

## Deep Ecology Perspectives and Issues

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**ABSTRACT:** Environmental ethics actually attempts to block or resist the web of anthropocentrism (man centered ethics). Anthropocentrism claims human mastery over the nature and so instead of that it voices in favor of non-anthropocentrism where the concept of environmental justice is established by way of paying equal values to all natural communities. In this regard, various environmental theories in the name of biocentrism, eco-centrism, Cosmo-centrism, deep ecology, shallow ecology have been developed. The present paper is an attempt to explain deep ecological movement is an extreme form of non-anthropocentrism and it may be thought of as the ultimate destination of environmental ethics. Deep ecology invites man-nature relationship. It tries to build bridge between man and nature and thereby claims our love and respect to nature.

**Key words:** Anthropocentricism, ecology, ethics, justice, non-anthropocentrism.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

The very objective of environmental ethics is to set up the trend of non-anthropocentrism instead of anthropocentrism. Anthropocentrism is a philosophical issue where everything is men centered. Accordingly, the subjugation, domination of men is accepted within the sphere of anthropocentrism. Anthropocentrism asserts that only humans have intrinsic value and other than humans, all other natural communities have only instrumental value or use value. In traditional ethics, the notion of anthropocentrism is focused. Even in Christian religion we find the dominant web of anthropocentrism where it is asserted that men are the sons or representatives of God. The same is continued and strengthened with the advent of science and technology. Men in present century are the firm believers of materialism, individualism, and subjectivism. As a result of that we are experiencing an overall trend of anthropocentrism. This web actually creates a negative impact to retain ecological or environmental balance. The heinous activities of men are creating a voluminous impact on natural environment. As a result of that, lots of environmental crisis have been created in the name of ozone depletion, water pollution, global warming and many more. This is where the relevance of environmental ethics actually hinges on.

### II. THE CONCEPT OF DEEP ECOLOGY

The concept of deep ecology has not developed as a systematic philosophical theory; rather it has been used in a variety of ways ranging from a general description of all non-anthropocentric theories. Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess technically termed it as 'ecosophy T'[1]. At the very outset Naess distinguishes between deep and shallow ecology. Shallow ecology actually 'fights against pollution and resource depletion'. Unlike deep ecology, shallow ecology is anthropocentric in nature. Accordingly, its central objective is to protect health and affluence of the people in developed countries. Deep ecology, on the contrary, takes a 'relational, total-field' perspectives, rejecting the anthropocentric 'man in environmental image' in favor of a more holistic and non-anthropocentric approach. Thus, deep ecology as a non-anthropocentric philosophical approach tries to locate the ongoing environmental crisis. It then attempts to propose a cure for the crisis by way making a radical change in our philosophical outlook. This change involves both personal and cultural transformations and would affect basic economical and ideological structures. We need to change ourselves as individuals and culture. Thus, it requires a 'reawakening of something very old'; it also requires a cultivation of 'ecological consciousnesses. An ecological consciousness is a spiritual approach that would address more on 'the crisis that recognizes the unity of humans, plants, animals, the Earth'[2].

Deep ecology actually sets up or presents a critique of what may be called the *dominant world views*. It claims that the so-called dominant world view is based on extreme form of anthropocentrism and it is heavily responsible for environmental destruction. Deep ecology thus attempts to work out an alternative philosophical world view that would purely holistic and not human centered. But the main question is: how do we step outside our personal and cultural worldview or ideology to compare it with something radically different? In this regard deep ecologists use a variety of strategies to meet these challenges including reliance on poetry, Buddhism,

spiritualism, and political activism, including acts of civil disobedience and eco-sabotage. In this regard deep ecologists set up a common platform through which the diverse nature of Deep Ecology Movement can be unified.

### **III. EIGHT PRINCIPLES OF ECOLOGICAL PLATFORM**

The common ecological platform is based on eight principles. These are in brief:

- (i) The flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth has intrinsic value.
- (ii) Richness and diversity of life forms are values in themselves and contributing to the flourishing of human and non-human life on earth.
- (iii) Humans have no right to reduce the richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.
- (iv) Present human interference with the non-human world is excessive and the situation is radically worsening.
- (v) The flourishing of human life and culture is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of non-human life requires such a decrease.
- (vi) A significant change of life condition for the better requires change in politics. These affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures.
- (vii) The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality rather than adhering to the high standard of living.
- (viii) Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to participate in the attempt to implement the necessary changes.

### **IV. SCIENCE OF ECOLOGY AND DEEP ECOLOGY**

It reflects that the science of ecology influences deep ecology. Ecological science would provide direct support to the platform of deep ecology. Moreover, it can be said that there remains an intimate relationship between ecology and ecophilosophy. Deep ecology relies on the science of ecology for a variety of purposes. Ecology helps us to detect environmental disorders and prescribes policies that can resolve these disorders. Although scientific ecology can contribute to the goal of Deep Ecologists, it should not be mistaken for the final authority on environmental disputes. For Naess, there are dangers in what calls 'ecologism' the view takes ecology as the ultimate science. We think deep ecologists seek to develop alternative worldviews that ecological insights into such issues as diversity, holism, interdependencies and relations. We have characterized deep ecology as tracing the roots of our environmental crisis to fundamental philosophical causes. In this regard, deep ecology is also concerned with questions of metaphysics and ontology as it is with questions of ethics. We think that deep ecology is concerned with a metaphysical ecology rather than a scientific one. Deep ecology denies that individual humans are separate from nature. Instead deep ecologists are committed to a version of metaphysical holism where humans are fundamentally a part of their surroundings, not distinct from them. It further states that humans are constituted by their relations to other elements in the environment. Thus, Naess assumes 'relational –total- field image' by alluding to recognition that humans are formed by their relationships. While illuminating the ontological aspect of deep ecology Warwick remarks, "It is the idea that we can make no firm ontological divide in the field of existence: that there is bifurcation in reality between the human and the non-human realms...to the extent that we perceive boundaries, we fall short of Deep Ecological consciousness." [3] According to Callicott, deep ecologists deny the reality of individuals. Human 'nature' is inseparable from nature.

### **V. CONCLUSION**

In view of the above it can be said that ecological consciousness and self-realization is the hallmark of deep ecology. There are two ultimate norms of deep ecology, such as, self-realization and bio-centric equality. Self-realization is a process through which people come to understand themselves as existing in a through interconnectedness with the rest of nature. Bio-centric equality is the recognition that all organisms and beings are equally members of an interrelated whole and therefore has equal intrinsic worth. Self-realization is a process of self-examination in which people come to understand themselves as part of a greater whole. It is a process through which a person comes to understand that 'there is no firm ontological divide between humans and non-humans', between self and other. Self-realization is a process through which we come to know ourselves not as individuals separate and distinct from nature but as a part of a greater 'self'. According to this theory, this self is the self-described within metaphysical holism. Thus, it can be said that we are as human beings, our nature, is constituted by our relations with other parts of the natural world. Self-realization comes to understand and fully appreciate this oneness. According to Devall and Sessions, the deep ecology norm of self-realization goes beyond the modern Western self which is defined as an isolated ego striving primarily for hedonistic gratification. Here spiritual growth is unfolding. Thus, the genesis of deep ecology sense of self requires a further maturity and growth, an 'identification which goes beyond humanity to include the non-

human world.’[4] Thus, we may conclude by saying that deep ecological movement eventually establishes non-anthropocentrism for which environmental ethics is striving for.

#### REFERENCES

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- [2] See Devall and Sessions, *Deep Ecology: Living as If Nature Mattered*, Salt Lake City: Peregrime Smith Books, 1985, p. ix.
- [3] Fox, Warwick, “Deep Ecology: A New Philosophy of Our Time?”, in *Ecologist*, 14, November-December, 1984, p.194.
- [4] Devall and Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, op. cit., p. 67.

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