

# Assignment

*To be submitted on 3 March 2026*

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## Long Answers

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### Q1. Define Environment, Nature, Ecology, and Ecosophy. Explain their interrelationship (5 marks)

**Ans:** Environment is the complete range of external conditions, surroundings, and influences in which an organism or system lives and operates. This includes both biotic (living things like plants and animals) and abiotic (non-living things like air, water, and soil) factors.

Nature is the physical world and everything in it that is not entirely created or controlled by humans. It represents the natural forces/phenomena, and the inherent character or basic constitution of the universe.

Ecology is a scientific discipline, a branch of biology, that studies the relationships and interactions between living organisms and their physical environment. It focuses on ecosystems, energy flow, and biodiversity.

Ecosophy is a term coined by philosopher Arne Naess (often associated with "Deep Ecology"). It is a philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium. It goes beyond the science of ecology to explore the ethical, philosophical, and spiritual relationship humans share with the earth.

These four concepts are deeply connected, moving from the physical reality to scientific study, and finally to philosophical ethics. Nature is the broadest concept, the fundamental physical reality of the universe; the environment is a specific localized context or setting within Nature where organisms actually reside and interact; ecology provides the scientific framework to observe, measure, and understand how those interactions within the Environment and Nature function. Ecosophy provides the ethical framework. It takes the scientific knowledge provided by Ecology about our Environment and asks how humans ought to behave within Nature to maintain ecological balance.

## Q2. Explain the relationship between Applied Ethics and Environmental Ethics with suitable examples. (5 marks)

**Ans:** Applied Ethics is the broad philosophical field concerned with examining specific, controversial moral issues in private and public life (such as bioethics, business ethics, or legal ethics). It takes abstract moral theories and applies them to real-world dilemmas.

Environmental Ethics is a specific, crucial sub-discipline within Applied Ethics. Traditional ethics mostly focused only on human-to-human interactions. Environmental ethics expands this boundary, applying ethical theories to human-to-non-human relationships. It asks questions about our moral obligations to animals, plants, ecosystems, and the planet as a whole.

Suitable examples are:

- 1. Applied Ethics (General):** A hospital debating whether it is morally justifiable to turn off life support for a terminally ill patient (Bioethics).
- 2. Environmental Ethics (Specific Branch):** A corporation debating whether it is morally justifiable to clear-cut an ancient forest to build a factory. Environmental ethics asks: Does the forest have an intrinsic right to exist? Do the animals living there have moral standing? Are we violating our duties to future generations by destroying this habitat?

## Q3. Discuss the importance of Ecosophy in shaping environmental awareness and ethical responsibility. (5 marks)

**Ans:** Ecosophy is vital because it shifts how humans perceive their place in the world, moving society from a superficial environmentalism to a deeper, values-based commitment to the planet. Some of its key importance are:

- 1. Shifting from Anthropocentrism to Ecocentrism:** Ecosophy challenges the traditional human-centered (anthropocentric) view that nature is merely a resource for human use. Instead, it promotes the idea that all living things have intrinsic value, regardless of their utility to humans.
- 2. Cultivating "Deep Ecology":** It encourages a deeper environmental awareness. Rather than just finding technological fixes for pollution so humans can survive (shallow ecology), ecosophy asks humans to fundamentally change their lifestyles, consumption habits, and worldview to live in harmony with the earth.

- 3. Fostering Ethical Responsibility:** By assigning intrinsic value to nature, ecosophy turns environmental conservation into a moral duty. It dictates that destroying ecosystems is not just poor resource management, but an ethical wrong.
- 4. Guiding Action and Policy:** When individuals and societies adopt an ecosophical mindset, it shapes grassroots environmental movements and pushes for laws that protect biodiversity and promote sustainable living, driven by moral conviction rather than just economic benefit.

#### **Q4. Explain the Man-Nature relationship from the classical Indian philosophical perspective. (5 Marks)**

**Ans:** In classical Indian philosophy, the relationship between man and nature is defined by interconnectedness and harmony rather than dominance. Unlike Western perspectives that often separate the two, Indian thought views humans as an integral part of the natural cosmos.

- 1. Pancha Mahabhuta (The Five elements):** Classical thought posits that both the human body and the external world are composed of the same five elements: Prithvi (Earth), Apas (Water), Agni (Fire), Vayu (Air), and Akash (Ether). This creates a physical and spiritual kinship between humans and the environment.
- 2. The Concept of Rta:** Nature is governed by Rta, the cosmic order. Human beings are expected to live according to Dharma (duty), which involves maintaining this balance. Exploiting nature is seen as a violation of this universal order.
- 3. Ahimsa and Rebirth:** Schools like Jainism, Buddhism, and Hinduism emphasize Ahimsa (non-violence). Because all living beings including plants and animals are part of the same cycle of Samsara (rebirth), they are seen as deserving of moral respect.
- 4. Unity of Existence:** Philosophies like Advaita Vedanta suggest that the Atman (individual soul) is essentially identical to Brahman (the ultimate reality). Therefore, harming nature is ultimately seen as harming oneself.

### Q5. Discuss the environmental worldview found in the Upanishads. (5 Marks)

**Ans:** The Upanishads present an eco-centric worldview where the divine is immanent (present) in every aspect of the natural world. This fosters a deep reverence for the environment.

- 1. Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma:** This central teaching means "All this is indeed Brahman." It teaches that the entire universe - the mountains, rivers, trees, and animals - is a manifestation of the Divine.
- 2. The principle of Renunciation:** The Isha Upanishad states, "Ishavasyam idam sarvam" (Everything in this universe is pervaded by the Divine). It advises humans to "Enjoy through Renunciation," meaning we should take only what we need from nature and not covet what belongs to other species.
- 3. Sacredness of Life:** The Upanishads often use metaphors from nature to explain spiritual truths. For example, the universe is compared to a vast tree (the Ashvattha). This symbolism encourages the protection of forests and water bodies as sacred entities.
- 4. Interdependence:** The texts describe a "food chain" of existence where all beings are linked. This highlights that human survival is not independent of the health of the ecosystem, and disruption to the natural cycle eventually affects human life.

### Q6. Compare the Christian and Tribal religious perspectives on nature and environmental responsibility. (5 marks)

**Ans:** While both perspectives encourage the care of the earth, they arrive at this responsibility through different theological and cultural frameworks.

In Christianity, the relationship is primarily defined by Stewardship. According to the Bible, God created the world and placed humans in it to "subdue and have dominion" over it. However, modern Christian ethics interpret this not as a right to destroy, but as a divine mandate to be "stewards" or guardians. Humans are accountable to God for how they treat His creation. Therefore, environmental responsibility is seen as a religious duty to preserve God's handiwork for future generations.

The Tribal (In contrast): Tribal or indigenous perspectives are rooted in kinship and Reciprocity. Nature is not seen as a "resource" to be managed, but as a community of which humans are just one part. Many tribal religions are animistic, believing that trees, mountains, and rivers possess spirits. Environmental responsibility here is

based on a "give and take" relationship. For example, many tribes only take from the forest what is necessary and offer rituals of thanks in return. Nature is viewed as an ancestor or a mother, and protecting it is a matter of preserving ones own identity and survival.

While Christianity often views nature as a gift from a Creator to be managed by humans (a vertical relationship), Tribal perspectives view nature as an equal companion or a sacred relative (a horizontal relationship). Both, however, strongly condemn the modern "consumerist" attitude that leads to environmental degradation.

### Q7. Explain the causes and consequences of resource depletion in modern society. (5 marks)

**Ans:** Resource depletion occurs when resources are consumed at a rate faster than they can be replenished. In modern society, this has become a critical environmental challenge.

The major causes are:

- 1. Overpopulation:** The rapid growth of the human population increases the total demand for food, water, housing, and energy.
- 2. Industrialization and Urbanization:** Modern industrial processes require vast amounts of raw materials and energy, while expanding cities take up fertile land and deplete local water tables.
- 3. Overconsumption and waste:** A "throw-away culture" driven by consumerism leads to the excessive use of minerals, fossil fuels, and timber beyond what is necessary for survival.
- 4. Deforestation:** The clearing of forests for agriculture and logging reduces timber resources and destroys ecosystems that naturally replenish soil and air quality.

The consequences are:

- 1. Scarcity of Resources:** Depletion leads to a shortage of essential items like clean drinking water and arable land, often driving up prices.
- 2. Loss of Biodiversity:** As habitats are destroyed for resource extraction, many plant and animal species face extinction.
- 3. Environmental Degradation:** Extracting deeper fossil fuels or minerals leads to increased soil erosion, water pollution, and higher carbon emissions, contributing to climate change.

**4. Economic and Social Conflict:** Competition over dwindling resources, such as water or oil, can lead to political instability and international conflicts.

**Q8. Define Sustainable Development. Discuss its principles and importance. (5 marks)**

**Ans:** Sustainable development is defined as development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It seeks to balance economic growth with environmental protection and social well-being.

Some of its core principles are:

- 1. Equity:** Ensuring a fair distribution of resources both within the current generation (Intra-generational) and between current and future generations (Inter-generational).
- 2. Conservation of Biodiversity:** Protecting the variety of life forms on Earth to ensure that ecosystems remain resilient and functional.
- 3. Sustainable Resource Use:** Moving away from non-renewable energy (like coal) toward renewable sources (like solar and wind) and practicing the "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle" model.
- 4. Precautionary Principle:** Taking action to prevent environmental damage even if some scientific cause-and-effect relationships are not fully established yet.

Some of its importance are:

- 1. Environmental Preservation:** It prevents the total collapse of ecosystems and helps combat global warming.
- 2. Long-term Economic Growth:** By preserving resources now, it ensures that the economy does not crash in the future due to a lack of raw materials.
- 3. Improved Quality of Life:** It aims for a world with cleaner air, healthier food, and stable climates for everyone.

### Q9. Examine the relationship between environmental degradation and social inequality. (5 marks)

**Ans:** Environmental degradation and social inequality are deeply linked, often creating a cycle where the poorest populations suffer the most from ecological damage.

- 1. Disproportionate Impact:** While wealthy nations or individuals often consume the most resources, the consequences such as pollution, floods, and droughts typically hit marginalized communities first. For example, industrial plants are often located near low-income neighborhoods, leading to higher health risks for those residents.
- 2. Lack of Adaptive Capacity:** Wealthier societies have the financial means to build sea walls, buy air purifiers, or relocate if an area becomes unlivable. Socially disadvantaged groups lack these resources, making them "environmental refugees" during climate disasters.
- 3. Resource Grabbing:** Environmental degradation often involves powerful entities taking control of land or water used by indigenous or rural communities. This worsens poverty and increases the gap between the rich and the poor.
- 4. Health Inequality:** Degradation of the environment leads to contaminated water and poor air quality. Those with lower social status often lack access to the healthcare needed to treat the resulting respiratory or water-borne illnesses.
- 5. The Cycle of Poverty:** When the land is degraded, rural poor who rely on farming or fishing lose their livelihoods, which forces them into deeper poverty and further social marginalization.

### Q10. What is Anthropocentrism? Explain why it is considered a challenge in Environmental Philosophy. (5 marks)

**Ans:** Anthropocentrism is a human-centered philosophical viewpoint that considers human beings as the most significant entities in the universe. It suggests that nature and all other living beings have value only in terms of their usefulness to humans.

It is considered a challenge in environmental philosophy because:

- 1. Instrumental Value of Nature:** Anthropocentrism treats nature as a mere "resource" for human consumption. This leads to the over-exploitation of forests,

minerals, and animals because they are seen as having no inherent right to exist on their own.

- 2. Justification for Degradation:** It has historically been used to justify environmental destruction, such as deforestation or pollution, as long as it benefits human economic growth or convenience.
- 3. Exclusion of Non-Humans:** Environmental philosophy seeks to extend moral rights to the ecosystem. Anthropocentrism acts as a barrier because it denies moral standing to any species that doesn't provide direct "utility" to people.
- 4. Short-sightedness:** Because it focuses on human needs, often immediate ones. It tends to ignore the long-term ecological balance required for the planet to survive.

### **Q11. Discuss the concept of moral status in environmental ethics. Who or what should be given moral consideration? (5 marks)**

**Ans:** In environmental ethics, "moral status" (or moral standing) refers to whether an entity deserves to be treated with ethical concern for its own sake. If something has moral status, we have a direct duty toward it, rather than just a duty regarding it because it belongs to a human.

Following are who or what should be given moral consideration:

- 1. Sentient Beings (Pathocentrism):** Many philosophers argue that all beings capable of feeling pleasure or pain (animals) deserve moral consideration.
- 2. All Living Things (Biocentrism):** This view extends moral status to all life forms, including plants and microorganisms, arguing that everything that has a "will to live" or a biological purpose has intrinsic value.
- 3. Ecosystems and Species (Holism):** Some ethical frameworks argue that we should give moral consideration to entire species, rivers, or ecosystems rather than just individuals. This is often called "Ecocentrism" or "Deep Ecology".
- 4. Future Generations:** Environmental ethics also argues that humans who are not yet born have moral status. We have an obligation to leave them a habitable planet.

### Q12. Explain the need to overcome anthropocentrism for achieving ecological justice. (5 marks)

**Ans:** Ecological justice refers to the fair treatment of all beings, human and non-human, and the fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens. Overcoming anthropocentrism is essential for several reasons:

- 1. Shifting from Ego to Eco:** To achieve justice, we must stop viewing humans as "masters" of the earth and start viewing us as "members" of the earth community. This shift allows for the legal and ethical protection of habitats that don't directly "serve" humans.
- 2. Recognizing Intrinsic Value:** Justice requires recognizing that a river or a forest has a right to exist regardless of its economic value. By moving past anthropocentrism, we can create laws that protect nature for its own sake.
- 3. Accountability for Damage:** Anthropocentrism often lets corporations or nations off the hook for environmental damage if no "human" was directly harmed. Ecological justice demands accountability for the harm done to the biosphere itself.
- 4. Sustainability for All:** Overcoming a human-centered view helps us realize that human survival depends on a healthy planet. True justice ensures that the "rights of nature" are upheld, which ultimately protects the life-support systems we all rely on.

### Q13. Explain the moral dilemma between present and future generations in environmental ethics. (5 marks)

**Ans:** The moral dilemma between present and future generations centers on Intergenerational Justice - the idea that our current actions regarding the environment will profoundly impact people who are not yet born.

- 1. Conflict of Interest:** The present generation often prioritizes immediate economic growth, comfort, and resource consumption. However, this often leads to the depletion of non-renewable resources and environmental degradation, leaving future generations with a "broken" planet.
- 2. The "Non-Identity" Problem:** A key philosophical dilemma is that future individuals do not yet exist and have no voice or legal rights today. This makes it difficult to determine exactly what we "owe" them, as they cannot represent their own interests in current policy-making.

**3. Sustainable Use Vs Exhaustion:** If the present generation uses up all fossil fuels or clean water, future generations will lack the basic necessities for survival. The ethical challenge is deciding how much the current generation should "sacrifice" or limit their lifestyle to ensure a livable world for the future.

**4. Responsibility for Climate Change:** Decisions made today about carbon emissions will dictate the climate stability of the next several centuries. The dilemma lies in whether it is fair for the present generation to enjoy the benefits of high-energy lifestyles while passing the catastrophic costs (like rising sea levels) to the future.

#### **Q14. Discuss the ethical concerns related to nuclear hazards and climate emergency. (5 marks)**

**Ans:** Both nuclear hazards and the climate emergency present unique ethical challenges because they involve high risks and long-term consequences that transcend national borders.

Nuclear Hazards Include:

- 1. Long-term Toxicity:** Radioactive waste remains dangerous for thousands of years. Ethically, it is questionable to produce energy today that creates a deadly legacy for thousands of future generations to manage.
- 2. Global Risk:** A nuclear accident (like Chernobyl or Fukushima) does not respect borders. It raises the ethical issue of "transboundary harm," where one nation's pursuit of energy can harm the health and environment of neighboring countries.

Climate emergency includes:

- 1. Environmental Injustice:** Those who contributed the least to global warming (such as developing nations and the poor) often suffer the most from its effects, like droughts and floods.
- 2. Irreversibility:** Once "tipping points" in the climate are reached (like the melting of ice sheets), the damage cannot be undone. Ethically, this represents a failure of stewardship over the earth. Both issues highlight a shift in ethics from local concerns to global responsibilities. They demand a "precautionary principle," where humanity must act to prevent potential catastrophes even if some scientific uncertainties remain.

### Q15. Explain the causes and consequences of Man-Animal Conflict in the context of environmental ethics (5 marks)

**Ans:** Man-Animal conflict occurs when the needs of wildlife overlap with those of human populations, leading to negative impacts for both.

Its causes are:

- 1. Habitat Fragmentation:** As humans expand agricultural land, roads, and cities, wildlife habitats are broken into smaller pieces. This forces animals like elephants or tigers to cross human settlements to find food or mates.
- 2. Resource Competition:** Depletion of natural prey or water sources in the wild leads animals to raid crops or livestock, bringing them into direct confrontation with farmers.
- 3. Human Encroachment:** Expanding tourism and illegal settlement in protected forest areas increases the frequency of accidental encounters between humans and dangerous wildlife.

Its consequences and ethical context are:

- 1. Loss of life and livelihood:** Humans may suffer physical injury or death, and farmers often lose their entire year's income due to crop raiding, leading to poverty and resentment toward conservation efforts.
- 2. Retaliatory Killing:** Animals are often killed in revenge or out of fear. From an ethical standpoint, this raises questions about the "Right to life" of endangered species versus the human "Right to Safety".
- 3. Ecological Imbalance:** When "conflict species" are eliminated, it disrupts the local ecosystem. Environmental ethics suggests we should move toward "coexistence" strategies such as wildlife corridors and fair compensation for farmers, rather than simply viewing animals as pests to be removed.

## Short Answers

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### Q1. Define Ecology? (1m)

**Ans:** Ecology is the scientific study of the interactions between living organisms (biota) and their physical environment (abiotic factors).

### Q2. What is meant by Ecosophy? (1m)

**Ans:** Coined by Anne Naess, Ecosophy is a philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium. It represents a personal worldview that integrates ethical values with ecological living.

### Q3. What is meant by Man-Nature relationship? (1m)

**Ans:** It refers to the continuous interaction and interdependence between human beings and the natural world, encompassing how humans utilize, impact, and perceive the environment.

### Q4. Name one religious perspective that supports environmental protection. (1m)

**Ans:** Buddhism (which emphasizes non-violence and compassion for all living beings) or Hinduism (which views nature as sacred and personified in deities).

### Q5. What is resource depletion? (1m)

**Ans:** Depletion is the consumption of a resource faster than it can be replenished, leading to the exhaustion of raw materials like fossil fuels, minerals, or fresh water.

**Q6. Who introduced the concept of Sustainable Development (Brundtland Report)? (1m)**

**Ans:** The concept was introduced by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland, in the 1987 report titled "Our Common Future".

**Q7. What is Anthropocentrism? (1m)**

**Ans:** Anthropocentrism is a human-centred worldview that considers human beings as the most significant entity in the universe and views nature primarily as a resource for human benefit.

**Q8. What is meant by moral status in environmental ethics?**

**Ans:** Moral status refers to whether an entity (such as an animal, plant, or ecosystem) deserves moral consideration in its own right, rather than just being valuable because of its use to humans.

**Q9. What is meant by climate emergency? (1m)**

**Ans:** A climate emergency is a situation in which urgent action is required to reduce or halt climate change and avoid potentially irreversible environmental damage resulting from it.

**Q10. What is man-animal conflict? (1m)**

**Ans:** Man-animal conflict refers to negative interactions between people and wild animals, often occurring when wildlife damages crops, livestock, or property, or threatens human safety due to habitat loss.