

The Responsibility Of Man For Environment: The Biblical Perspective**Mrs. Nitish Debbarma****Assistant Professor****Department Of Philosophy****Dasaratha Deb Memorial College****District-Khowai****State-Tripura****Received:26November2023/Revised:6December2023/Accepted:20December2023/Published:28December2023)****Abstract**

The environmental problem is nowadays a global issue. Human beings are facing the environmental crisis every moment. As we are part of environment, we need the search the problem of environment. We need a good environment to live a healthy life that all desire in our life. It is our duty to save the environment from the pollution and destruction. Therefore, human has the responsibility to keep the environment green and clean. Accordingly, every religion has the same responsibility to keep the environment free from destruction and exploitation. In this regard, what should be the responsibility of man for environment from the Biblical perspective? What does the Bible say about the duty of man towards nature? What is the Biblical picture regarding the creation? What are the solutions of these problems? These are the questions raised related to the environmental crisis. Human cannot survive alone in this world. As humans are the part of nature, human needs natural elements for survival. Every being is interrelated to one another in the environment. There is close relation between man and nature. Man should not harm nature by any means. Human depends natural resources for survival.

References: Biblical Perspective, Man, Environment**Biblical Account Of Creation**

According to the Christian theology, in the very beginning God has created heaven and earth (Genesis 1:1) then he created animal and plant. He created human on the course of six day. After creation of everything, God rest on the seven day which called the rest day and sabbath day.He created Light and Dark and separated them from each other's. This is the first day on which day he created heaven, earth, light and dark etc.God made expansion of water from the water on the second day. He said "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the water, and let it separated the waters from the waters (Genesis 1:6)"God gathered of water which is under heaven to have dry land and created sea, vegetables and plants etc. on the third day. He said "Let the water under heavens be gathered together into

one place, and let the dry land appear (Genesis 1:9)” and “Let the earth sprout vegetables, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth (Genesis 1:11),”God on the fourth day created the two great lights-the greater light and lesser light and the stars. The greater light is to rule the day and lesser light is to rule the night. He said “Let there be light in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for season, and for days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give lights upon the earth (Genesis 1:14-15)”God on the fifth day created the great sea creature and every living creature and winged bird. He said “Let waters swarm with swarms of living creature, and let bird fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens” (Genesis 1:20) and “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the sea, and let the birds multiply on the earth” (Genesis 1:22).God on the six-day created man, male and female. He said “let us make man in our image, after our likeness and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heaven and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth” (Genesis 1:26) and “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living things that moves the earth”(Genesis 1;28).On the Seven-day God finished his work that he had done and he rested on the seven days from his all work that he had done. The seven day is called sabbath day on which day he took rest.

After the creation of everything, he saw everything is good that he had created. After that he blessed and made holy the seven days. God said to human “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruits. You shall have them for food. And every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heaven and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food” (Genesis 1:29-30).

According to Holy Bible, God has made the earthly things like animals, plants, trees, birds and fishes in successive way. Bible reveals the concept of the great chain being that conceived a hierarchical order of creation. There is an order of creation starting with God then to human then animals and plants. This order continues through various levels of angels. God created all the animals and plants and he saw it was good. Everything was created by God with some purpose. Human is the special creation of God. Accordingly, God has given a special power with responsibility to Human for caring the environment. Human named all the animals. It

was the will of God that God has given authority with responsibility to take care of others being. According to Old Testament, human is given a special place in the creation.

Like Muslim and Buddhist religion, Christianity is also monotheistic religion who believes in only one God. Christian theology says that human cannot meet God directly. It is possible to meet God through the prophet only. For the reason Christianity believe in Prophet. Jesus is the only way to meet God. Jesus is the only son of God who was sent on this earth. God created everything as his wish then he felt everything good that he created after creation. Everything that was made is for glory of God. This world is created by God and to serve God. According to theology, human is the supreme being among his creation. Because, God created human in his own image and he created male and female. God shared his kindness to human being.

Stewardship

Christianity believes in the stewardship of human towards nature. The word steward means Guardianship of God's creature. According to Sir Matthew Hales, steward means "firm manager". He says human beings are viceroy of God. He considered human being as farmer of goodly farm of the lower world. Man is given responsibility to care of nature. Man is responsible for natural things i.e biotic as well as abiotic. There is an interrelation between man and nature. Genesis reveals that man was given responsibility to look after the garden. Adam was the first man who was commanded by God to look after garden of Eden. God said to Adam "to dress and keep it". The word 'dress' does not justify simply wearing human cloth. It justifies the duty to look after it and to keep beautiful as God wish. Humans are steward for God creature as human is created in his own image. Humans are considered as superior in this world only for the reason that human was invested with power, authority, dominion, trust and care for others being. Human is to correct and abridge of the excesses and cruelties of the furious animals and also to protect them from extinction.

According to John Black, the term 'steward' means a responsible. He means to say human should act in responsible way for lower creation. Human has ethical responsibility towards other creation. He says "Man could see himself as responsible and accountable to God for the management of the earth, over which he has in turn been given complete control. In other words, man saw himself as a steward." He says human is created in the image of God; it is undoubtedly acceptable that human act in responsible way to the lower creation of God. As God loves us in the same way human loves others creature of God. Genesis elaborates the stewardship of human being towards nature. There are many verses of Genesis implicitly

reveals the responsibility for human towards non-human such as “If you come across a bird’s nest in a tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs and the mother sitting on the young or eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young, you shall let the mother go, but the young you may take or yourself, that it may go well with you, and that you may live long” (Deuteronomy 22:6). God said ‘When a man opens a pit, or when a man digs a pit and does not cover it, an ox or a donkey falls into it, the owner of the pit shall make restoration. He shall give money to its owner, and the dead beast shall be his’.’“If a man gives to his neighbor a donkey or an ox or a sheep or any beast to keep safe, and it dies or is injured or is driven away, without anyone seeing it, an oat by the Lord shall be between them both to see whether or not he has put his hand to his neighbor’s property. The owner shall accept the oath, and he shall not make restitution. But if it is stolen from him, shall make restitution to its owner” (Exodus-22:10-12).

If we deeply consider the creation of God, we found that God created tress, all kind of animals like beast, cattle, fowl and every creature in the sea and bless them. He is the creator of all that moves on the earth. There must the purpose behind the creation. Everything has a purpose. Bible says since God created everything and human is the supreme creature human has the special responsibility for nature. Human is the steward of God’s creation. “... let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and overall, the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth” (Genesis). God has given the authority to human with a great responsibility for all being and to dominion over all being. The word ‘dominion’ does not mean the destruction of the animals and trees, here the dominion means the guardianship. In the family, father is the head and has the maximum authority to take care of the family. Similarly, God has given authority to human for caring man and animal equally. Dominion over the animals means bringing the animals under control of the human. Genesis reveals that “a man steals an ox or a sheep, and kills it or sells it, he shall repay five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep” (Exodus 22:1),“For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield, but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the beasts of the field may eat. You shall do likewise with your vineyard, and with your olive orchard” (Exodus 23:10-11). Human should not kill and steal an animal of anyone. If any person kills and steal an animal then a person is bound to repay five of an animal in return. Human are suggested to cultivate and to take rest. Human should also leave some of the grains in the field for the poor people and the beast. The first man Adam and Eve were given

responsibility by God to take care of Eden Garden. They have been restricted to eat the fruit of knowledge from the centre of the garden. But they did not obey the God's command and ate the fruit. They were naked in the garden of Eden. God called Adam and Eve to be closer to him. However, they felt ashamed and hid themselves behind the tree of the garden. Afterwards, God used animal's skin to cover their body and drove them out of the garden of Eden. Moreover, God commanded humans to feed animals with their crops and also the poor people. Genesis reveals the importance of nature as humans are important. It shows the good relation between man and animals. Man should take care of animals and plants under his authority without any harm. Therefore, Genesis implicitly suggests humans not to do as they wish with nature. For example, the treatment of animals and tress and fallow land like oxen, mother birds, tress fruits etc. Moreover, the book of Proverbs suggests that 'A righteous man regarded the life of his beast'.

John Passmore presents the arguments in favour of stewardship view for taking care of nature.

In reference to the Genesis, he says God created man in his own image as steward for caring and protecting the natural beauty. He highlighted the example of Adam and Eve who were put by God into the garden of Eden "to dress it and keep it". Man was deputed by God to take care of the nature. In this regard, he said in his book 'Man's Responsibility for Nature: Ecological Problem and Western Tradition' that "On this interpretation, then, it is a gross error to suppose that Christianity passes no moral judgment on man's relationship to nature..." But he said all the traditional views of Christianity are not considered that Stoic Christian traditions are not favourable to the solution of its ecological problems. He says, "What is ecologically dangerous in Christianity it encourages men to believe that they are sons of God and therefore, secure their continued existence on earth guaranteed by God, Man, it must certainly be recognized, has no tenure in the biosphere." Passmore said about two traditional views in relation to man and nature relationship. First, Man is steward for nature and second, man should cooperate nature to make it perfect. From the first view, man must believe that man is entrusted with the duty to preserve the beauty of the Earth and fruitfulness, and from the second view, man should endeavour to develop and perfect the natural world in accordance with its potential- these are the tradition of which Passmore discovered no trace between pagan antiquity and seventeenth century.

John Passmore argues that God has deputed humans as 'steward' to look after the nature. This theory discusses that man has been created by God to take care of the nature and also to

nourish it. Human has the responsibility to dress it in the best possible manner. Passmore mention in his book “Man’s Responsibility for nature” that man should live with animals in cooperative way and the problem of nature is ‘as a practical consequence of man’s dealing with nature’. Passmore presents both the theory of ‘despotic’ and ‘steward’ towards nature. Finally, he become in the position to support the steward view of nature. He said there is evidence of stewardship for caring nature. Therefore, the attitude of Christianity towards nature is ecocentric and stewardship. Passmore rejected the view of despotic attitude towards nature of Lynn White. He said human is a part of nature created by God. Human is place with responsibility for others lower being. He said belief in human dominion is to be considered not as despotic as accepted by Lynn White, but it implies as humanity, as the steward or bailiff for the creation of God. He finds this view of the human role for nature in Plato’s writing Phaedrus and in Iamblichus. Passmore said, this view was not held among Christians before sir Matthew Hale in the seventeenth century. Man is to cooperate with nature to make it perfect by realizing its potentialities. The biblical belief of the dominion of human over animals is stewardship or guardianship. In genesis 1, meat eating is not authorised, only vegetarian is authorised. Moreover, the responsibility of a king is to serve his people and protect within his realm which we found in the Bible. King being the guardian of the kingdom must not destroy his people and kingdom.

John Passmore, said the dominion of mankind over animals was constructed as responsible exercise of a circumscribed mandate is part of the Jahwist account of creation. Further, this theory is supported by John Black’ interpretation of genesis 2:15. Man is given the duty to preserve the nature and its beauty and protect it from any kind of harm. Man is also commanded to collect the food from the nature. He elaborated that this mandate was abolished by the fall and curse. However, the mandate was renewed after the fall. Similarly, the New Testament also speaks about the stewardship of nature. It tells about the care of God for animals found in the Bible, such as sparrows (Matthew 10:29 and Luke 12:6). Old Testament speaks about the care of trees and plants such as lilies (Matthew 7:2-30) just as much as Old Testament. The teaching of Jesus gives important for animals and plants. There are many evidence of Jesus’s advocacy of rescuing asses and oxen which have fallen into pits (Luke 14:5). This enough motivated us to take care of the animals. As Old Testament has given important for domestic and wild animals similarly the New Testament brought an important care of well-being. It is to reflect here that in one parable Jesus regards with

sympathy the painstaking retrieval by a shepherd of the hundred sheep (Luke 15:4-7). It can therefore be said that the attitude of Christianity towards is as stewardship.

Peter Singer explains it as, "... it allots human beings a special position in the universe, as beings that, alone of all living things, are God-like." Human being is sent to this world as a representative of God to take care of others animal. Being supreme being man has responsibility to keep this creation as beautiful. The responsibility that God has given to the man is that God created the first man in his own image and put into the garden of Eden and grow trees in the midst of the garden with full of food for him, and orders him, "...Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat" (Genesis 2:16). Peterson said "Jesus was not fully human but merely took human form, as a spirit temporally housed in a frail and fallible body" Significance of the of the human is explained in theology. God has created every facility for his entire creation for their survival like man animal and plants etc. He had commanded too human with his creation to steward of all. God has given a very special character to human that is intelligence which make difference man from others animals. Man, as given by God the special character similarly man is given a special duty to preserve nature which is found in the Bible.

References

1. Passmore, J. (1974). *Man's Responsibility for Nature: Ecological Problems and Western Traditions*, New York.
2. Singer, P. (2011). *Practical Ethics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
3. Attfield, R. (1991). *The Ethics of Environmental Concern*, Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press.
4. Dake, F. J. (2005). *Dake's Annotated Reference Bible – The Holy Bible*, USA: Dake Publishing.
5. New king James version, (2001). *The Holy Bible (Old Testament)* Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers,
6. Naess, A., & Rothenberg, D. (1989). *Ecology, community, and lifestyle: Outline of an ecosophy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
7. Attfield, R. (2006). Environmental Sensitivity and Critiques of Stewardship. In J. R. Berry (Ed.), *Environmental Stewardship*: New York: T. & T. Clark International.

8. Bookchin, M. (2005). *The Ecology of Freedom: The emergence and dissolution of hierarchy*. Oakland: AK Press.
9. Callicut, J. B. and Frodeman, R.(2009). *Encyclopaedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy*, Vol. I & 2, MacMillan, GALE, Cengage Learning.
10. Cobb, J. B., Jr. (1992). *Sustainability: Economics, ecology, and justice*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
11. Cooper, D. E. & Palmer, J. A.(1992). *The Environment in Question: Ethics and Global Issues*, London: Routledge.
12. Evans, J. C. (2005) *With Respect for Nature – Living as part of the Natural World*, Albany: State University of New York Press.
13. Feuerbach, L. (1957). *The essence of Christianity*. New York: Harper & Row.
14. Foss, J. E. (2009). *Beyond Environmentalism –A Philosophy of Nature*, A John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Publication,
15. Hall, D. J. (1986). *Imaging God: Dominion as stewardship*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
16. Ip, King – Tak. (2009). *Environmental Ethics: Inter-cultural Perspective*, New York: Value Inquiry Book Series,
17. Jamieson, D. (2001) *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
18. Leiss, W. (1994). *The domination of nature*. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press.
19. Moltmann, J. (1985). *God in creation: A new theology of creation and the spirit of God* (trans: Kohl, M.). San Francisco: Harper and Row.
20. Noss. (1980) *Man’s Religion*, 7th ed. New York: Macmillan.