

The Ethical Corporation
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Lecture - 29
Corporate Obligations to Natural Environment on Ethical Grounds

Hello. We are back and we are still talking about the corporate duties towards natural environment, but today we will specifically talk about the Ethical Grounds. We have so far talked about many other business strategic grounds, we have talked about the legal grounds, but today it is time to talk about that ethical theories. So, that is what is on our agenda today.

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We will speak specifically about these positions, very strong positions, and one by one will explain what they are. In connection to all of this you will see that we will also specify what is environmental ethics and in that what would be the duties of the corporation. The duties of the corporation will be separately discussed in my next lecture of course, but today we will just touch upon it barely.

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Grounding the environmental obligations in ethical reasons

If we have to articulate the corporate environmental obligations in terms of ethics **as ethical obligations**:

Then our language would change to:

- ✓ Change of **mindset**
- ✓ Internal, **value-based change**
- ✓ Duties based on **justice and fairness, utility, care**
- ✓ Environmental rights
- ✓ Environmental ethics

So, let us start. See, in my last lecture also I have left a hint that as long as there is no internal realization by the corporations that there is a need or a necessity or there is a genuine necessity for them to engage in environmental obligations, as long as it is external measures the effectiveness of those measures are limited. So, it has to be complemented the external measures will have to be complemented by also some internal realization.

So, what we are talking about is whether there is any ethical obligations that can be argued for. So, when we speak about the duties of corporations as ethical obligations, our language will also follow that trend. So, we'll talk about the change of the mindset. You see there will be talk on what is the root cause, why do corporations behave in such irresponsible way towards the nature. What is the root cause? And the internal answer is that there is a certain kind of attitude or mindset. So, if that can be identified what is the wrong mindset then necessarily they will be talk about changing it, change to some other mindset and that would be a value based recommendation. So, you will get to hear about that.

And then of course, we will have to frame these obligations in terms of the ethical theories that we know and in that connection will specifically talk about environmental ethics, the duties of towards environment, the environmental rights that we have. So, that is waiting for our discussion today.

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Appeal through Moral Grounds: Ideological Change

- The change needs to come from within: Change of mindset
- Traditionally, humans have a wrong attitude towards nature. That needs to change.
- The wrong attitude: **ANTHROPOCENTRISM. Humans at the centre.**

The World

• **Anthropos (Greek): Humans. Anthropocentrism: Human – centric.**

• That is: Humans are the most important entities in the universe. The world is centered around the humans.

So, first of all the wrong mindset, what is it that is leading corporations to behave in such untowardly manner, towards environment, that you feel like you know you can pollute it and there is no compunction there is no regret. What is that mindset? Why does it lead to such behavior? And in the research literature it has been called the wrong attitude has been called anthropocentrism. Anthropos means in Greek, humans. So, when we say anthropos in the center what we are talking about is human centric attitude.

Humans are at the center of the entire universe, as if everything is created and made only to serve the human beings and human beings are the most important beings. When we our attitude toward the rest of the species rest of the world is like that, that is known as an attitude or the mindset of anthropocentrism. And as I told you scholars have said this mindset is responsible that is the one that is behind all this irresponsible behavior towards natural environment.

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Anthropocentrism

- Lynn White (1967): Cultural encouragement for this attitude in rooted many traditional western perspectives . E.g.
- Aristotle: Nature has made *all things specifically for the sake of man* (*Politics*, Bk. 1, Ch. 8)
- Judaic-Christian beliefs: God created man in His own image. "God said unto them: Fill the earth & subdue it, have dominion over fish & birds, & over every living thing that moves upon the earth." (*Genesis*, Bk.1)
- Stewardship over nature: Being superior and different, men are God-appointed stewards of the earth.
- Rest of the beings are put there only to serve men in some way or the other.

Anthropocentrism has been very bitterly criticized by several scholars, among them we have to particularly mention about Lynn White whose article in nature actually created quite a stir because that is where white claimed that this anthropocentrism has been endorsed culturally in various traditional western perspectives. In particular, White mentioned about Aristotle and his writing this is a direct quotation from Aristotle politics, where Aristotle is writing nature has made all things specifically for the sake of man that is classic anthropocentrism.

Similarly, if you look into genesis book 1, this is again a quotation where it is clearly said that god created man in his own image. So, all other creations are different, but god created man especially in his own image. Not only that, god said unto them fill the earth and subdue it have dominion over fish and birds over every living thing that moves upon the earth. So, it is almost Gods instruction that you be the shepherd of the rest of the world that men are God appointed shepherd or stewards of the earth. And rest of the beings therefore, are there only to be ruled, guided and shepherded by the by human beings. This is what White actually said.

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Anthropocentrism: Support from religion

- White (1967): Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen. It places animals and nature at the feet of humans. Thus the main strands of Christian thinking had encouraged the overexploitation of nature
- Passmore, (1974) : "Christianity encouraged certain attitudes to nature: that it exists primarily as a resource...that man a right to use it as he will...that man's relationships with it are not governed by moral principles..."
- These critiques link anthropocentrism as culturally endorsed to environmental overexploitation by men.
- But this is not a flaw exclusive to Christianity. Asian religions (Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Confucianism) may hold life in general as sacred, but the similar mindset and environmental overexploitation and degradation is no less in India, China, or Japan

Similarly, it is a the point is actually quite profound and it has been directly White has charged that it is the fault of Christianity of a special kind which White said is the most anthropocentrism religion the world has seen because, it places animals and nature at the feet of humans. And therefore, from the Christian thinking White said there is an encouragement to over exploit the nature. That was the message, that you know you have the world to explore and humans have the entire world as their property to use it, so that everything else serves the human beings.

Philosopher John Passmore, also made similar comment about Christianity that Christianity encouraged certain attitudes towards nature that it exists primarily as a resource. Resource for whom? Resource for the humans that man has a right to use it as he will, that man's relationships with it are not governed by moral principles. Now, these are very strong claims. But these critiques what are they trying? They are trying to link anthropocentrism as a cultural endorsement for environmental over exploitation. And they are specifically talking about Christianity as the source religion for that.

Now, to that my humble submission is that it the attitude is wrong. Anthropocentrism is a wrong attitude no doubt, but it is not a flaw exclusively of Christianity. If you look at even the Asian religions such as Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Confucianism; you know in each one you may find beliefs which hold life in general as sacred, not to be wasted, all right and to be respected. But while doing that and there is a lot of nature worship also

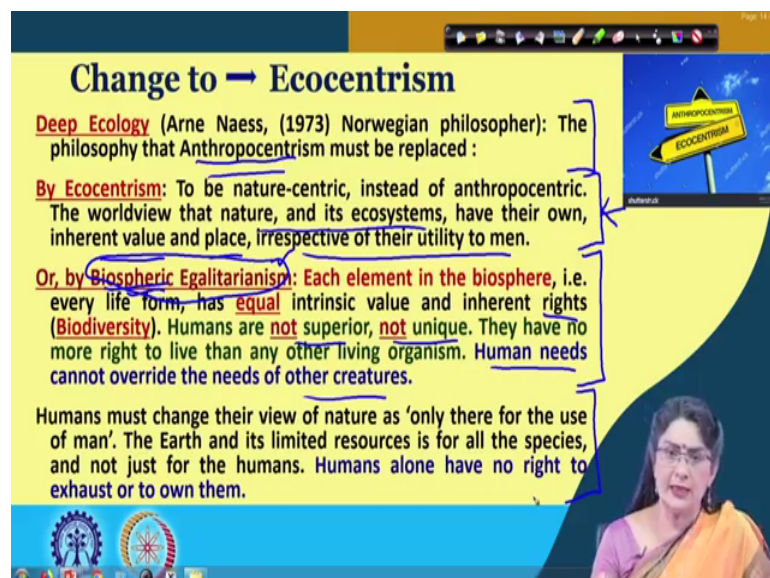
available in these religions, but in practice we find that environmental abuse is no less in either India or China or Japan. So, what is my submission here is that the mindset is not an exclusive link with any particular religion. It is a pervasive mindset which is wrong which is at the root that much we can agree. So, with that let us talk about then the change of the mindset.

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If we say that mind that is the wrong mindset then we need to also answer what should it be change it to.

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And the answer given by various people you will find now. For example, this is a very prominent position in environmental ethics which is Deep Ecology. This was promoted by Arne Naess, Norwegian philosopher in 1973 around in early 70s, which talked about that first of all the anthropocentrism, is an attitude that must be for second, it must be changed. Changed to what?

Now, this is where deep ecology says, change it to ecocentrism. Anthropocentrism means put human beings in the center of everything. Ecocentrism means ecosystems become the center and rest of the species have to be arranging around it. So, nature and its ecosystems take the central place and everything in the ecosystem has inherent value of their own and place whether they are of any use to human beings or not, all right. This was the basic message. Change it to this kind of a mindset. So, if anthropocentrism is wrong then from that they are asking change the mindset to ecocentrism.

Learn to see the world as ecocentric. I will I will talk about what the implications are. But all they said try to change the mindset to biospheric egalitarianism, that that seems to be a very long and hard word, but let me break it up for you. Egalitarianism means equality the position that says there should be equality. Where should the equality be? In the biosphere that is what it means, biospheric egalitarianism. So, each element in the biosphere every life form that you can think about has equal place, equal value and their own inherent rights.

Therefore, all the call all the implications of anthropocentrism are also rejected. So, humans are neither superior, nor are they unique. If they are not superior then there is no point about arguing why everything else has to be subjugated by them. Everything has its own place. Humans are no, nothing special, therefore, human needs cannot override the needs of the other living species other creatures for example.

So, if there if earth has limited finite resources, human needs cannot override the needs of the other species. Moreover the nature is not even there only for the sake of human beings. That was the mistake that anthropocentrism sort of nurtured. So, that has to be that myth has to be broken. Everything and the earth is there for all the species. Human beings have nothing special no special right over any of this.

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Deep Ecology

- **Man-nature relationship has an ethical dimension:** There are ethical duties towards the nature, a change in self-realization.
- Deep ecology is **deep** as it asks to embrace that ethics **as a way of life**. In intentions, practices, and in lifestyle: Minimal resource usage, not wasteful practices.
- Ideological changes required: In **economic, technological & political spheres**. Find less resource intensive technology, encourage less consumption based economy.
- Humans have no right to decrease the **richness and diversity** that is there in nature (**Biodiversity Principle**), except to satisfy very basic needs.

Influenced by Mahatma Gandhi, Naess asked for **social activism** as a way to implement the changes. Deep Ecology inspired environmentalist movement. Naess was the first chairman of **GREENPEACE**.

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Now, therefore, this position as you can see is a serious ethical theory. It speaks about the man nature relationship has ethical dimension. What does that mean? It means that when you are behaving towards nature in that relationship there are some ethical qualities involved. For example, you are duty bound towards nature to do certain things. These are the changes in you. Your viewpoint changes how you are looking at the world, your relationship to the world changes as you realize that you are just one of the many, not nothing special.

Now, deep ecology has been particularly named so, because it wants its reached to be deep inside the human beings when you are changing mindset, after you change the mindset then the behavior will be modified. Behavior modification follows the change of mindset. So, but then the change has to be deep. Now, what do they mean by the deep ecology? That ecology has to be practiced, deep within as a way of life. It is not just words, it is not just intellectual discussion, but it is a way how you live.

So, it will show up in your intentions, in your practices, in the lifestyle, in fact, deep ecology advocates said that you go for minima minimal consumption. So, they are minimalist, meaning as little as possible resource consumption as possible, deep ecology. And Naess also spoke about that in order to have this kind of mindset change, it is we are not just talking about the change in the individuals mind, there has to be also very big

change in economic behavior in the technological choice and in technological usage and of course, in the political spheres. The political will have to support it.

So, they said in those stands that you have to find alternative technology which is less resource intensive. You have to find other kind of consumption pattern because earlier economy used to believe that the more you consume, the more there will be growth and their development and we have come to question that, you know about sustainable development now. And so there is now talk about how consumption is not the only thing that drives the economy.

Similarly, let me remind you that there have been also alternative technology try outs. All of you know perhaps that you know refrigeration technique actually used to be, I mean they, earlier old refrigeration technology was about with the one that has been blamed for the chlorofluorocarbon emission which practically has been shown to deplete the ozone layer. So, that technology clearly is not a viable option, if we want to be deep ecologist..

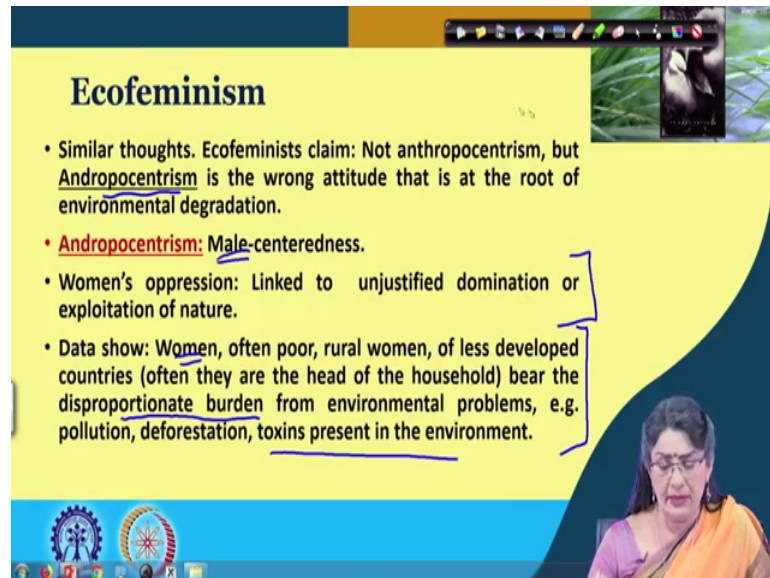
So, now, all of you also we will realize that entire refrigeration or cooling technology has changed. Now, you will find CFC free products, the technology has changed and that is a major shift and that is what Naess and others were talking about, that when you try to find out there are other ways. Deep ecology also said that because humans have no right specific specifically over the earth or over other species, so they have no right to decrease the richness and diversity that already exists. Out of this biodiversity principle came about. You know that that if there are rich diversity around you have no right, you humans have no right to decrease or extinguish the lives of any of those species.

Naess was deeply influenced by many thinkers specifically of Mahatma Gandhi. And Naess actually said that you know if you believe in these things then there has to be activism based on that. Ethics is that kind of a subject which is not purely cerebral, you it is not about sitting in an armchair only. You need to go out in the world and actually practice it. So, even deep ecology Naess clearly encouraged his followers to get into social activism to implement the changes and out of that kind of effort this Greenpeace organization came to be.

It was founded in Amsterdam, in this early 70s on this philosophy that we need to bring changes in the corporate sphere. We need to change the behavior and the mindset of the business, big businesses and all of you are probably familiar with this organization. I just

wanted to mention that Naess was the very first chairman of this organization and that is no accident.

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Ecofeminism

- Similar thoughts. Ecofeminists claim: Not anthropocentrism, but Andropocentrism is the wrong attitude that is at the root of environmental degradation.
- **Andropocentrism:** Male-centeredness.
- Women's oppression: Linked to unjustified domination or exploitation of nature.
- Data show: Women, often poor, rural women, of less developed countries (often they are the head of the household) bear the disproportionate burden from environmental problems, e.g. pollution, deforestation, toxins present in the environment.

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Here is another position that we can certainly talk about that is ecofeminism. They are also saying that anthropocentrism is the wrong mindset, but to that they are adding something else. They are saying that it is not the mindset is not just anthropocentrism, it is andropocentrism which means that actually the males are at the center. The power divide is not equal, it is the males who consider themselves to be the center of the universe.

Women are among the other things who have to serve them, and that attitude they say is directly linked with over exploitation and abuse of natural environment. I will try to explain that. But the main culprit here they set the attitude of aggression and subjugation of dominating over the others. So, this is the commonness here that they say that that put women and natural environment on the same platform, because they are subject to this male aggressive attitude to overpower, to conquer and then to use and abuse.

In fact, there is a lot of studies which have been you might find interesting, these are known as eco-feminist studies or feminist environmental philosophical studies which shows some empirical work has been done, which show that that typically many of our current environmental problems are at their core feminist issues. Why? Because typically they affect women more. Particularly, if you look into the less developed countries then

the poor rural women who often have to be the head of the households, you know on them the environmental problems take a disproportionate toll. Disproportionately they have to bear a disproportionate burden from these environmental problems, be it water pollution or water scarcity, deforestation or it could be the very toxic substance present in the environment, women pay a heavier price than men in this.

So, they say that many environmental problems have a prominent feminine side.

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Ecofeminism

- **Andropocentrism:** Traditional power-wielding patriarchal pattern to dominate and to subjugate women. The same attitude is responsible for uncaring use, aggressive domination and subjugation, and abuse of nature
- The same social structures are responsible. Total exploitation after subjugation, use and uncaring abuse.
- Change it to a **caring relationship:** Care for the natural environment. A reciprocal relationship, not one-way exploitation.

That is where we; so, their their submission is somewhat like this that you know it is the same power welding aggressive social patriarchal structures which allow the society to subjugate women, to put them in a lower status, that attitude is also responsible for the uncaring use and the aggressive domination of nature and abuse of nature, because you want to overpower. You want to always you harness, control, use and so on. And they are saying this attitude is the wrong one therefore, it has to be changed to this.

What it have to be changed to? Caring relationship. A relationship of reciprocity. It should not be one way exploitation only, all right. So, in a relationship if you take, if you nurture each side nurtures the other side there is no problem of taking from the relation, but the relationship should not be only of taking without anything giving. So, that is true equally about male women relationship as well as human and nature relationship, that is where they say the parallels are there.

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Vandana Shiva on Ecofeminism

How societies look mistakenly at both women and nature: Both are to be tamed and put in a passive and submissive role, and take that as a signal to be misused or abused. Both are valued in terms of their 'utility' and 'service' to males / male dominated society.

A woman is valued, not for her sake, but for her ability to bear children, particularly sons. A river is valued it is a source of 'hydropower'. Perceived as 'unproductive' if it is simply there as a river.

Change that perception to: Nurturing, caring relationship, respecting

This attitude of male aggression needs to change: By reciprocal care. Instead of subjugation: Non-exploitative, non-oppressive emotional bond with nature (e.g. the valley that you grew up in).

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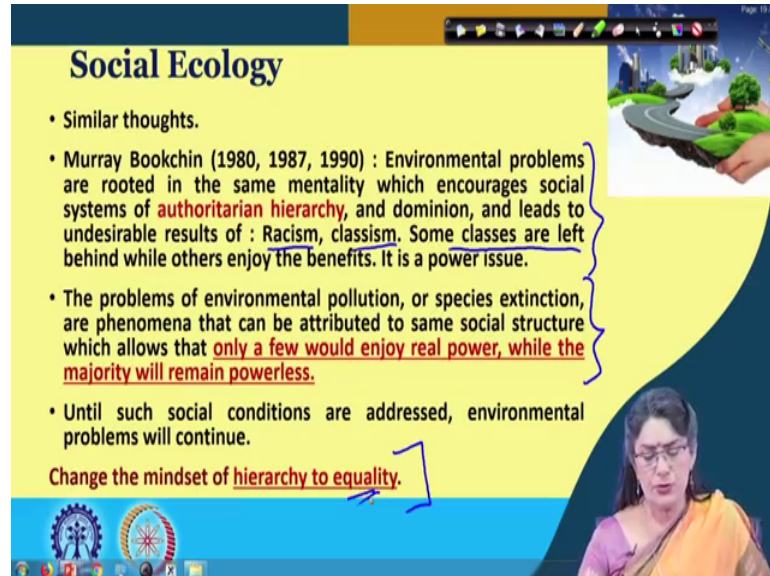
If you want to read up on this particular position, then I would certainly recommend Vandana she was writing. She is an Indian and she writes wonderfully and she was part of many environmental movements and she is very articulate speaker as well. Here is a small point from her writing that you know she is also talking about ecofeminism, and says that you know how societies especially patriarchal societies how they mistakenly look at women and nature, and think that both are to be tamed and put in a passive and submissive role, then you appreciate that.

And you take that submission if somebody is submissive you take that as a signal to be misused or abused, ok. And both are valued in terms of what kind of use they have for the dominant males in the society. So, for example, the woman is valued not for her sake, but for what the children that she can bring, specifically if she can bring sons or the male heirs. Similarly, a river is valued only when it is a source of hydropower, you can harness and get generate power from it otherwise it is perceived as unproductive you know it is just lying there.

So, this perception about nature has to change, and as I said to a caring relationship and emotional connect has to be there and you take care of. You were using the river then please be ready to also give back to the river. If it needs cleaning then you have to do the cleaning. Before you take the water from there you need to understand that you are entering into a responsible relationship that is what they are talking about. So, non-

exploitative and non-oppressive relationship with nature this is what eco-feminists would endorse.

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Social Ecology

- Similar thoughts.
- Murray Bookchin (1980, 1987, 1990) : Environmental problems are rooted in the same mentality which encourages social systems of **authoritarian hierarchy**, and dominion, and leads to undesirable results of : Racism, classism. Some classes are left behind while others enjoy the benefits. It is a power issue.
- The problems of environmental pollution, or species extinction, are phenomena that can be attributed to same social structure which allows that **only a few would enjoy real power, while the majority will remain powerless.**
- Until such social conditions are addressed, environmental problems will continue.

Change the mindset of hierarchy to equality.

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Social ecology is another strong position which also talks about what the mindset has to be changed to, and they said that most of the environmental problems come from the same mentality which creates social hierarchies. What we are talking about is racism, classism, casteism in society which divides up the society into strata and the powerful strata try to subjugate the powerless strata, all right. That is what racism is all about, that is what classism, classism means different classes of people, rich versus the poor. Caste is different, you understand upper caste, lower caste. These are stratification of the society, artificially done.

The whole point Bookchin says is about living some classes behind because then the others can enjoy the benefits more. So, it is a power issue, it is a subjugation issue and he says the parallel here is that same attitude is there towards nature. So, if environmental pollution species extinction these are nothing, but some sort of a aggressive dominion, power issue, so that only some can enjoy it, others cannot. This is when this is said they particularly have in mind the environmental brunt is borne by the poor people, the lower strata of the people and so on. So, the change is from this hierarchical dominating attitude to equality, ok. So, this is what social ecology would talk about.

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Environmental Ethics

- It is the discipline that studies the **moral relationship** of human beings to the natural environment and its **nonhuman elements**: Boundary of ethics extended beyond humans: How **should** we live in an eco-centric world?
- **Environmental rights**: (Blackstone, 1973): **Right to a livable environment**, to clean air, pure water and natural habitat [Firms which violate this right should be punished.]
- **Environmental duty**: To protect this right of the others. To prevent environmental harm, pollution, depletion, and degradation.
- **Duty of Corporations**: To respect these rights, and carry out the duty.

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Out of this, therefore, we can now talk about a subject called environmental ethics. What is it? It is an ethics that particularly speaks about the moral relationship between human beings and natural environment. Natural environment does not just include the living beings there are also non-human elements. So, the boundary of ethics is no longer confined to human beings only, it now includes everything in nature also.

And there they are raising the question, an ethical question. How should we live in if the world is an eco-centric world? What should be our proper behavior there? Not only that, some people have even argued that there are specific classes of rights called environmental rights. For example, like right to a livable environment, you know which is part of human rights as well.

So, environmental rights, this just like property rights or a specific class of rights we are talking about environmental rights. There are also environmental duties that you many of you have been exposed to such duties in through your environmental studies, for example, recycle, reuse, you know all these are duties of our current type. Similarly, corporations would also have duties. We will speak about duties of corporations in our next lecture in a greater detail. So, I am going to skip that and save it for next time.

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Environmental movement

- It became a social movement in the USA in the 1960s. It was an anti-corporate, anti-capitalism movement for social justice.
- It brought many positive changes: New environmental regulations for controlling corporate behavior, new principles, a change in lifestyle. New paradigms came: Sustainable development.
- In 1973, in India spontaneously, there was a grassroots social movement against environmental degradation due to deforestation in the sub-Himalayan region. **CHIPKO**. It successfully brought a 10 year moratorium on tree-felling and deforestation with governmental support.
- There have been many other social protests and coalitions on environmental issues.

LISTEN TO THE PEOPLE
NOT POLLUTERS

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In the meantime, we need to show you that this environmental ethics actually has a history of being a social movement. In the 60s, it really took root in the United States of America and it became a social justice movement. It was definitely anti-corporate, anti-business, anti-capitalist in nature in fact.

They said that we do not want because the business is really degrading the environment and such movements brought many changes. One of the changes that we saw was in the law in terms of the regulatory laws. So, new laws came in, new principles came in, and a change came in lifestyle. These days even the young children they understand recycling which did not exist earlier. New paradigms came in our intellectual discourse namely sustainable development. Earlier we used to understand development only in one way.

Now, in India the history of environmental movement is somewhat different. It is not it was not always or ever an elitist movement. It was not run by the intellectuals. Many a times environmental protests movements have been done by the grassroots people, people who actually live very close to the nature and one of them you probably have heard about, it was a very spontaneous protest and that is known as the Chipko.

The women of the hill regions in the Sub-Himalayan region they protested against deforestation, in their very unique way. It was a non-violent protest, Chipko as in you hug the tree, all right. There I can tell stories about that, but it was a very successful movement. So, there have been many such attempts and many of them are well recorded,

but in general there is this point that we do not like to see the natural environment being degraded.

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Criticisms

- Politically conservative, and corporate lobbies argue against:

1. Environmentalism is actually anti-human. It puts human interest in the back burner. Economy must flourish, jobs must be created: Humans also need preservation. Environmental well-being should not happen at the human cost.
2. The climate change is just a hype, not really true, no conclusive evidence. The earth is not as vulnerable as it is made out to be. It has restored itself before humans, it will restore itself after humans are gone.

The point is about conflicting ideology, and conflicting interests. The lasting internal or mindset change through ethics has to come voluntarily, not by imposition or open conflicts. Thus, this way alone is also not sufficient.

The ethical corporations should try a combinatorial approach of all three.

Now, understandably against such movements and against this line of thinking I mean a change from anthropocentrism to biocentrism, egocentrism, did not sit well with certain groups of people, particularly the politically conservative people and the corporate lobbies. They argued that it is a criticism of this whole thing that actually environmentalism is anti-human because it puts humans at the backburner and tries to give rights to everything else. So, but on the other hand humans also have survival rights, jobs must be created in order to get going, so humans need preservation.

They have also argued that climate change is not happening, it is just a hype made created by certain people. It is not really true. And the earth is also not very vulnerable as it is made out to be because earlier also ice ages have gone and come retreated, so lift to earth it will restore by itself, we do not have to do anything special. Now, whether you believe in this or this is a different question, but I just posed them, so that you know that you know it is not that a it is not a total success yet, there is a lot to be still done.

But conflicting ideologies you know this is what it is all about, but there is a very big point in all this discussion that we had is about the internal change through ethics. So, that is hard, but we need external measures like laws, like you know strategic tools for example, all these trading techniques and so on, but at the same time there has to be also

an internal realization and perhaps the ethical corporations can take a combinatorial approach of all of this.

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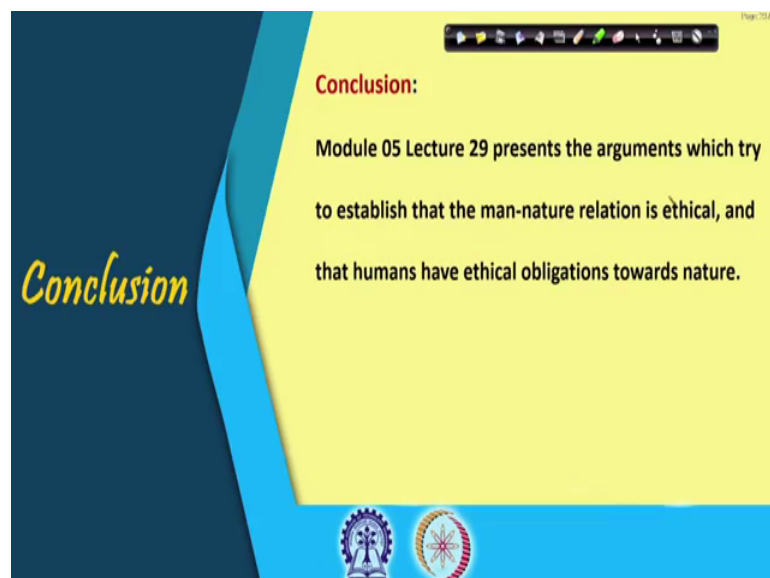
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With that I am going to end the lecture today. And, we will talk about more in the next module and that would be the last session on our duties towards natural environment.

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Conclusion:

Module 05 Lecture 29 presents the arguments which try to establish that the man-nature relation is ethical, and that humans have ethical obligations towards nature.

The slide features a dark blue background on the left with the word "Conclusion" in a yellow, cursive font. The right side has a yellow background with the conclusion text. At the bottom center, there are two circular logos: one of a tree and one of a sun.

Thank you very much.