

ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS EMBEDDED IN THE HINDU TRADITION: A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS

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Introduction

Environmental philosophy is recently emerging branch of philosophy in the West. This branch studies the relationship between humans and non-humans (animal beings and inanimate things) and insists that non-humans have equal rights as human beings do. This new trend of philosophy criticizes metaphysical stance and ideological position of traditional philosophical systems as well as some major religions. An environmental philosopher has perfectly not succeeded to prove anthropocentric ideology in the Eastern religions (especially Hindu and Chinese traditions). On the Contrary, They consider that Hindu and Chinese traditions have proto-environmental ideology. This paper analyses the environmental philosophical ideas implicit in the Hindu philosophical systems and also clarifies ideological and metaphysical stance of environmental philosophical ideas of Hinduism and the western philosophical tradition. Environmental philosophical ideas in the west originated and developed from rationalistic and positivistic dimension of the knowledge. On the contrary, it is said and believed that Hindu environmental philosophical ideas have originated and developed from mystic and metaphysical dimensions of the knowledge. This paper analyses this interesting epistemological conflict and tries to reconcile positivistic conflict of the different avenues of the knowledge by logic of metaphysics.

Methodology

Philosophy is itself as a unique methodology. The paper includes various methodologies of philosophy. The very important methodologies of philosophy: Critical evaluation of beliefs and clarification of concepts are utilized in this paper. Apart from this, analytical method, synthetic method, comparative method and critical method and holistic method have been used in this paper.

Summary and Conclusion

According to environmental philosophy, the moral realm includes not only human beings but also non-humans and inanimate things of the natural world. Every being has its own rights to realize its own good and potentials in the evolution process like human beings. The lowest forms of living beings have pain and pleasure as human beings do and inanimate things and inorganic elements have potentialities to become animate beings in the future evidenced by scientific researches. The many scientific studies proved that human beings had evolved from the lowest forms of living beings. The human beings, as the more evolved form of living beings, as per ethical consideration, have more responsibility to allow the lowest forms of living beings to achieve their highest potentialities inherent in them.

Ascending order of the living beings from the lowest to the highest witnessed by the lines of the Thiruvacagam of Manikavacagar as;

“... Pullaki Podaki puluvai, maramaki, palvrukamaki, parvaiyai, pampaki, kallai, manitharai, peiyai, kangalai. Valasurarai, munivarai, thevarai”¹

In this ascending line, we can find the inanimate thing, a stone which is the important element for environmental philosophy. It is not enough for us to have the feeling of empathy and sympathy towards non humans but also to have the same towards inanimate things. In ecosystem, every species live together and its successful existence and continuity depend on other species and inanimate things in the system. This implies that every species has a mandatory obligation to other species of the system. In this back ground, environmental philosophy insists that the highly evolved life form of human being has moral obligation to the lowest forms of living beings and inanimate things from which the evolution of human beings originated. In this moral background, changing life style and eco-friendly measures are proposed by environmental philosophers and scientists to preserve the natural resources as much as possible and to do justice for non-humans as well as inanimate things in the ecosystem.

The Bhagvat Gita, the ancient Holy Scripture reflects fundamental environmental philosophical ideas this following words:

“I am the self seated in the heart of all creatures. I am the beginning, the middle and the very end of all beings. All beings have, therefore treated alike”²

Hindus consider that ‘Pancha Bhuthas (the five elements (space, air, fire, water and earth) are embodiment of divine or God Saint Manikavasagar in his *Thiruvacagam sings* as,

“Vanaki, manaki,
Valiyaki, yoliyaki
Yunaki, ooyeraki...”³

This devotional song depicts in real state, the five elements are god.

It is said that environmental ideas of Hindus originated on the basis of metaphysical oriented knowledge but not on the basis of rationalistic and positivistic oriented knowledge. However, one find that contemporary environmental philosophical ideas in many ways merge with the Hindu philosophical ideas, even though the both avenues for the attainment of the two kind of knowledge is different in its nature and feature. Even though the avenues for the attainment of such a great wisdom is different in its origin, the end reaching by the two different avenues is the same and just for all living being in the world.

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¹ . Thiruvacagam,26-28

² . Bhagavat Gita, X.20

³ .Thiruvacagam,5.2.15

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