

Business Ethics
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Lecture – 56
Ethics of conserving depletable resources

In the earlier discussion we have focused on the ways in which the ethics of pollution can be dealt with based on whether we take view on anthropocentric view where the environment gets protected or people get interested in protecting or thinking about the environment for the sake of the benefit that is derived by the human being itself. So, extremely different view as compared to this has been that of the ecological prospective which talks of like and the environment needs to be protected for the sake of itself only and not for the benefit that human beings get from it.

So, the human being and the non human being both have their intrinsic value and that is why they have, they should be protected. The environmental right perspective it discusses like, every human being has the right for a livable environment and any activity that is degrading the environment and in quality is not acceptable and that may lead to absolute ban on pollution; however, as already discussed we understand like this absolute ban may be an very idealistic condition which is not possible and therefore, the debate was that of internalizing the external cost and by the organization and trying to show it in the price on the products and services.

But questions may come up again regarding how do we measure this cost, what are the indices for it, how frequently the study has been done, is it truly measurable or not. So, that you can ascribe a value to it, based on this due to this debate the focus shifted to understanding; why is it like the environment is thought of like, why does this idea comes like the environment can be exploited, can be polluted, can be depleted? And the answer was sort in a deeper understanding of how the society functions, what gets respected in the society, and what needs to be done.

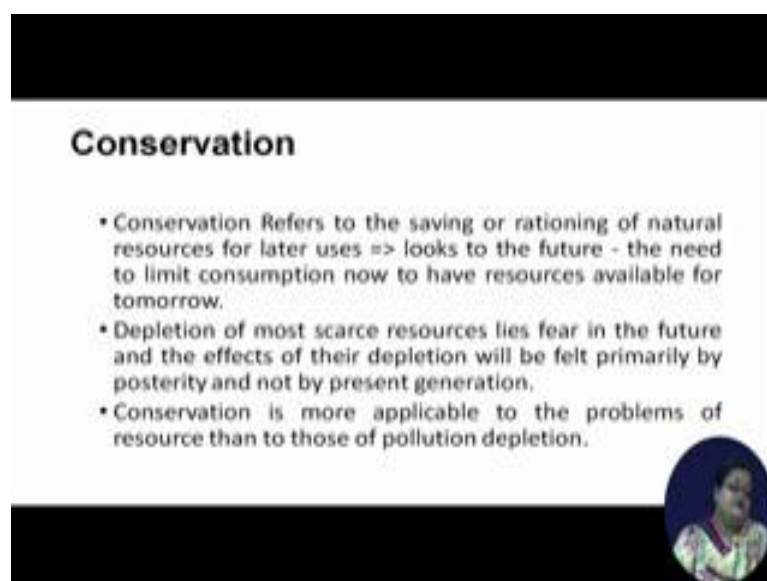
So, there the focus was in social ecology where the study of the different societies, shows like nature have been given secondary status somewhere and power has been ascribe to concurring over this nature and that defined whether somebody is more powerful than the other person. The ecofeminism view of this perspective tells, the nature has been

equated in different societies with woman and because the society treats woman as in a secondary statuses compared to male and it is a male dominated society. So, due to that mental map the nature also gets a secondary status in the mental framework of people and drawing analogy just like it is nothing harm to treat may be women in a derogatory way, degraded way and. So, may be similarly there is nothing harm in depleting the resources or polluting the environment.

According to the ecofeminists, viewpoints this whole lens of understanding the woman as a secondary citizen and like instead of focusing on the male dominance part, the society should change its view from having a masculine oriented lens to a feminist oriented lens.


Where ethics of care then justice thinking of the values of others which are these feminine qualities gets more respected and there, if we can think of caring for some human entities. Similarly the ethics of care can be extended to the non human entities like animals and plants and water and environment also and. So, that is why for this caring approach this ethics of care to trying to think of the need of others and then taking some measures to fulfill those needs and aspirations has become important. The ethics of care becomes more prominent when we discuss the ethics of conserving depleting resources.

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Conservation

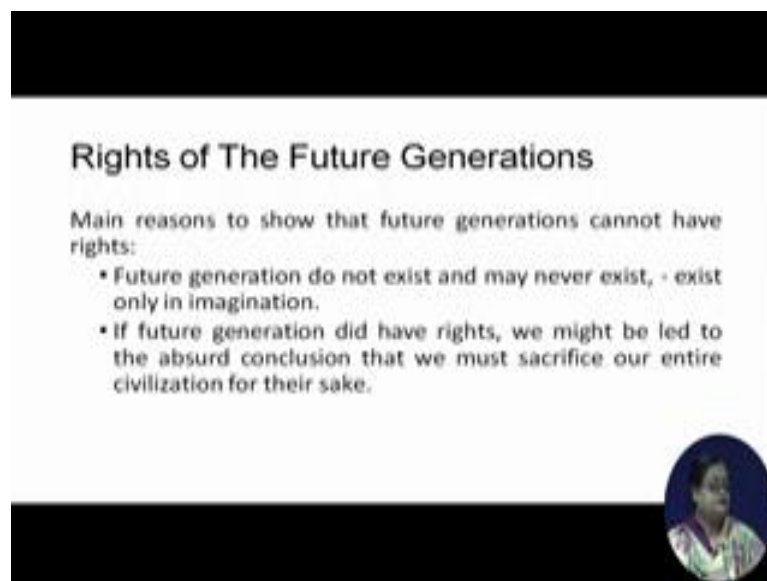
- Conservation Refers to the saving or rationing of natural resources for later uses => looks to the future - the need to limit consumption now to have resources available for tomorrow.
- Depletion of most scarce resources lies fear in the future and the effects of their depletion will be felt primarily by posterity and not by present generation.
- Conservation is more applicable to the problems of resource than to those of pollution depletion.



So, when we understand why conservation is, it refers to the saving or rationing of natural resources for later uses and it has a future orientation. It looks to the future, the need for to limit consumption now, to have resource which is available for tomorrow. So, when you are talking of conservation there is relationship of it with doing some rationing and saving to and limiting the present consumption now and to have resources for tomorrow. And may be when we are talking these resources we are hinting more towards the resources which are scarce resources. So, and the fear associated with it like if we are over consuming now then in future a specific condition may arrive where the, where nothing will be left for the future generation for you nothing will be left in the future to take care of the future needs.

So here, when we are talking of conservation of resources, we are focusing more to the depletion of nonrenewable resources, and not majorly to the problems of pollutions.


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Rights of The Future Generations

Main reasons to show that future generations cannot have rights:

- Future generation do not exist and may never exist, - exist only in imagination.
- If future generation did have rights, we might be led to the absurd conclusion that we must sacrifice our entire civilization for their sake.



And when we are discussing about the conservation of resources for future question may come up regarding this future means what? Is it that we are talking of future use of the present generation or we are discussing future use by the future generation? So, conserve when we talking of from the sustainability prospective we are focusing more towards future use of the future generation. So, here we will extend this concept of conservation of resources and try to discuss this in light of the future use for the future generation also and extend it to the domain of sustainability.

So, here when we discussing depletion of resources because the problems related to pollution and the problems related to resource depletion are somewhat different. When you are talking of reducing pollution there also we are trying to focusing on conserving the environment for the future generation because the pollution also consumes pure air and water, but when we are talking of conservation of for resource depletion we are more focusing towards the depletion of the resources and resources becoming extinct from what it is available at present and what it is available to the future generation.

Now, when we are repeating the phrase future generation two three questions get related to it. First question of course, is because conservation ensures supply to the future generation. So, two major kinds of question that we face over here is to understand why should we conserve resources for the future generation and how much should we conserve. I repeat; two questions become very important to over here, why should we conserve resources for future generation and how much should we conserve. These two questions can be answered from again the like justice perspective, rights perspective or care perspective and we will discuss about each of these perspectives now.

First if we try to agree like we will be, we are required to conserve for the future generation because the future generation also has a right to a livable environment and environment which is like the present generation is enjoying. The environment should not be anything less than what they have, they will be enjoying. So, while discussing the right of the future generation it might appear like we have an obligation to conserve resources for the future generation because they also have an equal right to the limited resources of the planet. Now, if they also have an equal right to the resources of the planet. So, then by depleting these resources we are taking away, what are actually theirs and violating their right to these resources.

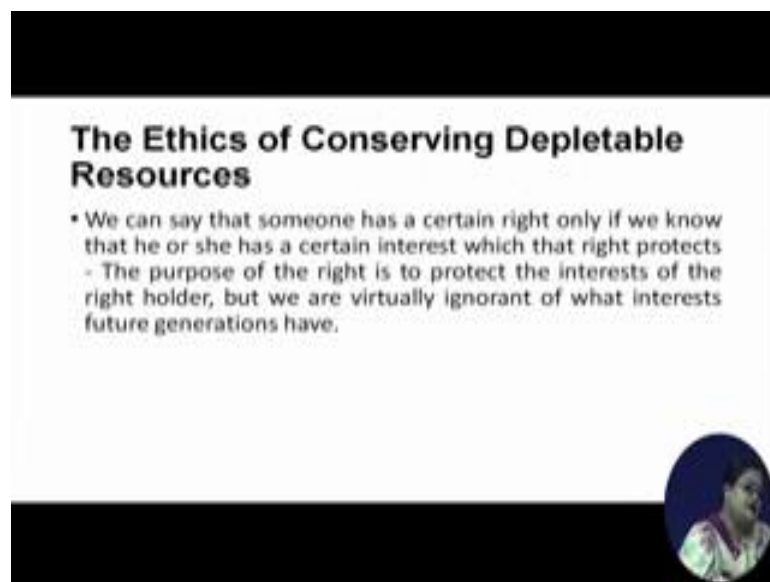
However, some critics have told and like it is good to be concerned about future generations, but it is a mistake to think like that, we have will be conserving the resources because it is the right of the future generation. The arguments given for it, is that because the future generations do not exist now and whenever exist also. So, it is not ok to tell like they have certain rights. So, because if they do not exist in future, they may not possess any right so; however, even if it is the future generation have rights it is an absurd proposition like we need to sacrifice everything of our present, in order to sacrifice everything of our present, in order to take care of the means of the future

generation. Why? Because then we are depriving ourselves for the sake of the future and like if everyone has equal needs to some of them resources, which are depletable in nature, then to save for the rights of all the people of the future generation we are also depriving ourselves by not consuming it.

So, also if certain people have rights, we can claim it only when the person shows certain interest in possessing it. So, because the future generation is not yet known and we do not understand whether they will be possessing their interest in the same area or not. So, then we cannot tell like they have a right also. So, and we also do not know like what kind of technology will be available to serve their purposes. So, and they might have developed number of substitutes for the resources that are scares now. So why should we try to conserve for the future generation, when the rights of the future generation itself not being well established.


However, because the rights of the future generation does not gets well established, we cannot say like we do not have any obligation to the future generation. So, because we definitely do have obligation, but the theory may not be based on rights.

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But based on other moral considerations and one such moral consideration is that of justice.

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Conservation Based on Ethics

- Rawls:
 - Leave the world no worse than we found it.
- Care Ethic:
 - Leave our children a world no worse than we received.
- Atfield:
 - Leave the world as productive as we found it.

So, when we are discussing justice. So, we will be discussing justice from Rawls perspective. According to Rawls, the he argued like, although it is unjust to impose disproportionately heavy burdens on the present generation for the sake of the future generation like the rights prospective, like it is may be talking too much of the rights of the future generation and too much of the things like the present generation has to do in terms of consumption control and conserving resources, consuming less and all.

So, may be too much demanding for the heavy burden on the present generation for the sake of future generation. So, similarly it is unjust for the present generation to leave nothing for the future generation. So, what is suggested over here to find out a, to determine a just way of distribution of resources which is between the generations and then, find out like how much of the resources that is expected like we leave for our future generation, leave behind for our future generation.

So, the position that a person is supposed to take over here, like everybody should put them in the original position and without understanding what a generation they belong to that is whether they are the present generation and the future generation. So, they have to ask like they should be doing the following things, ask what is reasonable for members of adjust some generations to expect of one another at each level of advance. They should try to piece together; adjust saving schedule by balancing how much at each sage

they would be willing to save for their immediate descendants against what they would feel like they are entitled to claim from their immediate predecessors.

So, the role like just parents they have to think how much they are to a certain, how much they are to, they should set aside for their children by noting what they would believe like they are themselves entitled to claim from their parents. So, what Rawls tries to conclude from here, is that it helps to ascertain, this method helps to ascertain; what earlier generation in justice owe to later generations and that what justice that we demand for us is merely that, what we do to the next situation and next generation and that we leave them the world which is no words that what we found it. So, each generation must not only preserve the gains of culture and civilization and maintain inter those just institutions that they have established.

But they must also put aside in each period of time a suitable amount of real capital accumulation. Here, the capital is not only the factories, not only the machines so, but the culture, the technique, the skills and the skills and that may possible just institutions and fair value of liberty. These is in term for what is received from previous generations it enables the later wants to enjoy better life in a more just society. So, it means like we hand over to our immediate generation successors a world that is not towards conditions then the one received from our parents. So, from this also, the ethics of care also speaks in the same tune. It talks of like, it also suggests like to leave to a children the world which is no words than what we received from our parents.

So, we can always improve it, but and make it better, but when it comes for a conservation of resources, we should not be living behind a world which is less than what we got from our parents. According to Attfield, speaking in the same tune like; we should leave a world as productive as we found it when we started our journey. So, we should not be making the world less productive than we find it is at present.

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This moves us to the discussion of sustainability. So, when we were talking of conservation of resources some dilemma appeared regarding whether we are going to conserve the resources only for the future and or like compromising on the needs of the present generation.

So, but that is not what we defined by sustainability. When we are looking at sustainability, we are giving equal importance to both the meeting the needs of the present generation as well as without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their needs. So, when you talking of conservation of resources if you trying to answer the question, why should we go to conserve and the second question, to what extend like we are going to conserve, then the answer which lies with the extend that we are going to conserve depends on balancing the needs of the preset generation and the needs of the future generation which we will be discussing in sustainability. While discussing the problems of resource depletion from the market point of view like, do they get interested in conservation of resources? So, we find certain observations like businesses try to conserve consume resources before competitors do. And businesses have short time horizons, the future for the business is difficult to predict and the future tries to ignore externalities.

Then the only means of conserving for the future then appears to be either it comes of voluntarily in terms of self regulation as we discussed in yesterdays module or in terms

of some policies and practices like policies of conservation, which has been political enforced by the government or the civil society in association with the government. So, Rawls view tries to emphasis in the factor that, although we should not sacrifice the advances that we have made with some voluntary or legal measures should be adopted to conserve the resources and environmental benefits that we reasonably feel like our immediate future generation would need. So, if they have to make their lives as comparable with initially at least to our own.

So, this would mean like preservation of wide life and endanger species, may be taking care of the fossil fuels. So, to take care that the consumption of fossil fuels become less and does not rise, then cutting down the cost and consumption of goods which are and production of goods that are not based on renewable energy sources resources. And how do we recycle nonrenewable resources as we have seen in the product cycle when we talked of ethical supply chain and so the backward loop of supply chain of where we are adding value to the waste and giving it a new life cycle. So, nothing actually remains as a waste because you are generating value out of it and making it reusable and. So, and we are trying to also some find alternatives for resources that we are rapidly depleting. So, these type of steps required when we are talking of conservation of resources from with a business perspective.

In the next module we will be discussing on the sustainability issues related to the environment.

Thank you.