

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS PERSPECTIVES FROM NANAKIAN PHILOSOPHY

ARTICLE

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INTRODUCTION

Environmental ethics refers to the moral relations between humans and their natural environment. Brennan and Lo [1] define 'environmental ethics' as a discipline in philosophy that studies the moral relationship of human beings to, and also the value and moral status of, the environment and its nonhuman contents. Environmental Ethics emerged as a distinct field in early 1970s. In fact environmental ethics is a part of wider term, environment philosophy, which is a branch of philosophy that is concerned with the natural environment and humans' place within it. It includes environmental ethics, environmental aesthetics; environmental hermeneutics, environmental theology, anthropocentrism and some also include ecofeminism [2]. Borghini [3] also defined 'environmental ethics' (eco-ethics) as that branch of philosophy dealing with the major ethical questions regarding the relationships between humans and the environment. This includes issues such as biodiversity, wildlife management, ecological preservation, hunting practices, farming techniques, and food regulations.

It is hard to find direct information related to environmental ethics in Nanakian Philosophy. Nanakian Philosophy is a philosophy embodied in the verses (*bani*) of Guru Nanak which have been explained and preached by the Sikh Gurus who succeeded to the 'House of Nanak' ([4] – p 43-63).

However, there are enough philosophical thoughts in Nanakian Philosophy which could help to formulate basic principles to develop environmental ethics. In simplest terms, environmental ethics means the ethics to keep the Earth and its environment in good conditions as long as possible to pass it on to future generations of humanity.

The term 'environmental ethics' is a part of wider term, 'environment philosophy', which is a branch of philosophy that is concerned with the natural environment and humanity's place within it. Our Earth is the third planet from our Sun. Nevertheless, the Earth is the only planet in this Universe known to us which can sustain life although there is the possibility that there may be millions of such planets which can sustain life. Since the Earth provides everything to sustain life, therefore, Guru Nanak calls it "Mother Earth" (ਧਰਤੀ ਮਾਤਾ - AGGS, p 1021). Guru Nanak in his first verse, Jap, has equated Air as the Guru, Water as the father and the Earth as mother during the early part of 16th century. Consequently, it necessitates that we formulate environmental ethics to keep Mother Earth and its environment safe for as long as possible. However, before formulating the environmental ethics one must be aware of the fact that the Earth has been constantly changing; it was never in the state which we observe today and will never be in the same state in the future in spite of all our efforts to save it. In this paper the formulation of environmental ethics are discussed according to Nanakian Philosophy.

MOTHER EARTH

Our Earth is the third planet from our Sun. Our solar system is located in the Milky Way, a large spiral galaxy containing roughly 100 billion stars disposed in the form of a disk, with several spiral arms coiling around a central bulge. The diameter of the disk is about 100,000 light years and the Sun is located about 30,000 light years from the Milky

Way's nucleus on the Orion arm. Our galaxy, Milky Way, is one of the billions of galaxies in this Universe. In that respect our Earth is insignificant place in the whole Universe. It is quite wrong to think that the Earth is the center of the Universe as is understood in some religions.

Nevertheless, the Earth is the only planet in this Universe known to us which can sustain life although there is a possibility that there may be millions of such planets which can sustain life. Keeping in view environmental ethics, about 546 years ago Guru Nanak has declared the Earth as a place to practice righteousness as follows:

ਰਾਤੀ ਰੁਤੀ ਥਿਤੀ ਵਾਰ ॥

ਪਵਣ ਪਾਣੀ ਅਗਨੀ ਪਾਤਾਲ ॥

ਤਿਸੁ ਵਿਚਿ ਧਰਤੀ ਥਾਪਿ ਰਖੀ ਧਰਮ ਸਾਲ ॥

Rātī ruṭī thitī vār. Pavaṇ pāṇī agnī pātāl.
Fis vich dharṭī thāp rakhī dharam sāl.
The Earth having heat (molten rocks) in its center along with air and water around it; with day, night, different seasons and different days, is a place for the humanity to live and practice righteousness.

ਤਿਸੁ ਵਿਚਿ ਜੀਅ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਕੇ ਰੰਗ ॥

ਤਿਨ ਕੇ ਨਾਮ ਅਨੇਕ ਅਨੰਤ ॥

ਅਗਗਸ, ਜਪੁ 34, ਪੰਨਾ 7 [5].

Fis vich jīa jugat ke rang.
Fin ke nām anek anant.
Thereon are various types of living beings. And their names and kinds are uncountable.
AGGS, JAP 34, p 7.

Since the Earth provides everything to sustain life, therefore, Guru Nanak

calls it as “Mother Earth” (ਧਰਤੀ ਮਾਤਾ):

ਪਉਣੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਪਾਣੀ ਪਿਤਾ ਜਾਤਾ ॥

Paṁuṇ gurū pāṇī piṭ jāṭā.
ਉਦਰ ਸੰਜੋਗੀ ਧਰਤੀ ਮਾਤਾ ॥

Uḍar sanjogī dharṭī māṭā.
Guru Nanak is advising to the humanity:

*Please consider⁵ the importance of air¹ as the Guru²; water³ as the father⁴;
And the Mother⁸ Earth⁷ is the womb⁶ where everything needed by the humanity is produced with collective⁶ actions of air, water and Earth.*

ਰੈਣਿ ਦਿਨਸੁ ਦੁਇ ਦਾਈ ਦਾਇਆ ॥

ਜਗੁ ਖੇਲੈ ਖੇਲਾਈ ਰੇ ॥੧੦॥

Raiṇ dīnas dūe dūā dūā jag khelai khelāī he. ||10||

ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ: 1, ਪੰਨਾ 1021.

Night⁹ and day¹⁰ both¹¹ are as female¹² and male¹³ nurses and the whole humanity¹⁴ plays^{15,16} in their laps. 10

AGGS, M 1, p 1021.

Guru Nanak has further expanded the above philosophy about the importance of the environment in a sloka at the end of Jap at page 8 of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS):

Sloka

ਪਵਣੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਪਾਣੀ ਪਿਤਾ

ਮਾਤਾ ਧਰਤਿ ਮਹਤੁ ॥

ਦਿਵਸੁ ਰਾਤਿ ਦੁਇ ਦਾਈ ਦਾਇਆ ਖੇਲੈ

ਸਗਲ ਜਗਤੁ ॥

Pavaṇ gurū pāṇī piṭā māṭā dharat mahat.
Divas rāt dūe dūā dūā sagal jagat.
Air is like a Guru; water is like a father (both represent

environment); and the Earth is like the great mother (which provides all types of resources and food). Both day and night are like a male-nurse and a female nurse, respectively, and the whole humanity plays in their laps.

It means humanity enjoys these natural environment and resources provided by the great Mother Earth. Therefore, it is the duty of humans to practice righteousness.

ਚੰਗਿਆਈਆ ਬੁਰਿਆਈਆ

ਵਾਚੈ ਧਰਮੁ ਹਦੂਰਿ ॥

ਕਰਮੀ ਆਪੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਕੇ ਨੇੜੈ ਕੇ ਦੂਰਿ ॥

Changāīā buriāīā vāchāi dharam haḍūr.

Karmī āpo āpṇī ke neṛāi ke dūr.
(Now) your virtues (good deeds) and vices (bad deeds) are evaluated under the Laws of Nature/Universe.

Since people are honored according to their deeds, therefore, some will come near to salvation while others will remain away from it.

ਜਿਨੀ ਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਇਆ

ਗਏ ਮਸਕਤਿ ਘਾਲਿ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਤੇ ਮੁਖ ਉਜਲੇ ਕੇਤੀ ਛੁਟੀ ਨਾਲਿ ॥੧॥

Jinī nām dhiāīā gaē maskat ghāl.
Nānak te mukh ujle keṭī chhutī nāl.
||1||

ਅਗਗਸ, ਜਪੁ ਸਲੋਕ, ਪੰਨਾ 9.

Nanak says:

The faces of those nobles, who have comprehended that Entity (God), glow with happiness and attain liberation from their troubles. And with the association of such nobles many others can attain salvation.

AGGS, Jap Sloka, p 9.

Note: This sloka is repeated again at page 146 but under M 2 instead of M 1 [6].

(M 1 and M 2 represent Mahal – The

succession number of Sikh Guru who succeeded to the House of Nanak. M 1 means Guru Nanak himself and M 2 means Guru Angad – second Guru and so on.)

RESOURCES

Guru Nanak advises us that that Entity (As 'Nature' - explained later) has provided all the resources in the womb of Mother Earth as follows:

ਆਸਣੁ ਲੇਇ ਲੇਇ ਭੰਡਾਰ ॥

ਜੇ ਕਿਛੁ ਪਾਇਆ ਸੁ ਏਕਾ ਵਾਰ ॥

Āsaṅ lo'e lo'e bḥandār.

Jo kichḥ pāi'ā so ekā vār.

ਅਗਗਸ, ਜਪੁ 31, ਪਨਾ 7.

The God (Nature) exists everywhere in the Universe and has stored natural resources in every world (including our Earth) of the Universe. Whatever was to be put into these stores was put once for all (right from the beginning and no more will be added later on).

AGGS, Jap # 31, p 7.

That Entity exists everywhere in the Universe and has stored natural resources in the world (Mother Earth). Whatever was to be put into these stores was put once and for all (right from the beginning and no more will be added later on). For example, fossil fuels as oil and coal were deposited once and no more will be added now after their depletion. Therefore, we are already looking for alternative energy sources. Guru Nanak has already indicated in Jap stanza # 29 that there are two major sources of energy in the Universe – fusion (ਸੰਜੋਗ / *sanjig*) and fission (ਵਿਜੋਗ / *vijog*) [6]. Fission (atomic energy) is already being used extensively and now we are looking at fusion energy, which is safer and less polluting.

Earth's Clock of Life (billions of years)



Fig. 1: An Illustration from "The Life and Death of Planet Earth" shows the authors' view of the Earth's Clock of Life. (Image Credit: Donald Brownlee/ Peter Ward) [8]

Natural resources mean all types of matter including fossil fuels and the environmental conditions required to grow the food needed by the living beings to sustain life. However, it all depends on how the humans use them.

A geothermal plant is another natural resources which is safe and without any pollution. Geothermal plants drill wells into hot rock, at times a mile (1.6 km) deep or even more, and water is pumped into the wells. This water will generate on contact with the hot rock large amounts of steam and super-hot water that can put in motion turbines and run electricity generators at the surface. Currently, the US is the biggest geothermal energy producer worldwide. "The electricity produced annually by geothermal plants now in use in

California, Hawaii, Utah and Nevada is comparable to that produced by solar and wind power combined", said Nafi Toks [7].

In all the above phrases Guru Nanak explains the importance of the Earth as "Mother Earth" with all its resources produced in her womb and environment around it for sustaining life. Consequently, it necessitates that we need to formulate environmental ethics to keep Mother Earth and its environment safe for as long as possible. It is important to remember the constantly changing condition of the Earth. For example, According to the scientific information about origin of our Earth in our Solar System Brownlee and Ward [8] have developed Earth's Clock of Life as follows: Brownlee and Ward have explained in the above clock that if the Earth

was formed about 4.5 billion years ago and that time is taken as the zero hour of the Earth then the first sign of life originated about a little before 1:00 AM (around one billion years) and oxygen appeared after 2:00 AM (after two billion years). Plants and animals started to appear after 4:00 AM (after 4 billion years). Now we are at about 4:30 AM (about 4.5 billion years after the formation of the Earth). The most of the plant and animal lives may disappear by 5 PM (after about 0.5 billion years from now). According to their estimation the ocean will be lost by evaporation of water by 8:00 PM which means no life on Earth or in water by that time. There is about 7.5 billion years until the Earth disappears.

According to another estimation, that of Howes, [9] our home planet will remain habitable for a further 1.75 billion years. During this time, the Earth will remain in the 'habitable zone' in which surface temperatures and our proximity to the Sun will allow for the existence of liquid water and the continuation of life. Brownlee and Ward [8] repeat the above message of Guru Nanak, saying that: "The people really should consider the fate of our world and have a realistic understanding of where we are going. We live in a fabulous place at a fabulous time. It's a healthy thing for people to realize what a treasure this is in space and time, and fully appreciate and protect their environment as much as possible."

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Environmental Theology

Environmental theology is defined by Jacobus [10] as: "The study of God's relationship to the environment".

Environmental theology (Eco-theology) is a form of constructive theology that focuses on the interrelationships of religion and nature to explore the interaction between ecological values, such as sustainability, and the human domination of nature. The movement has produced numerous religious-environmental projects around the world under the United Nations Organization (UNO). The role of Sikhism with UNO will be discussed later.

Environmental theology involves the role of God (the Entity) to formulate environmental ethics. The God is understood among various religions and scientists under the following three possible concepts:

1. God is Creator and exists external to the Universe
2. God exists internally in the environment (the physical and living worlds)
3. God does not exist

God is Creator and Exists External to the Universe [11]:

In this case, God plays a pivotal role in the creation of the physical and living world and stays outside of its creation. Almost all religions believe that God created the Universe and every action and reaction in this physical world and living world are happening according to the command or the will of the God. But according to scientific information changes are occurring on the Earth according to the Laws of Universe. For examples, earthquakes on the land and under the sea which cause tsunamis, bringing much destruction on the sea shores. Floods, droughts, steady rise in temperature on the Earth, etc. are due to natural phenomena. Under

these circumstances there is nothing in the hands of humans to control such changes.

God Exists Internally in the Environment (Physical and Living Worlds) [12], [13]:

If God exists internally in the environment (physical world and living world) then everything in the physical world and every living being is divine. Therefore, every living and non-living things ought to be worshiped by humans and it becomes obligatory to take care of them. Therefore, under these circumstances human cannot harm any living being and even non-living things since damaging these things means hurting God.

God's Role in Nanakian Philosophy

However, in Nanakian Philosophy the role of God is quite different than that described as above in A - 1 & 2. First of all we have to understand the concept of God in Nanakian Philosophy. Guru Nanak has expressed God in the form of a logo as **ੴ**. It has been discussed by Chahal [14], [15] in details as follows: **ੴ** : **ੴ** (One) stands for 'One and Only', **ੴ** stands for 'Oh' ('That') and Extended end (**ੴ**) stands for 'Infinite'. Therefore, **ੴ** can be pronounced as **ਇਕੁ ਓ ਬੇਅੰਤ** (*Ek Oh Beant*) in Punjabi and as 'The One and Only, That is Infinite' in English.

This **ੴ** (One) used in **ੴ** is 'Singularity' as is understood by some scientists. This 'Singularity' is also called 'Nothingness' by other scientists but Guru Nanak calls this 'Nothingness' as **ਸੁੰਨ** (*Sunn*). Singularity (Nothingness or *Sunn*) is a

point in space-time at which gravitational forces cause matter to have infinite density and infinitesimal volume, and space and time to become infinitely distorted [16].

Guru Nanak has also described God as ਨਿਰਗੁਣ (*Nirgun*) – without any attributes and ਸਰਗੁਣ (*Sargun*) with all attributes of matter and life. *Nirgun* state (Nothingness/Singularity) of God changed to *Sargun* state (Universe). Chahal [17] described that ਨਿਰਗੁਣ (*Nirgun*) state of God in Siddh Gost can be equated to Nothingness (without any attribute of the Universe) or Singularity and the same *Nirgun* State of God becomes the ਸਰਗੁਣ (*Sargun*) state (with all the attributes of the Universe) as is evident from the following phrase:

ਅਵਿਗਤੋ¹ ਨਿਰਮਾਇਲੁ² ਉਪਜੋ³

ਨਿਰਗੁਣ⁴ ਤੇ ਸਰਗੁਣ⁵ ਥੀਆ⁶ ॥

Avigato nirmā'il upje
nirgun̄ te sargun̄ thīā.

ਅਗਸ, ਮ: 1, ਪੰਨਾ 940.

Nirgun⁴ (God - without any attributes of Universe) originated³ from purely² Nothingness¹; then this Nirgun⁴ became⁶ Sargun⁵ (with all attributes of the Universe).

AGGS, M 1, p 940.

It is evident from the above discussion that *Sunn* (Nothingness or Singularity) is the *Nirgun* state of God and the *Sargun* state of God is the Universe. If it is so then the God is neither external nor internal to the physical world or living world. Therefore, God Itself is that Entity which is the Universe/Nature as Guru Nanak has further explained that that Entity is Nature as follows: Guru Nanak says that that Entity is recognized through Nature since that

Entity is Nature:

ਨਾਨਕ¹ ਸਚ² ਦਾਤਾਰ³ ਸਿਨਾਖਤੁ⁴

ਕੁਦਰਤੀ⁵ ॥੮॥

Nānak sach̄ dātār sinākhaṭ̄ kuḍratī.
||8||

ਅਗਸ, ਮ: 1, ਪੰਨਾ 141,

Nanak says¹:

The Ever-existing² Bountious³ (that Entity) is recognized⁴ through Nature⁵ (the Universe).

AGGS, M 1, p 141.

Then Guru Nanak is equating that Entity with Nature (Universe). That means “that Entity itself is Nature”.

ਕਹਣਾ ਹੈ ਕਿਛੁ ਕਹਣੁ ਨ ਜਾਇ ॥

Kahnā hai kichh̄ kahaṇ na jāe.

ਤਉ¹ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ² ਕੀਮਤਿ³ ਨਹੀ ਪਾਇ ॥੧॥

ਰਹਾਉ ॥

Fa^o kuḍratī kīmatī nahī pāe. ||1||
rahāo.

ਅਗਸ, ਮ: 1, ਪੰਨਾ 151,

I want to say something but cannot say.

Since You (that Entity)¹ are the Nature², therefore, I cannot appraise³ You.

AGGS, M 1, p 151.

Note: Nature: 1. Physical World - all natural phenomena and living things.

2. The forces and processes collectively that control the phenomena of the physical world independently of human volition or intervention.

Guru Nanak says:

That Entity (God) is Nature.

But we, the Sikhs ignored it. Then about 200 years after Guru Nanak, Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) [18] reiterated the message of Guru Nanak (although he did not know Guru Nanak) that: God and Nature

are identical (Nature is God).

It becomes evident from the above basic principles of Nanakian Philosophy that that Entity (called God in many religions) is neither external nor internal to the physical and living worlds but that Entity (God) Itself is the Universe and Nature.

God does not Exist [19], [20], [21], [22]:

Many scientists and philosophers are either atheists or agnostics [23]. If God does not exist then it means every action and reaction is going on in this Universe (physical and living worlds) according to the Laws of Nature/Universe. In this case it becomes the duty of humans to understand these laws and formulate the environmental ethics to take care of the Mother Earth and its environment to sustain the humanity. Now let us see what can we, humans, do according to the Nanakian Philosophy?

Laws of Nature: According to Guru Nanak the Universe has evolved according to the actions of certain Laws of Nature:

ਹੁਕਮੀ¹ ਹੋਵਨਿ ਆਕਾਰ²

ਹੁਕਮੁ³ ਨ ਕਹਿਆ⁴ ਜਾਈ ॥

ਹੁਕਮੀ⁵ ਹੋਵਨਿ ਜੀਅ⁶

ਹੁਕਮਿ⁷ ਮਿਲੈ ਵਡਿਆਈ⁸ ॥...

Hukmī hovan ākār
hukam na kahīā jāī.

Hukmī hovan jīa
hukam milai vadiāī.

Everything is created² according to the Laws of Nature¹;

And these Laws of Nature³ are not easily described⁴.

The life⁵ is created according to these laws⁵

And one begets honor⁸ also according

to these laws⁷...

ਹੁਕਮੈ²⁰ ਅੰਦਰਿ²¹ ਸਭੁ ਕੇ

ਬਾਹਰਿ²² ਹੁਕਮ ਨ ਕੇਇ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਹੁਕਮੈ²³ ਜੇ ਬੁਝੈ²⁴

ਤ ਹਉਮੈ²⁵ ਕਰੈ ਨ ਕੇਇ ॥੨॥

Hukmai andar sabh ko

bāhar hukam na ko^e.

Nānak hukmai je bujhāi

ṭa ha^umai kahai na ko^e. ||2||

ਅਗਸਤ, ਜਪੁ 2, ਪੰਨਾ 1.

Nanak says:

If one can understand²⁴ the Laws of Nature²³ then one will not boast²⁵ about one's pride because every action and reaction is going on under²¹ these laws²⁰ and nothing is outside²² them.

AGGS, Jap # 2, p 1.

Now, almost all the Laws of Nature have been discovered. However, still there may be many, which have not been discovered yet. These laws have been referred to as the 'Laws of Nature' or 'laws of the Universe' or 'laws of Nature/ Universe' while discussing Nanakian Philosophy [4].

The most important message of Guru Nanak, to be noted in above discussion, is that whatever is going on in this Universe is happening under these Laws of Nature. Therefore, there is no chance of the performance of any miracle by anybody on this Earth since what has to be done is to be done under these laws. In this connection, I would like to bring to the notice of readers the realization of Robert Nola [24]:
"...even though people can break moral and legal laws, it is not open to nature to break the laws of nature. There seems to be a kind of necessity to the laws of nature that prevents nature from breaking its own laws."

Carl Sagan has put it well:

"... If by 'God' one means the set of physical laws that govern the Universe, then clearly there is such God. This God is emotionally unsatisfying... it does not make much sense to pray the law of gravity." Reported by Dawkins [25].

It means even the Nature (that Entity called Go) cannot break its own laws. In this respect, Isaacson [26] reported the views of Einstein that science could not accept a deity who could meddle at whim in the events of his creation. Einstein says:
"The main source of the present-day conflict between the spheres of religion and of science lies in this concept of a personal God."

Isaacson [26] further reported that:
"For some people, miracles serve as the evidence of God's existence. For Einstein it was absence of miracle that reflected divine providence. The fact that the world was comprehensible, that it followed laws, was worthy of awe."

Einstein writes about scientists:
"Scientists aim to uncover the immutable laws that govern reality, and in doing so they must reject the notion that divine will, or for that matter human will, plays a role that would violate this cosmic causality." Reported by Isaacson [26].

Guru Nanak further emphasizes that only the Laws of Nature are operative and everything in this Universe appears from the 'One' (ੴ) - The Singularity and/or Nothingness:

ਏਕੈ¹ ਹੁਕਮੁ² ਵਰਤੈ³ ਸਭ⁴ ਲੇਈ⁵ ॥

Ēko hukam varṭai sabh loⁱ.

*ਏਕਸੁ⁶ ਤੇ ਸਭ⁷ ਓਪਤਿ⁸ ਹੋਈ ॥੭॥

Ēkas ṭe sabh opat hoⁱ. ||7||

ਅਗਸਤ, ਮ: 1, ਪੰਨਾ 223.

Only the Laws of Nature² of One² (that Entity) are working³ in the whole⁴ Universe⁵.

*And everything⁷ appeared⁸ from that *One⁶ (Singularity or Nothingness).*

AGGS, M 1, p 223.

*ਏਕਸੁ (Ekas) means the 'One' in ੴ

- The Go of Guru Nanak.

ਹੁਕਮੀ¹ ਹੁਕਮਿ² ਚਲਾਏ³ ਵਿਗਸੈ⁴

ਨਾਨਕ ਲਿਖਿਆ⁵ ਪਾਈਐ ॥੭॥੧੨॥

Hukmī hukam chālā^e vigsai

Nānak likhi^a pāⁱai. ||7||12||

ਅਗਸਤ, ਮ: 1, ਪੰਨਾ 418.

That Entity¹, the authority on laws, is pleased⁴ to find that the Laws of

Nature² work³ as have been

ordained⁵.

AGGS, M 1, p 418.

It is evident from the above discussion that that Entity Itself does not play any part in the evolution of the Universe and life since it is all happening according to Its Laws of Nature. Therefore, we have to understand these laws and use them to keep Earth and its environment free from destruction and pollution for the future generations of humanity.

Anthropocentrism

Anthropocentrism is a philosophical viewpoint arguing that human beings are the central or most significant entities in the world (This term can be used interchangeably with *human centrism*, and some refer to the concept as *human supremacy*). This is a basic belief embedded in Western religions and philosophies. Anthropocentrism regards humans as separate from and superior to nature

and holds that human life has intrinsic value while other entities (including animals, plants, mineral resources, and so on) are resources that may justifiably be exploited for the benefit of humankind [27].

Historian Lynn White Jr., in a much-cited essay published in 1967 ([28] quoted from [29]) on the historical roots of the environmental crisis, argues that the main strands of Judeo-Christian thinking had encouraged the overexploitation of nature by maintaining the superiority of humans over all other forms of life on Earth, and by depicting all of nature as created for the use of humans. Central to the rationale for his thesis were the works of the Church Fathers and the Bible itself, supporting the anthropocentric perspective that humans are the only things that matter on Earth. Consequently, they may utilize and consume everything else to their advantage without any injustice. For example, *Genesis 1:27-8* states: “God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over fish of the sea, and over fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”

White says that Judeo-Christianity itself provides the original deep-seated drive to the unlimited exploitation of nature. Unfortunately, the application of anthropocentrism has also gone to the extent to subdue women, which is discussed later as ecofeminism.

Anthropocentrism in Nanakian Philosophy

Anthropocentrism is found not only in Judeo-Christianity but also in many other religions. In Nanakian Philosophy humans are considered to be highest class in the evolution of living beings. Although anthropocentrism is respected in Nanakian Philosophy, however, it is discussed in a different sense. In Hinduism Jogis and Siddhas considered themselves belonging to the highest class among humans. But Guru Nanak taught them that the whole of humanity belongs to highest class (according to the evolutionary process) and conquering the mind is equivalent to conquering the world as follows: ਆਈ¹ ਪੰਥੀ² ਸਗਲ³ ਜਮਾਤੀ⁴

ਮਨਿ⁵ ਜੀਤੈ⁶ ਜਗੁ⁶ ਜੀਤੁ⁷ ॥

Āi panthī sagal jamātī
man jītai jag jīt.

ਅਗਰਾਸ, ਜਪੁ 281, ਪੰਨਾ 6.

*Consider the whole of humanity^{3,4}
equal to the highest¹ class²;
Conquering⁶ the mind⁵ is equivalent
to conquering⁷ the world⁶.*

AGGS, Jap 28, p 6.

According to this principle, if man has conquered his mind then he has the power to control all problems being faced by humanity.

Guru Nanak further explains about equality among humans:

ਸਭੁ ਕੇ ਉਚਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਨੀਚੁ ਨ ਦੀਸੈ ਕੇਇ ॥

Sabh ko ūchā ākhīai nīch na dīsai
ko^e.

ਅਗਰਾਸ, ਮ: 1, ਪੰਨਾ 62.

*Call everyone as the highest
(belonging to high class) and do not
look at others as if they belong to a
low class.*

AGGS, M 1, p 62.

Here Guru Nanak is condemning the

caste system since in this system all humans are not treated at par.

On the other hand, Guru Arjan accepts the principle of anthropocentrism but with some restrictions as follows:

ਅਵਰ¹ ਜੇਨਿ² ਤੇਰੀ ਪਨਿਹਾਰੀ³ ॥

Avar jon terī panihārī.

ਇਸੁ ਧਰਤੀ⁴ ਮਹਿ ਤੇਰੀ ਸਿਕਦਾਰੀ⁵ ॥

Is dhartī meh terī sikdārī.

ਸੁਇਨਾ⁶ ਰੂਪਾ⁷ ਤੁਝ ਪਹਿ ਦਾਮ⁸ ॥

Su^{inā} rūpā tujh pēh dām.

Guru Arjan says:

Man is the ruler⁵ of this Earth⁴.

*And every other¹ life² has to work for
the humans³.*

*Besides, all the gold⁶, silver⁷ and
other wealth⁸ outside or inside the
Earth also belong to the man.*

ਸੀਲੁ⁹ ਬਿਗਾਰਿਓ¹⁰ ਤੇਰਾ ਕਾਮ¹¹ ॥੪॥

Sīl bigārīo terā kām. ||4||

ਅਗਰਾਸ, ਮ: 5, ਪੰਨਾ 374.

However, Guru Arjan also warns that: *Your immoral¹¹ action⁹ would
destroy¹⁰ your good behavior⁹.*
AGGS, M 5, p 374.

Treatment of other Living Beings

In some religions, killing of any living being is a sin while it is considered a sacrifice to please God in other religions. However, Guru Nanak says that living beings belong to various categories according to the Laws of Nature, based on type of food being eaten by a particular group of living beings:

ਇਕਿ ਮਾਸਹਾਰੀ¹ ਇਕਿ ਤ੍ਰਿਣੁ² ਖਾਹਿ ॥

ਇਕਨਾ ਛਤੀਰ³ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ⁴ ਪਾਹਿ ॥

Ik māshārī ik trīṇ khāhi.

Ikna chhātīr amrit pāhi.

ਇਕਿ ਮਿਟੀਆ⁵ ਮਹਿ ਮਿਟੀਆ⁶ ਖਾਹਿ ॥

Humans belong to category of omnivorous:

People who are against meat eating are so because they think that killing of living organisms is a sin. They call themselves vegetarians because they think that the plants are not living organisms. If they are so, they don't have consciousness because they are not aware of being killed. Such conclusions are drawn because of lack of proper knowledge about life. In fact every living organism, whether single-celled or multi-cellular organisms or plants or animals, have consciousness and are very well aware of conditions inside their bodies as well as outside environment. They try to protect themselves from the adverse conditions as soon as their lives are threatened. Guru Nanak has explained this fact as follows:

ਏਕਾ¹ ਸੁਰਤਿ² ਜੇਤੇ³ ਹੈ ਜੀਅ⁴ ॥

ਸੁਰਤਿ⁵ ਵਿਹੁਣਾ⁶ ਕੇਇ ਨ ਕੀਅ⁷ ॥

Ēkā suratṛ jetē hai jīā.

Suratṛ vihūṇā ko'e na kīā.

ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ: 1, ਪੰਨਾ 24.

That Entity (God) has given the same¹ consciousness² to all³ living beings⁴.

No living being⁷ is without⁶ consciousness⁵.

AGGS, M 1, p 24.

Plant and Animal: Sometimes it is very difficult to distinguish between a plant and an animal. For example, *Euglena* is an organism which has chlorophyll and like plants it can synthesize its own food. However, it depends on ready-made food under certain conditions when it cannot synthesize its own food then it will ingest food particles and excrete wastes like an animal. *Euglena* is a bridging link between plant and animal. Guru Nanak explains this phenomenon as follows

to convince people about these indistinguishable characteristics of plants and animals:

ਮਾਸੁ¹ ਮਾਸੁ¹ ਕਰਿ ਮੂਰਖੁ² ਝਗੜੇ³ ਗਿਆਨੁ⁴
ਧਿਆਨੁ⁵ ਨਹੀ ਜਾਣੈ ॥

ਕਉਣੁ ਮਾਸੁ⁶ ਕਉਣੁ ਸਾਗੁ⁷ ਕਹਾਵੈ ਕਿਸੁ
ਮਹਿ ਪਾਪ⁸ ਸਮਾਣੈ⁹ ॥

Mās mās kar mūrakhḥ ḥḡagṛe giān
ḍḥiān nahī jāṇai.

Kaṁuṅ mās kaṁuṅ sāg kahāvai kis
mēh pāp samāṇe.

ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ: 1, ਪੰਨਾ 1289.

Only fools² wrangle³ about the eating of meat¹.

(Because) They don't have any knowledge⁴ and don't pay any attention⁵ to know what is called meat⁶ (animal), and what is called a plant⁷;

And eating of which results in the committing⁹ of a sin⁸.

AGGS, M 1, p 1289.

If the plants and animals are indistinguishable then Guru Nanak questions:

When is a sin committed?

Is it in eating an animal or a plant?

Life depends upon another life

Guru Angad describes the above philosophy of Guru Nanak that life in the sea depends upon the eating other living beings in the sea since there is no system of farming to produce food and there is no shop where one can buy different foods. (Big fish eats small fish):

ਜੀਅ¹ ਕਾ ਆਹਾਰੁ² ਜੀਅ³
ਖਾਣਾ⁴ ਏਹੁ⁵ ਕਰੇਇ⁶ ॥

Jīā kā āhār jīā
khāṇā ehu karēi.

One living being¹ eats⁴ other animals³ as food² – a system established⁶ in Nature⁵.

AGGS, M 2, p 955.

Note: There is possibility that this sloka belongs to Guru Nanak since the theme is very similar in the next sloka of Guru Nanak.

Therefore, according to Nanakian Philosophy, the consumption of plants or animals by humans is not immoral if the ecosystem is maintained. That is why over-hunting or over-fishing or no hunting of certain animals, etc. is recommended to maintain the ecosystem. However, in our modern world, certain animals are reared for the production of milk, eggs and meat for consumption by humans.

Ecofeminism describes movements and philosophies that link feminism with ecology [30]. The term is believed to have been coined by the French writer Françoise d'Eaubonne in her book, *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (1974). Ecofeminism connects the exploitation and domination of women with that of the environment, and argues that there is a connection between women and nature. Ecofeminists believe that this connection is illustrated through the traditionally 'female' values of reciprocity, nurturing and cooperation, which are present both among women and in nature. Additionally, ecofeminists draw connections between menstruation and the moon cycles, childbirth and creation etc. Women and nature are also united through their shared history of oppression by a patriarchal Western society [31]. According to Nanakian Philosophy, woman is compared to Nature, especially to the Earth as the 'Mother' who nourishes and take care of all needs of humanity. The importance of woman has been described as follows, indicating that woman is part and parcel of man:

ਭੰਡਿ¹ ਜੰਮੀਐ² ਭੰਡਿ ਨਿੰਮੀਐ³

ਭੰਡਿ ਮੰਗਣ⁴ ਵੀਆਹੁ⁵ ॥

Bḥand jammī²ai bḥand nimmi³ai
bḥand mangan vī⁴āhu.

ਭੰਡਹੁ ਹੋਵੈ ਦੇਸਤੀ⁶ ਭੰਡਹੁ ਚਲੈ ਰਾਹੁ⁷ ॥

Bḥandahu hovai doṣṭī⁶ bḥandahu
chalai rāhu.

Man establishes friendship⁶ with a woman, is engaged⁴ to a woman, get married⁵ to a woman and the woman conceives³ and a new man is born² from a woman¹. That is the way the cycle goes on.

ਭੰਡੁ⁸ ਮੁਆ⁹ ਭੰਡੁ ਭਾਲੀਐ¹⁰

ਭੰਡਿ ਹੋਵੈ ਬੰਧਾਨੁ¹¹ ॥

Bḥand mu⁹ā bḥand bhālī¹⁰ai
bḥand hovai bandhān.

ਸੇ ਕਿਉ ਮੰਦਾ¹² ਆਖੀਐ

ਜਿਤੁ ਜੰਮਹਿ¹³ ਰਾਜਾਨ¹⁴ ॥

So ki¹⁰o mandā ākhī¹⁰ai
jit jamēh rājān.

ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ: 1, ਪੰਨਾ 473.

When that woman⁸ dies⁹ the man seeks¹⁰ another woman and establishes a relationship (gets married)¹¹.

(If the woman is so important) then why does the man subdue¹² her since that woman gives birth¹³ to kings¹⁴ (Not only kings but also intellectuals)?

AGGS, M 1, p 473.

Therefore, woman and man both are equally responsible to develop environmental ethics to maintain the ecosystem on Mother Earth.

FEEDING AND HOUSING OF EVER-INCREASING POPULATION

World population just surpassed the big round number of 7,000,000,000. Humanity reached its first billion just as the 19th century got underway. It

reminds us of the prediction by Malthus, who in 1798 famously asserted that the population would inevitably outstrip food production. That was before the *first* billion.

Could the world feed so many people? The answer was obviously 'yes', a qualified 'yes', however. Today's 7 billion could never survive on the amount of food grown in Malthus's day. It is increased productivity, courtesy of cropland expansion and a series of farming 'revolutions' that has enabled population growth. Yet, despite productivity gains sufficient to enable the world to add another 6 billion, a billion people today are chronically undernourished [32].

Besides the effects of anthropocentrism and ecofeminism there is another catastrophic problem of "feeding and housing of the ever-increasing population", which has forced humans to increase the food production by the use of genetically engineered crops, vegetables and fruits; use of insecticides and fungicides; cutting down forests to increase crop land for forming and to house the increasing population. All these activities have increased the pollution of air, water and deforesting. Had these practices not used then Malthus theory of decrease in human population would have been evident by the death of people by hunger and diseases.

However, one must not forget that there are limits to production:

- Limits to the expansion of cropland.
- Limits to the amount of water for irrigation and
- Limits to affordable fertilizer.

These are physical constraints that affect how much food can be grown. Ultimately we may have to come to Malthus solution to control the population.

This is too vast subject to be discussed here except that it is evident that there is a need to control the growth of population, to control the pollution and destruction of Mother Earth.

UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION (UNO) AND EARTH DAY

Concept of Earth Day was first proposed by John McConnell in 1969 at a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Conference in San Francisco. He proposed March 21, 1970, the first day of spring in the Northern Hemisphere, which was proclaimed by Secretary General U Thant at the United Nations for its celebration [33]. However, US Senator, Gaylord Nelson proposed April 22, 1970. Later on it was designated as International Mother Earth Day in 2009 by a consensus resolution adopted by the United Nations [34].

However, the importance of air, water and the Earth was realized by Guru Nanak (1469-1539) as discussed earlier exactly 500 years before John McConnell could think of it during 1969. The Sikhs might have recited that Sabd (AGGS, JAP – Sloka, p 9 as discussed previously) for hundreds of millions of times during performance of *Akhaḍ Paath*s of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib and also while reciting the Jap bani all over the world but never realized the importance of air, water and the Earth to celebrate

Earth Day. John McConnell (1915-2012) is a peace activist with a passion for peace, religion and science [35]. Ironically the Sikhs still could not recognize the above realization of Guru Nanak for another 40 years until 2009 when the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) initiated a program to help the world's religious traditions to create long-term plans to improve their relationship with the environment.

Under that program the Sikhs started their own EcoSikh project for the celebration of Sikh Environment Day not on March 21 or April 22 but on March 14 the date when Guru Har Rai, the seventh Guru, succeeded to the House of Nanak [36]. But the Encyclopaedia of Sikhism [37] and Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar say it is March 3, 1644. This credit was given to Guru Har Rai for his passion of preserving flowers since a few flowers were broken from a bush with his long robe which made him very sad. I wonder why the Sikhs, responsible for creating Sikh Environment Day, failed to give this credit to Guru Nanak for his passion for peace, religion and science, the founder of Sikhi, who made humanity aware of the fact that air is the Guru, water is the father and the Earth is their Great Mother who provides everything needed by the humanity. And it is the duty of humanity to practice righteousness and protect them from pollution.

From the activities of the EcoSikh in India and abroad it appears to be that they are developing an environmental aesthetic but not helping to make the Sikhs aware of environmental ethics to control pollution. Aesthetics is the field of

philosophy that studies the ways in which humans experience the world through their senses. It is especially concerned with the appreciation of particular objects when they strike the senses in a pleasing manner. For this reason aesthetics most frequently focuses on works of art, however, aesthetic appreciation is not limited to art; it is frequently directed towards the world at large. This is the world that surrounds humans in their day-to-day existence and thus constitutes the everyday environment: the world in which people work, play and live [38]. Therefore, environmental aesthetics include development parks, planting ornamental and flowering trees as developed in the Chandigarh and Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana by Dr MS Randhawa from 1950s to 1970s. Now the same environmental aesthetics are being practiced by universities and cities in Punjab and India.

The activities of the EcoSikhs are planting ornamental and flowering trees around the gurdwaras and on the roads. Such activities fall under environmental aesthetics which is of course a part of the main subject of environmental philosophy but it does not help much to eliminate pollution. However, it is great effort to make the environment around gurdwaras pleasing to the eyes and mind.

In this respect the work done by Sant Balbir Singh Seechewal in cleaning the stagnant and polluted Kali Veiyn rivulet from filamentous algae is highly commendable [39]. It is generally believed that Guru Nanak used to take a dip in this rivulet. It is also believed that Guru Nanak had begun his holy march to deliver the word of God, from the

bank of this rivulet. During all religious occasions, the people of Punjab used to sip some water from this rivulet for self-purification. During the reign of Emperor Jalal Ud-Din Muhammad Akbar (1556-1605) this rivulet was brick lined and the gurdwara at Sultanpur Lodhi stands on its banks. Thereafter, with time it became polluted and filamentous algae grew in it.

Filamentous Algae also known as "pond moss" or "pond scum" these threadlike algae often occur in huge greenish masses floating upon the waters' surface. Fig. They can form dense mats in static water by forming long rope-like strands in flowing water. Its filaments consist of series of cells being joined end to end giving a thread-like appearance. This form begins growing on the bottom or substrate and then lifts to the surface as buoyancy grows due to its production of oxygen. This form of algae may seem cottony, slimy, or coarse in texture [40].

Now there is a big question:

Should the Sikh celebrate Earth Day as a great event with the rest of the world on April 22 or a separate event as Sikh Environment Day on March 14?

I may add here that April 22 is the most suitable date for the Sikhs because during the month of *Vaisakh* (April):

Birthday of Guru Nanak falls on April 15.

The Sikhs celebrate *Vaisakhi*, cultural festival, on April 13/14.

Moreover, *Vaisakh* is almost peak of the Spring Season – The cheerful season according to Guru Nanak:

ਨਾਨਕ ਵੈਸਾਖੀ¹ ਪ੍ਰਭੂ² ਪਾਵੈ³

ਸੁਰਤਿ⁴ ਸਬਦਿ⁵ ਮਨੁ⁶ ਮਾਨਾ⁷ ॥੬॥

Nānak vaisākḥṛn parabhḥ pāvai
suratḥ sabaḥ man mānā. ||6||
ਅਗਸ, ਮ: 1, ਪੰਨਾ 1108.

*Guru Nanak says use⁷ your mind⁶ to
study Sabd⁵ attentively⁴ to
understand³ God² during the month
of Vaisakh - The peak of Spring
Season when everything is becoming
cheerful.*

AGGS, M 1, p 1108.

(Note: The time of the blooming of
shrubs and trees is variable at
different places. For example, in
Quebec, Canada the shrubs and trees
start to bloom while in Punjab the
farmers are harvesting their crops
during the month of Vaisakh (April).
However, on the other side of the
Mother Earth in Australia winter is
setting in at this time.)

CONCLUSIONS

The Earth is the bird plane in our
Solar System in our galaxy, Milky
Way, known to sustain life.
According to Nanakian Philosophy
the Earth is considered as 'Mother',
air as 'Guru' and water as 'Father'.
Mother Earth provides all the
resources required for sustaining life.
Therefore, it is the duty of humanity
to develop ethics to save Mother
Earth and its environment as long as
possible for the forthcoming
generations of humanity.
It is also known that there are many
actions and reactions going on
according to the Laws of Nature/
Universe over which humans have no
control.

Although all religions believe in
anthropocentrism and humans
consider themselves as superior than
all other living beings (including
women – ecofeminism) and have the
birthright to use them for their
benefit. However, Nanakian
Philosophy advises humanity to use
them in such a way that ecosystem is

maintained so that humanity can
stay on this Earth as long as
possible.

According to Nanakian Philosophy
woman is not to be subdued but
should be given the utmost respect
since the existence of humanity
depends upon her.
Although the increase in population
on this Earth has survived so far
because of increased food
production, there is a limit to it also.
The solution may be found in
Malthus theory to keep a check on
the increase in the population.
Finally, we must keep in mind that
the disappearance of life on this
Earth is evident after about 1.75
million years and the disappearance
of the Earth itself after about 7.5
billion years.

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replaced with the name of Bāgā/
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