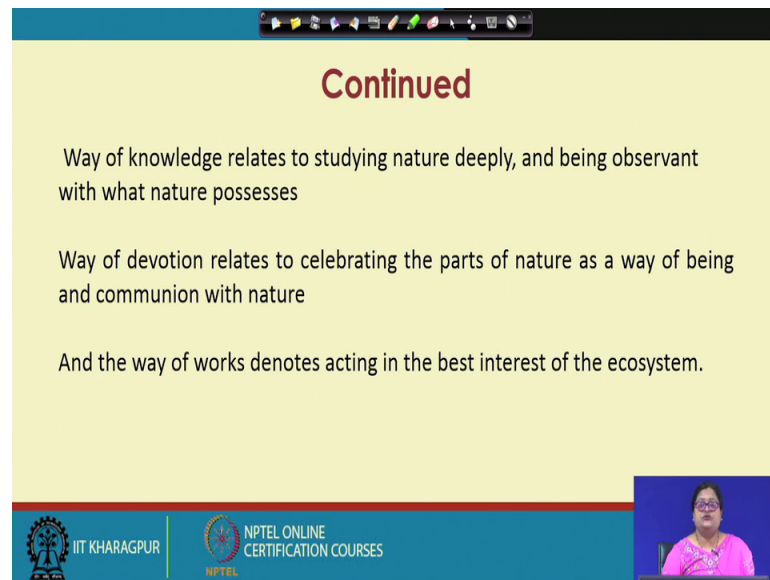
According to Harold Wood, modern pantheism offers three approaches to achieving oneness with god – the way of knowledge, way of devotion and the way of works

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Modern pantheism, it is considered to be an updated version of both transcendentalism and animism. And a modern pantheism ecology is viewed as the scientific revolution of god. According to Harold wood modern pantheism offers 3 approaches to achieving oneness with god.

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Way of knowledge relates to studying nature deeply, and being observant with what nature possesses

Way of devotion relates to celebrating the parts of nature as a way of being and communion with nature

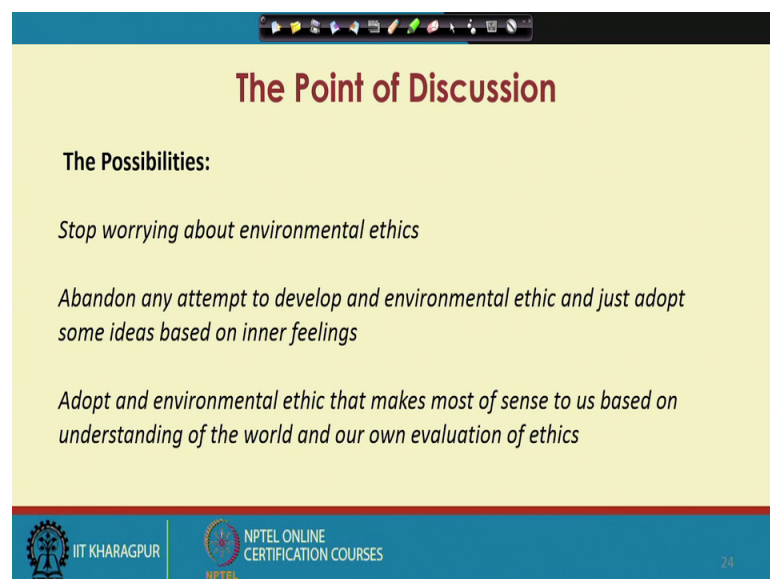
And the way of works denotes acting in the best interest of the ecosystem.

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The way of knowledge, the way of devotion and the way of works, way of knowledge relates to studying nature deeply and being observant of what nature possesses. Way of devotion relates to celebrating the parts of nature as a way of being and communion with nature. And the way of works denotes acting in the best interest of the ecosystem. All 3 together will give rise to an holistic worldview and a holistic a thought process and action towards the nature at large.

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The Point of Discussion

The Possibilities:

Stop worrying about environmental ethics

Abandon any attempt to develop and environmental ethic and just adopt some ideas based on inner feelings

Adopt and environmental ethic that makes most of sense to us based on understanding of the world and our own evaluation of ethics

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Now, take the point of discussion of we want to discuss like, if we are not to seeing if feel like there is no connectivity between this discussion on how spirituality has guided us, and how like through the ansoms scripts scriptures and the tenets.

Alike in the our in Hindu the old Gayatri mantra that we have, it is a deep connection with not only like our indebts indebtedness towards the our earth, towards our ancestors, towards every creatures possible and how we how it is a part of our of indebtedness to the past and indebtedness to the future the nature creatures everything the whole world at large.

And how it is a duty for us to give back to each of these entities, if we feel like we are not going by this concept and we are if we do not want to explain our feel like explaining the connection between spirituality and environmental ethics. Then what is the way that we can look at the relationship of environment and our attitude towards environment?

There could be 3 possibilities will stop worrying about environmental ethics, because we feel like why should we get worried about environment because as long as our own self-interest is served, then it is why should I think about other non-human entities.

Abandon any attempt to develop and environmental ethics, and just stop adopt and just adopt some ideas based on inner feelings. So, we may not develop a world view or a concept at the like this. We are going to follow and because it is right to do so. And, but we will just adopt some ideas based on our inner feelings I feel good by doing it.

So, that is how we practice it. But in sometimes it may so happened like if we are not developing a value system towards the environment, and how we should be responsible and dutiful towards the environmental large. And just adopt some feelings based on our enough current in our feelings and because if those feelings change in the future perspective are we going to abandon our ideas or not.

Adopt and environmental ethic that makes more sense to us based on our understanding of the world and our own evaluation of ethics. So, this also we can do based on adopt this based on our understanding of the world, and our own evaluation of ethics. So, this is also persons own practice which is based on his or her understanding of the world.

But if these are not ingrained in some values, then we may stop doing things which are only beneficial for the human beings. So, this part like adopt some ideas which are based on inner feelings or are made most of the sense of us based on the understanding of the world and our own evaluation of ethics needs to be strongly grounded on some believe system, strongly grounded on some basic principles which guides which are guiding philosophy of our life.

And somewhere the tenets of spirituality the basic teachings of our religion; where it speaks of the connectivity of the human self and other non-human entities and the nature at large; which talks of the indebtedness of the human beings to the nature at large hence duty to give it back to them.

And or it talks of restricting our self from providing any harm to the other non human entities, gives us some guiding principles to follow and practice, which will develop our understanding of the world and like nurture our feelings for the non-human entities, and make our own evolution of ethics.

So, the ideas of spirituality actually helps to develop these things. We will discuss about some more interesting questions about other aspects of engineering ethics in our upcoming discussions.

Thank you.