

# Promotion of Green Revolution for the Growth of Agricultural Sectors: A Philosophical Basis through the Lens of Emmanuel Levinas

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**Abstract:** Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995) is an eminent phenomenologist philosopher who is a Jew by birth, had early days in Germany and became a scholar in France. The main concern of Levinas is the consideration of Ethics as the first philosophy. Ethics is taken as relationship between beings where the importance is accorded to human responsibility towards the other person/things. The relationship with the other person cannot be reduced to comprehension. It would limit the other. The face of the other is the condition of possibility for ethics. Here the face-to-face relation enhances the relationship. This relationship does not limit between the human beings, but is to anything that is other (Nature). So There are two things emerge from these, firstly, can we be sure of the other in nature and secondly, the need to treat the other in the nature. So, there is a plausible need for response towards the needs of the environment. This Paper tries to establish the possibility of the Green Revolution in agriculture as a philosophical basis and to state that in response to Levinasian concept of the other, we need to promote agrarian sector. The author tries to base on Levinasian concept for the care of the environment especially the agricultural sector which is the backbone of the Green Revolution. This paper focuses on the importance of environmental intervention to promote, sustain and preserve the nature through the ideals given by Levinas.

**Keywords:** Emmanuel Levinas, Levinasian Other, Green Revolution

The survival of the planet earth is impeccable through the emphasis in green revolution. There is adverse impact on earth caused explicitly through the human intervention. The earth is seen as the source of livelihood, shelter and a safe cradle for human survival. However, ingenious habit of utilizing the earth's resources has led to antagonistic sway on earth itself. Green revolution is a path that nurtures the earth for its longevity and survival. Human beings depend on earth on everything for their survival. The conducive behaviour enables the earth to serve better the human beings themselves. The stress on the growth of agricultural segments is part of green revolution which is beneficial for both the earth and the human beings. The care for the earth by leading a greater love for it is accentuated by philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995). He orders everyone to have a respected care for the '*face of the other*'. He is an eminent phenomenologist philosopher who is a Jew by birth, had early days in Germany and became a scholar in France. The main concern of Levinas is the consideration of Ethics as the first philosophy. Ethics is taken as relationship between beings where the importance is accorded to human responsibility towards the other.

## Levinas' Theme of Environment

Levinas is known for his work in the area of centrality of human beings in ethical projects. The works of Levinas cannot be restricted to human beings but towards human responsibility to deal with that are in nature. Though is philosophy begins with the attention to the human other who is always faced with the other. (The other can be human other or non-human animal or non-human non-animal other). To understand that there is a possibility of the other is to establish that they have an existence by themselves. The presence of the other is a sublime reality which cannot be ignored. The other by its *face* calls for attention. Human beings need to act positively towards the other that/which calls for attention. A responsible human being deals resonantly with the cry of the other. It is in this sense, that Levinasian philosophy gets environmental taste. Human beings are obliged to respond to the other – human beings, animals, plants, or anything that exists.

## The Process through the '*il y a*' in the Environmental Concerns

Levinas goes to the root of the project of study when he proposes that the other is a presence that cannot be denied or doubted. He made a clear distinction between an "existent" and "bare existence"<sup>i</sup>. All things have their own existence or the '*il y a*'. It is clear that all beings exist in their own space and time without someone's perception. Levinas goes on to say that there are beings in their bare existence. This *bare existence* he terms as '*il y a*'. He delineates the '*il y a*' as "impersonal, anonymous, yet inextinguishable 'consummation' of being, which murmurs in the depths of nothingness itself"<sup>ii</sup>. All the beings in the universe have their reality without any human interventions of them. It entails then that there is the possibility for the other. Hence, the other is a definite 'be' in the world.

## Existence and Existents as Real Presence of things in the Environment

Levinas developed the notion of '*il y a*' from his earliest writings where he clearly brought out a distinction between 'existent' and 'bare existence'<sup>iii</sup>. The 'bare existence' is devoid of accidents or qualities of things. The 'bare existence' is like Aristotelian substance which Levinas claims as "the absence of everything returns as a presence, as the place where the bottom has

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dropped out of everything, an atmospheric density, a plenitude of the void, or the murmur of silence".<sup>iv</sup> The existence of things in the environment is a real presence which requires no human intervention to confirm it.

Levinas gives the difference between the existent and the '*il y a*'. He holds that the existent as an event or an experience, is a '*rip in il y a*', an interruption of its anonymity. 'An existent is an event, which shows up most primordially and immediately as a position of a location, here and now, a place'.<sup>v</sup> The existent as the eruption of anonymous being shows up concretely in its body. This body requires location and is also an irruption in the '*il y a*'- it creates a 'tear' in the anonymity of the '*il y a*'. Thus the existents exist in the world with its body, occupy space. The existent of things is seen as a localized materiality characterized as subjectivity.<sup>vi</sup> So the presence of the other with qualities and accidents is a real certainty for Levinas. Levinas thus, proposes that anything in this environment is a real possibility. The agricultural sectors of our discussion are a possibility for Levinas. It does have a matter for discussion and explanation.

### **The Treatment of the *Other*- The Other as the Agricultural Sector**

The presence of things really exists both in its bare existence and in its qualities. Levinas proposes that the other can be anything that exists in the universe. We can then, introduce the agricultural sector as the other that exists. Levinas does not stop with the existence of the other, but the presence of the other calls out to respond positively for its nurturing. To have this feature – the presence of the other – we need to take his idea of the '*face*' of the other.

The '*face*' of the other is a common phrase in Levinasian thought. By the term '*face*' it is understood as the '*countenance*' with physiognomy, character, facial expression, said states, situation and the like, which causes a visible description to something. It could also mean that which is '*seeing*' through the behaviour or appearance or could be said as something representing.<sup>vii</sup> However, for Levinas the '*face of the other*' is not understood in terms of physical countenance or appearance, but it is the '*other is invisible*'. It means that the face of the other is irreducible to given data in the perceptible eye of the observer. Roger S. Gottlieb puts it this way:

"What Levinas poses as an alternative is the irreducibility or underivability of our concern for the other. This concern does not stem from an empirically or conceptually based sense of the "facts" or the ultimate ontological structures of the universe....They are neither a consequence of our knowledge of things (totality) or of the ultimately knowable character of things themselves (essence) nor are they how the things appear to us or exist in their truth (being)".<sup>viii</sup>

The '*I*' or the '*ego*' tries to comprehend the other to its known countenance. The other by its visibility (or say countenance) comes across to the '*I*' and the '*I*' in its return tries to incarcerate the other there in what '*I*' see or its '*play of words*'. The face of the other is seen in others' vulnerability and need which calls for justice, which represents the "*trace*" of the infinite. Infinite cannot be reduced to empirical, tangible moments but can be understood only as a '*trace*'.<sup>ix</sup> So too, the face of the other is beyond human reduction of concepts. The possibility of giving an existence '*il y a*' - to the other is the proper way of speaking about Levinasian '*face*' of the other.

Levinas proposes that the '*I*' always tend to respond to the other. It becomes a responsibility to act towards the other. The self in its coincidence of the meeting of the face tends towards a concrete action. However, in Levinas we find that all is focused on the alterity of the alter ego. The other is other than me, other than things, and other than others but is pure alterity, a pure singularity.<sup>x</sup> Levinas would also claim that the face commands a gathering – or a proximity – we can know or have an experience of another without discovering in him indiscernible difference.<sup>xi</sup> It is an act of recognizing in the face of the other its own unprecedented existence in the world. And in recognizing the face of the other invites all to respond to the other, here in our case, the agriculture.

### **The Obligation to the *Other* (Agriculture) - a Call beyond Refusal**

Levinas as a philosopher of ethics places emphasis on the relationship between persons or individuals. He alludes emphatic descriptions to the encounter with the other persons. The specialty of the encounter is that the other impacts me more than any outside object. The other person presents to me as an alter ego. This is possible through my perception. I am able to comprehend another human person similar to me, in their actions, in their consciousness. The other person lives in his/her environment, their surroundings and those that help them to live prolifically wholesome. Agricultural sector is one area that the other person lives for their healthy survival.

Levinas opines that the other individual addresses me, calls me – there is a relational inter-subjectivity. The existence of '*il y a*' (there is) of the other requires no external evidences of its presence. One feels implicitly towards the other. The presence of the other compels one to act towards it. It is an internal force or an internal urge. It is a lurching within to respond. Levinas claims that the other individual is present outside oneself as an individual waiting to be heard, cared and solicited for. The obligation towards the other is a definitive call within me to positively respond in lieu for assistance. This definitive call within me is an insatiable hunger. The hunger for the other reflects back on me. Levinas would claim that this hunger "challenges my identity and above all, my complacency and self-assurance."<sup>xii</sup> This desire for the other when faced with the other leads into a relationship of responsibility. It is a positive responsibility to enhance the existence of the other that is facing me. The other can be the ultimate reality as well. It could be the agriculture which seeks our attention. The other that faces me is an obligation for me to '*face*' responsibly, and contributing to its wellbeing.

### **The Need for Promotion of the Green Revolution in Agriculture**

We need to focus more on "Green Revolution" which term was coined by William S. Gaud of United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in 1968, for the introduction of new technology and policies implemented in the developing nations with aids from industrialized nations between the 1940s and the 1960s to increase the production and yield of food crops.<sup>xiii</sup> There is a need for paying attention in agricultural sectors such as expansion into marginal lands, rapid rates of deforestation and overgrazing in dry areas which in turn lead to severe adverse environmental consequences. Land and loss of organic matter lead to land degradation and desertification, which leads to lack of food, fuel wood, and other agricultural and forestry products. Poverty

and its related vices together with opportunities for quick political and economic gains without having to bear associated environmental costs, has led to exploitation of the land base. This exploitation and the resulting degradation of the future land base may be avoided through a combination of technological change and public policy without serious adverse effects on short-run food supplies. New technology facilitates higher yields on existing agricultural lands. Thus, expanding the development and use of yield-increasing technology reduces the pressure on new lands to meet increasing demands for food and other agricultural products.<sup>xiv</sup> The new challenges in the present time are, meeting the demands of diet diversity resulting from rapidly rising incomes; feeding rapidly growing urban populations; accessing technologies that are under the purview of proprietary protection; and gearing up for the projected negative consequences of climate change.<sup>xv</sup> These can be dealt with only through a proper plan and execution. Green revolution in the agricultural sector has indeed benefited many as well as resulted in food sufficiency. It is like Levinasian concern for the other. It is a positive response to the need of the hour.

### Conclusion

The need for promotion of green revolution in agricultural sector is not impetuous desire, but the need of the hour. Levinas as a philosopher emphasized the need to respond to the other. Every human person is obligated to help the other in answering their cry for support. As a responsible individual, every human person has to tend towards the welfare of the other. The support of green revolution, first of all is a reality (*a il y a*) and is a positive response to the current problems of environmental concerns. The Levinasian concept thus, remains as a base for support in the endeavours of green revolution in the agricultural sectors.

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