

Environmental Ethics and Deep Ecology: A Balance with nature

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Abstract

The most fundamental issues we face and deal with today is the balance or adjusting our relationship with nature. With the increasing deterioration of ecological systems on which human beings rely and the aggravation of the environmental crisis, human beings have realized that we cannot rely on economic side to solve the ecological problems. Then a believe comes to our mind that a new environmentalism in the form of "Environmental Ethics and Deep ecology" emerged to solve the environmental crisis with a new form of thought and to protect the natural resources and eco- systems . Environmental ethics can prove to be helpful in building a holistic attitude in society. The decade of 1960's witnessed strong ecological revolution ---- a revolution in consciousness concerning man's outlook towards other species and the need to protect the integrity of nature. This ecological revolution paved very much for the rise of new ecological movement that is long- range deep ecology. Deep ecology is a move from " anthropocentrism" to ' eco – centrist' . Deep ecology is a highly ecological movement that arises as a new perception to visualize the inexorable changes that humanity currently confronts. Arne Naess theory of deep ecology aims to find out a solution to our feeling of emptiness and stress and we can

. Thus, Environmental ethics and Deep ecology movement aims to participate in overcoming the ecological crisis by developing a process to show the meaning and truth in our lives. It points towards the development of a spirituality, a higher consciousness or awareness which would recognize and integrate spiritual values towards nature.

This paper elaborates about Deep – ecology ---- its' holistic ' perspective which is much more helpful for minimizing the environmental crisis and apprehending Self – realization . ' Self- realization ' is the essence of deep – ecology . Self – realization means broadening and deepening our sense of self beyond the narrow ego to an identification with all living beings . In other words , through realizing the maxim ---- ---- " Everything is interrelated " .

Lastly , it concludes that the joy and meaning of life can be enhance and towards a new way of seeing the world through increased Self – realization . Thus , Self- realization can help us to aspire goals and make a balance with nature.

KEYWORDS—Environmental ethics- Deep – ecology, eco- centrist, spiritual , holistic , life , self- realization

INTRODUCTION:

The problem of environmental exploitation has been a cause for concern now not merely for India but for the entire world as well .The environmental crisis is an outward manifestation of the crisis of mind and spirit. The strains of the ecological crisis are so apparent that the task to preserve the environment is a must. Adjusting the relationship between humans and nature is one of the most fundamental issues we

face and must deal with today. With the increasing deterioration of ecological systems on which human beings rely and the aggravation of the environmental crisis, human beings have realized that we cannot rely on economic and judicial methods alone to solve the problems of environmental pollution and ecological imbalances. Only after we have adopted an appropriate attitude towards nature and have established a new ethical relationship between human beings and nature will be able to love and respect nature automatically. In this context, environmental ethics and deep ecology can play a vital role to run our life smoothly and can make a balance between man and other beings in our surrounding environment.

Environmental Ethics:

Environmental ethics is the philosophical discipline that consider the moral and ethical relationship of human beings to the environment. In other words it considers the ethical basis of environmental protection. Its emergence was the result of increased awareness of how the rapidly growing world population was impacting the environment as well as the environmental consequences that come with the growing use of pesticides, technology and industry. It aims to provide ethical justification and moral motivation for the cause of global environmental protection. Environmental ethics helps define man's moral and ethical obligations towards the environment. It considers the ethical relationship between people and the natural world and the kind of decisions people have to make about the environment.

.According to *Leopold*, “ A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community .It is wrong when it tends otherwise”.(Leopold Aldo,1949) .He has tried to open a new subject which will deal with the relation between man and nature and he called it “Land Ethics”, issue of Environmental Ethics”.

The magnitude and urgency of contemporary environmental problems – collectively known as the environmental crisis form the mandate for environmental ethics – a re-examination of the human attitudes and values towards nature. In this respect three approaches can be taken to environmental ethics. They are – ‘*Anthropocentrism*’, ‘*Bio-centrism*’ and ‘*Eco-centrism*’ (Arumugam.E,2008)

An ‘*Anthropocentrism*’ environmental ethics grants moral standing exclusively to humans being and considers non-human natural entities and nature as a whole to be only a means for human ends. Anthropocentrism regards human as separate form and superior to nature and holds that human life has intrinsic value of nature.

A ‘*Bio-centrism*’ maintains that all life forms are ‘moral patients’ – entities to which we should accord moral consideration. We therefore have a duty towards all forms of life. As *Albert Schweitzer* (1923) wrote:

‘*Eco-centrism*’ is that holistic theory according to which the whole eco-system, comprising both the biotic and abiotic parts of nature, deserves moral worth. This eco-centric theory directs us to extend our moral concern to items that are non human, indeed to things that are not even animals, such as plants, forests etc.

“The essence of goodness is to maintain and cherish life, and the essence of evil is to destroy and damage life. All living beings have the will to live, and all living

beings with the will to live are sacred, interrelated and of equal value. It is, therefore, an ethical imperative for us to respect and help all life forms.”(Eliot Robert,1995) According to some commentators our exploitative and destructive attitude towards nature originates in an ‘anthropocentric’ attitude. Hence, they argue, we need a fundamentally new way of interacting with nature. More science and technology are not going to get us out of the present ecological crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink our old one.

Deep- Ecology:

The decade of 1960’s shows strong ecological revolution. This ecological revolution paved very much for the rise of new ecological movement. Arne Naess’s theory of deep ecology aims to find out a solution to our feeling of emptiness and stress and we can regain a feeling of connectedness with other living and non-living entities.

Deep ecology designate as a unique perspective on the environment is based on a new perception of reality that has profound implications not only for science and philosophy but for everyday life. Naess makes a number of normative claims about how humans relate to the natural world and how humans should proceed in their interactions with the environment, other species, and eco- systems.

Arne Naess “Deep” and “Shallow” ecologies shows that “ shallow” approaches to environmental problems are anthropocentric, in that they are concerned only with the detrimental impact of the problems on human well being . Deep ecology directs us to preserve the integrity of biosphere for its own sake, irrespective of possible benefits to humans alone that might follow from so doing (Peter Singer, 1989). Thus “ Deep ecology movement” in contrast endorses “biospheric egalitarianism”, the view that all things are alike in having value in their own right, independent of their usefulness to human purposes.

Ecological Consciousness:

Environmental ethics provides moral grounds for social policies aimed at protecting the earth’s environment and remedying environmental degradation. That is why it can be viewed that environmental ethics involves ecological consciousness amongst us. Ecological consciousness is a growing spirit that speaks of tolerance, interdependence etc. It also show path to a sustainable future. Ecological consciousness makes a bond in nature creating ecological balance. Otherwise the concept of ecological imbalance will emerge. Therefore, it can be opined that we are in a chain in environment if one knot is displaced from another the whole chain will be useless. Similarly it can be asserted that nature is an umbrella of all beings under which each and every being develop forms of life according to their own nature. Thus, each and every organism is an integral part of the ecosystem and has its impact over it.

The diminishing of ego and the integrity between human and the non- human world constitute Naess’s ultimate norm - “Self- realization”. Self- realization is the fundamental norm of deep ecology. Realizing the true self will give the equal rights to every species of this eco system to live freely in this biosphere.

Naess saw the process of self-realization as the realization that human self is part of the wider ecological community and this can be realized that allows us to identify with all living and non-living things (Naess, 1989).

Naess talks of Maturity of feelings in our relationships with our environment allowing us to realize our potential. However, to talk of relationship does not mean to separate this small sense of self from the wider ecological sense of self, but to achieved greater self-realization in the wider sense. Wider identification is an essential component for the formation of ecocentric societies. As developed by Naess, the position also focuses on the possibility of the “identification” of human ego with nature. By identifying with nature we can enlarge the boundaries of the self. Then only by realization of our true self we can derive the norm ‘self-realization’ for every being where we can increasingly see ourselves in others and others in ourselves.

Once we ‘see ourselves in others’ in this broad way our natural inclination is to protect the Earth: “care flows naturally if the self is widened and deepened so that protection of free nature is felt and conceive of as protection of our very selves.”

CONCLUSIONS

Ecological consciousness safeguard against cruelty to all creatures. Rather it involves a safe and sustainable temperament in order to live happily with nature. Due to lack of ecological consciousness we pollute our environment.

Finally I can be opined that the importance of environmental ethics and deep ecology in the present day society is indispensable. In so far as we are living in harmony with nature, so apart from viable environment we cannot think of a human life possible in this eco-centric universe. To make a viable environment we have to comprehend the distinction between ecological balance and ecological imbalance. Thus, so far as environmental ethics is concerned, ecological consciousness and self realization leads to the welfare of all in our environment and nature. So, to make life better and worth living for present and future generation a minimum ethical code for good environment is essential(Leopold,Aldo 1997). As it is said –

“Sarve Sukhinassantu sarve santu niramayah

Sarve bhadrani pashyantu ma kasciddukha-bhagabhavat.”

(May all be happy, May all be free from disease. May all realise what is good. May none be subject to misery).

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